

In a world of information overload, the library media program is the connection to literacy

A white paper on the role of Library Media Specialists and Media Centers in supporting Michigan's School Improvement Framework. Written collaboratively by the Media Specialists of REMC 12 East – Calhoun and Branch counties. March 2006

The mission of the school library information program is to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information.

-- *Information Power, Building Partnerships for Learning* (American Association of School Librarians and Association of Educational Communications and Technology, Chicago: 1998)

In the current age of information and the growing global society, students and teachers need strong library media programs administered by a highly qualified Library Media Specialist (also called teacher-librarian). The Library Media Specialist is uniquely qualified to support the educational philosophy and objectives of a school district by engaging in three key roles that facilitate effective delivery of the curriculum: program administration, learning and teaching, and information access and delivery. The capacity for districts to ensure the effective navigation of information by teachers and students is limited without the inclusion of the certified Library Media Specialist.

Student academic achievement increases with integrated school library media programs administered by a certified Library Media Specialist.

- Guidelines for Michigan school library media programs include effective teaching, curriculum development, collaborative planning, engaging students in reading, writing, speaking, and listening for enjoyment and understanding, and meeting diverse learning abilities.ⁱ
- Results from wide studies in sixteen states **including Michigan** between 1993 and 2005 demonstrate strong ties between student achievement and school library media programs regardless of student income and parent educational levels.ⁱⁱ

One Library Media Specialist in a school collaborating with teachers and administrators reaches across all subject areas, provides information access to everyone within the school community, and shares a suitable collection of books, periodicals and electronic information tied to the curriculum.

- School Library Media Specialists collaborating closely with teachers resulted in 21% higher elementary scores in Colorado and the best statewide high school reading/language scores in Oregon.^{iii iv}

The Library Media Specialist manages the delivery of information and assists staff and students in accessing and utilizing information for the knowledge necessary to succeed in the information age.

- Student achievement is directly impacted by Library Media Specialists and serves to make Michigan students more academically competitive in attracting businesses to the state.
- Students in schools with a professional certified Library Media Specialist are twice as likely to score higher on achievement tests, have higher reading scores and perform above average. (State studies in **Michigan**, Alaska, Minnesota). In Ohio 99.4% of 13,000 students in grade 3-12 surveyed in 2004 believed school libraries and their services helped them to become better learners.^v

A strong library media program includes a highly qualified professional who provides students and teachers with direct links to their information and instructional needs. As well as the teaching role, the professional Library Media Specialist provides access to a comprehensive curriculum-based collection of print and non print materials including books and databases. One Media Specialist in a school can reach across all subject areas, providing information access to all students and teachers, and sharing the latest and greatest in books, computer resources and periodical material.

In a world of information overload, the library media program is the connection to literacy. This is true both in recreational reading and in learning to assess what information is accurate, valid and reliable in print and on the Internet. Library media specialists are information professionals in a time when sources, forms and types of information keep changing. Today they are needed more than ever.

ⁱ *Guidelines for Michigan Library Media Programs*. 2003. Information Media Program Advisory Committee. 11 December, 2005. <http://mame.gen.mi.us/member%20resources/LMC_Guidelines.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ "School Library Media Studies on Achievement." Iowa Association of School Librarians. 10 December, 2005. <<http://www.iema-ia.org/IEMA119.html>>.

ⁱⁱⁱ "How School Librarians Help Kids." April 2000. Library Research Service. 11 December 2005. <<http://www.lrs.org/documents/lmcstudies/CO/execsumm.pdf>>.

^{iv} "School Libraries Work!" 2006. U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Service. 7 March, 2006. <http://www.scholastic.com/librarians/printables/downloads/slw_2006.pdf>.

^v Todd, Ross and Kuhlthau, Carol. "Student Learning through Ohio School Libraries: The Ohio Research Study." *Ohio Educational Library Media Association* (2004)