

# California's School Libraries Make a Difference

**Strong school libraries help give our students the best chance to succeed.**

California public schools with strong school library programs outperform those without such programs on the state's STAR tests. This is true regardless of the school community's parent education and poverty levels, ethnicity, and percentage of English language learners. Increases in the following library program elements correspond to increased STAR test scores at the elementary, middle school and high school levels:

- Total hours library open
- Total technology available through the library
- Total services provided by library staff
- Offering a program of curriculum-integrated information literacy instruction
- Informally instructing students in the use of resources
- Providing teachers with information about new resources
- Providing reference assistance to students and teachers

## **A strong school library program is one that provides**

- A full-time teacher librarian and a full time paraprofessional.
- A robust, up-to-date collection of digital, print and media resources with a budget to support it.
- Liberal access to the library's facilities, technology, and resources.

## **Greater Staffing = Stronger Impact**

Our research shows that the strongest relationship between school libraries and STAR test scores occurs at the high school level, which has, as a percentage, *over 3 ½ times* more fully-staffed libraries (a full-time teacher librarian and a full time clerk) than the middle schools, and *over 25 times* more fully staffed libraries than the elementary schools.

The school library program is a better predictor of scores on the high school English Language Arts STAR test than other school variables such as teacher experience and teacher salary. On the U.S. History test, the library program is a better predictor of scores than both school variables and community variables, including parent education, poverty, ethnicity, and percentage of English language learners.

Nearly every element of a high school library program positively correlates with STAR test scores, including all of the elements listed above, as well as

- Teacher librarian staffing levels
- Total staffing levels
- Budget
- Collection size

In elementary, middle school and high school libraries, teacher librarian staffing and total staffing are strongly related to the level of services provided. What's more, increases in library services are related to higher STAR test scores. Staffing is key in creating strong school libraries.

## **The bottom line? Strong school libraries help give our students the best chance to succeed.**

See Ph.D. dissertation by Doug Achterman, "Haves, Halves and Have-Nots: School Libraries and Student Achievement," University of North Texas, December, 2008.