



For Immediate Release
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Syracuse Researchers Link Higher Test Scores with Certified Librarians in Schools

Albany – New York State schools with certified librarians have higher scores on average on the fourth grade English Language Arts (ELA) test than those who don't, according to the findings of researchers at Syracuse University School of Information Studies (iSchool).

Preliminary findings of research conducted by Professor Ruth Small and graduate students in the Center for Digital Literacy (CDL) show a statistically significant increase – with an almost 10 point difference – in the ELA test scores among fourth-grade students whose schools had certified librarians over students in schools without certified librarians.

“We believe these findings are important to consider, not only because of the higher ELA test scores,” says Small, who directs the school library media program at the iSchool. “These certified librarians are having a larger impact on students’ overall learning as well. Although we’re still analyzing the data, our preliminary results show that certified librarians are also more likely to provide students with materials that present more diverse points of view and that better support the curriculum than non-certified librarians.”

Certified school library media specialists are currently not mandated at the elementary level in New York State, but they are at the secondary level (grades 7-12). There are currently 568,924 students in K-12 schools who do not have access to a certified school library media specialist.

“This preliminary report reaffirms what nineteen other state studies have shown, that school libraries staffed by certified librarians and equipped with current books and technology can have a positive impact on student academic achievement”, said Michael J. Borges, Executive Director of the New York Library Association.

The research, which is being funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Studies, included survey responses from 1,612 schools, proportionately representing New York City; large Upstate cities such as Syracuse, Buffalo, and Rochester; other high-needs schools from urban and rural districts; average need schools; and low-need schools. Even when the need levels of schools were taken into consideration, there was still a 2.2 point difference in average test scores.

“These initial findings supports our efforts to require school library media specialists in grades K-6, especially in those school districts that are not meeting state and federal standards,” said Alan Lubin, Executive Vice President, New York State United Teachers.

The researchers are now currently analyzing more in-depth information gathered from surveys and focus groups involving school library media specialists, students, principals, and teachers from 48 elementary, middle, and high schools across New York State. They will analyze these various groups’ perceptions of school library specialists and their effect on education.

“The NYS Assembly values libraries and believes they are an important part of our educational system. This preliminary report reinforces the need to continue to invest in our schools, especially those lacking a quality school library program,” stated Assemblymember Amy Paulin, Chair of the Assembly Libraries and Educational Technology Committee.

Small hopes to better understand the impact these trained library media specialists have on motivating students to learn, influencing the adoption and use of technology, and servicing students with disabilities and special needs.

“Our preliminary results support what school librarians already knew,” Small says. “Best intentions only go so far. We need people educated in school librararianship and dedicated to motivating students to read and learn in our schools.”

The New York Library Association is supporting an increase in Library Materials Aid from \$6.25 per pupil to \$10 per pupil as recommended by the NYS Board of Regents. Library Materials Aid is used by schools to purchase books and other reading materials for their libraries. NYLA is also asking the Governor and the Legislature to amend the Contracts for Excellence initiative to allow the extra funds that high need school districts receive to be spent on hiring school library media specialists and equipping libraries with up to date books and technology.

“This study confirms the direct impact of certified school librarians on the educational success of our children. That is why I am sponsoring legislation (S.1686) to ensure that every school in the state has a library and a school librarian. In recent years, the Senate has successfully proposed record increases in state aid to public libraries, and I will continue to promote support for school libraries,” said State Senator HughT. Farley, Chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Libraries.

The Governor in his proposed 2008-09 Executive Budget removed \$5 million in funding for libraries and held School Library Materials Aid at \$6.25 per pupil despite proposing a \$1.4 billion increase in school aid.

A copy of the preliminary report can be found at www.nyla.org or www.ischool.syr.edu.

