

Certified Teacher-Librarians, Library Quality and Student Achievement in Washington State Public Schools

The Washington State School Library Impact Study

Executive Summary

Background

The goals of the present study were to describe the current conditions of school libraries in Washington State schools and to evaluate the relationship between quality school library programs staffed by certified teacher-librarians and student achievement. The findings are based on the results of the 2014 Washington State School Library and Information Technology program survey (WSLIT) of public schools sponsored by OSPI and WLMA, linked to school-level student achievement data provided by OSPI.

The WSLIT/OSPI survey response rate was 61 percent, or 1,486 out of a total 2,428 K-12 schools across the state. The linked achievement data included elementary, middle and high school standardized reading and math test scores for 2013/14, as well as 5-year graduation rates for the year 2012/13.

Major findings of the present study include:

- Students who attend schools with certified teacher-librarians and quality library facilities perform better on standardized tests and are more likely to graduate, even after controlling for school size and student income level.
- The presence of a certified teacher-librarian on staff has a particularly high relationship to a school's five year graduation rate.
- Students who attend schools with on-staff certified teacher-librarians (CTLs) have more equitable access to technologically advanced and accessible library facilities.
- Students who attend schools with certified teacher-librarians staffing their school libraries have greater access to databases and resources for longer times during the school day. Often these resources are accessible outside the school as well.
- Students who attend schools with certified teacher-librarians are more likely to be taught information technology skills and technology fluency skills.



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- Quality public school libraries staffed by full time CTLs are unequally distributed across the State. Students who are least likely to have access to a quality library are disproportionately more likely to face poverty and other risk factors known to adversely impact student achievement.

Policy implications

- Funding for certified teacher-librarians is uneven among districts and should be a staff-funding priority to improve student success, graduation rates and information literacy instruction in Washington State.
- Efforts to improve student achievement by addressing risk factors should support staffing of certified teacher-librarians to help reduce the opportunity gap in Washington schools.
- The impact of a high quality school library with a certified teacher-librarian should be considered part of the funding priorities for improving reading and literacy skills for our state's youngest students.
- The individualized learning resources, research skills and access to information and resources that can be provided through a school library with a certified teacher-librarian should be a key priority in helping to ensure struggling high school students are able to obtain a high school diploma.
- Better reporting of library staffing and funding will improve the state's ability to document the impact of school library and information technology programs on student achievement.

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Full Report Available at <http://www.wla.org/wlma>



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