



# Student Learning Through Ohio School Libraries

## The Ohio Research Study Fact Sheet

December 15, 2003

<http://www.oelma.org/studentlearning.htm>

The research study, *Student Learning through Ohio School Libraries*, was funded by the State Library of Ohio through a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to the Ohio Educational Library Media Association (OELMA), and was coordinated through Leadership for School Libraries (L4SL), a coalition of OELMA, INFOhio (the state K-12 network), the Ohio Department of Education and The State Library of Ohio. The research was undertaken by Dr. Ross J. Todd and Dr. Carol C. Kuhlthau of Rutgers University and the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries (CISSL). The study sought to understand **how students benefit from school libraries** through elaborating “conceptions of help” and providing some measure of the extent of these “helps,” as perceived by students and faculty.

### The Study

- Conducted from October, 2002 through December, 2003
- Looked at 39 effective school libraries across Ohio
- Collected information through two web-based surveys with 48 questions & one open-ended critical incident
- Surveyed 13,123 students in Grades 3 to 12 and 879 faculty
- Largest study to date of how the school library helps students learn

**When effective school libraries are in place, students do learn. 13,000 students cannot be wrong.**

### The Results

99.44% of the sample (13,050 students) indicated that the school library and its services, including roles of school librarians, have helped them in some way, regardless of how much, with their learning.

*Collectively, the data show that effective school libraries in Ohio are dynamic rather than passive agents of learning.* The findings indicate that the effective school library helps the strongest as a *resource agent* and a *technical agent*, providing access to information resources necessary for students to complete their research assignments and projects successfully. However, the qualitative responses show that the school library’s strength is not just as a passive information supply and exchange agency. Clearly helpful is the library’s part in engaging students in an active process of building their own understanding and knowledge – the library as an *agent for individualized learning, knowledge construction and academic achievement.*

*Correspondingly, the instructional intervention by the school librarian goes beyond teaching students how to use technology tools to access and evaluate information, but also provides instruction in how to use these tools effectively and reflectively to create products.*

**The study shows that an effective school library, lead by a credentialed school librarian who has a clearly defined role in information-centered pedagogy, plays a critical role in facilitating student learning for building knowledge.** This instructional intervention role, centering on the development of information literacy, affords Ohio students significant opportunities to learn and to succeed with their research. What this conveys is the

notion of an effective school library in Ohio as not just an *information place*, but also as a *knowledge space* where students develop the appropriate information literacy scaffolds to enable them to engage with information and build new knowledge. An effective school library is not just *informational*, but *formational*.

### The Implications and Recommendations

The successes of the school libraries in this study show what can be focused on and improved in any school, and they provide useful benchmarks for measuring improvement. The study identifies some essential *informational*, *transformational* and *formational* building blocks for effective school libraries in Ohio’s schools to play a leading role as *dynamic agents of learning*. Key building blocks are:

- Resources
- Technological infrastructure
- Reading resources
- Information literacy
- Technological literacies
- Reading engagement

As a result of the Ohio research study, it is recommended that:

- **all school library programs provide instructional intervention, through a credentialed school librarian, which centers on the development of information literacy skills for inquiry learning**
- **all school libraries, including elementary schools, be staffed with credentialed school librarians who have educational certification and who engage in collaborative instructional initiatives to help students learn and achieve**
- **all school librarians have a clearly defined role as information-learning specialist, with expertise**
  - as an instructional designer who creates and delivers information literacy instruction at class, group and individual levels;
  - as an educational partner-leader who mutually collaborates, negotiates, and plans with school administrators, teachers, students and parents to implement information literacy instruction in the curriculum;
  - as a school library program administrator who mutually negotiates, plans and implements a whole-school library program which articulates the integration of information, transformations and formation, as well as the managerial and organizational dimensions of the role; and
  - as a partner-leader in the provision of learning-oriented professional development targeted to whole-school success of learning goals.
- **all school libraries provide a learning-centered space supported by a strong technology infrastructure**
- **all stakeholders engage in sustained and action-oriented discussions in the context of continuous improvement of the necessary resources, technology and staffing requirements needed to maximize the learning opportunities through school libraries.**

**In Ohio, the provision of opportunities to learn through effective school libraries is critical to ensure that no student is left behind.**

The essential foundations for an effective school library in Ohio's schools are identified in the model below. All Ohio schools are encouraged to strive for excellence through continuous improvement of school libraries. These building blocks for

excellence are not to be perceived as independent blocks; rather, as elements that work together in integrated and iterative ways to bring about student achievement.

