

Research Pointing to the Importance of Access to Library Materials for Student Achievement

Is the Library Important?

Abstract: Three multivariate analyses, all controlling for the effects of poverty, confirm the importance of the library. Replicating McQuillan's analysis of 1992 NAEP scores, this study finds that access to books in school and public libraries was a significant predictor of 2007 fourth grade NAEP reading scores, as well as the difference between grade 4 and grade 8 2007 NAEP reading scores, suggesting that access is important for improvement after grade 4. Access (school/classroom libraries) was a significant predictor of scores on the PIRLS test, a reading test given to fourth graders in 40 countries.

Quotes:

Looking at scores from 1992, "...even after controlling for the effect of poverty, access to print was a significant and strong predictor of performance on the NAEP reading test. Those with more access did better." (p. 27)

Looking at scores from 2007, "Once again, poverty is a strong predictor of scores, and once again access to books makes an independent contribution to reading achievement." (p. 27)

NB: Access to books was measured as "a combination of books per student in school libraries and per capita total circulation in public libraries in each state." (p. 27)

Looking at predictors of eighth grade scores in 2007, grade four scores were a strong predictor, but poverty was a weak predictor. "Access to books...is a significant predictor of the difference in NAEP reading scores between grade 4 and grade 8. (p. 28)

"The effect of poverty on fourth grade reading is enormous, but access to books can contribute to fourth grade reading, regardless of poverty. The analysis also indicates that those who read better in grade four also read better in grade eight, but access to books can help here as well. This finding agrees with data showing that 'late intervention' in the form of recreational reading is not only possible but can be effective (Krashen & McQuillan, 2007)

Krashen, S., Lee, S., & McQuillan, J. (2012). Is the Library Important? Multivariate Studies at the National and International Level. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education* [Online], 8(1), 26-38.
Available at <http://jolle.coe.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Is-the-Library-Important.pdf>

Anything but Reading

Abstract: The article discusses the methods in improving students reading ability. The author states that one of the most effective ways to improve reading ability is to provide readers with interesting and comprehensible books. In addition, more access to books will increase the interests of students in reading. Moreover, the utilization of sustained silent reading will also result in better reading.

Quotes:

Looking at the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), analysis showed that “availability of a school library is a very strong predictor of reading scores – nearly as strong as the effect of poverty...This is remarkable. Not only is it consistent with other reports of the effectiveness of libraries, it is also independent of the effect of poverty.... This suggests that good libraries can help alleviate at least some of the problems of poverty.

Krashen, Stephen. "Anything but Reading." Knowledge Quest, vol. 37, no. 5, May/Jun2009, pp. 18-25.
EBSCOhost,
ezproxy.ilibrary.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tfh&AN=42324893&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

The Access Gap

Abstract: Stephen Krashen believes that schools can counter the effects of poverty in at least one area: access to books. However, little research has been done to determine whether students living in poverty have access to school library services comparable to those attending schools with low concentrations of students living in poverty. We examined the school library access gap; namely, the differences in school library characteristics (staffing, books added to collection, schedule, and number of days closed) in schools with various concentrations of students living in poverty. Alarming, we found that the students in most need--those attending schools with the highest concentrations of students living in poverty--had the fewest school library resources to draw on. Findings suggest that if we hope to close achievement gaps between high and low socioeconomic groups, we must attend to the access gap in school libraries in high- and low-poverty schools. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

Quotes:

Sixty-three percent of the lower-income children used the school library, compared with 40 percent of the students from higher-income families. There is cause for concern when economically disadvantaged students, who use the school library at a greater rate than their higher-income peers, might have less access to school libraries than students who are more affluent.

[About the state studies of school libraries done by Keith Curry Lance and others] The results from these studies consistently indicate that access to school libraries improves student achievement.

...in the Michigan study, he [Lance] found that increases in librarian and staff weekly hours resulted in improvements in seventh grade reading scores.

[In another study] Student achievement tended to increase as the number of hours the school library was open increased. High-performing schools were open an average of 36.3 hours per week, whereas low-performing schools were open an average of 28.7 hours per week – over 20 percent fewer hours per week.

Other characteristics of school libraries may also affect student achievement....students take more books out of school libraries that have larger collections and stay open longer....school libraries with flexible schedules had larger book circulation than those with fixed schedules....school library media

centers that were closed fewer days in the course of a year had larger book circulation than those closed for larger spans of time.

Students attending schools with lower levels of students living in poverty were significantly more likely to have access to a library with more than one full-time librarian than those students attending schools with high levels of students living in poverty.

On average, students attending schools with few peers living in poverty were likely to make use of a school library with over eighty hours of staffing available a week. Students who attended schools with over 50 percent of peers living in poverty had school libraries with only 61.9 hours, on average, of staffing per week. {This number of hours is MUCH lower in Shared System schools.}

We found that students who attended schools with high-poverty thresholds were likely to have about 600 volumes added to the collection per year. This stands in contrast to the almost 1,400 volumes added to collections at schools where less than 10 percent of the student body lived in poverty.

Students who need the most support had school libraries with significantly fewer staff persons, fewer new resources added each year, fixed schedules, and were closed almost a full week more than the schools with more affluent students.

School library media centers have the potential to help bridge the poverty achievement gap by narrowing the school library access gap and providing access to books and other resources.

Pribesh, Shana, et al. "The Access Gap: Poverty and Characteristics of School Library Media Centers." *Library Quarterly*, vol. 81, no. 2, Apr. 2011, pp. 143-160. EBSCOhost, ezproxy.ilibrary.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tfh&AN=60914577&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Save the Libraries!

Abstract: Discusses the importance of libraries to the transformation of literacy development. Goal of the transformation of libraries in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Qualities of excellent librarians; Challenges faced by school libraries.

Quotes:

School libraries have also fallen on hard times--victims, like their public counterparts, of budget cuts and an increased emphasis on technology over books. In a previous study (**Neuman & Celano**, 2001), we analyzed school libraries in both low-income and middle-income neighborhoods, assessing them in three categories: resources (including quantity and condition of books and computers), staffing, and availability. Our current findings show a similar, but sharper, trajectory of inequality for the neediest students.

In middle-income neighborhoods, school libraries averaged 12 books per student, with nearly all the books in good to excellent condition. This situation contrasted sharply with school libraries in low-

income neighborhoods, in which there were only two books--in either good or poor condition--per student. In addition, for every computer in the library in low-income schools, there were three in middle-income schools. Low-income schools had no trained school librarians; the typical school librarian in middle-income schools had a master's degree and 12 years of school experience. Finally, school libraries were open approximately three days a week for students in low-income neighborhoods compared with five days a week in the middle-income neighborhood schools (Neuman & Celano, 2001).

The emerging portrait shows that students likely to benefit most from school libraries were offered the poorest services and resources and the least access.

Neuman, Susan B. and Donna Celano. "Save the Libraries!." *Educational Leadership*, vol. 61, no. 6, Mar. 2004, pp. 82-85. EBSCOhost, ezproxy.ilibrary.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tfh&AN=12472267&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Building Brighter Futures

Quotes:

Limitless Libraries served 60,000 students in 2015-16 and delivered 131,000 materials to them. Middle and high school students were surveyed about their use of Limitless Libraries and the outcomes they experienced.

"Notably, 3 out of 5 responding students associated their LL use with three outcomes strongly associated with their success in school: improving or increasing their reading, finding information for their school work, and finding books not available in school libraries. "

CURRY LANCE, KEITH and ALLISON BARNEY. "Building Brighter Futures. (Cover Story)." *Teacher Librarian*, vol. 44, no. 2, Dec. 2016, pp. 18-22. EBSCOhost, ezproxy.ilibrary.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tfh&AN=120783493&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Book Deserts: The Consequences of Income Segregation on Children's Access to Print

Note: While not connected to the topic of school libraries and student achievement because the survey was conducted during the summer, this is a fascinating article about print items available to young readers in neighborhoods of three socioeconomic levels.

Abstract: We examine the influence of income segregation on a resource vital to young children's development: a family's access to books in early childhood. Income segregation reflects the growing economic segregation of neighborhoods for people living in privilege (1%) compared with those in poverty or near-poverty (20%). After describing recent demographic shifts, we examine access to print for children in six urban neighborhoods. Results indicate stark disparities in access to print for those living in concentrated poverty. We argue that such neighborhoods constitute "book deserts," which may seriously constrain young children's opportunities to come to school "ready to learn."

Quotation:

...families in these low-income communities will have to rely on the public libraries for books in the community, representing our country's only safety net for information literacy. While offering excellent services to children and their families, in some areas decreased funding has led to limited hours and curtailed services....in many low-income communities, demand has actually exceeded capacity placing a great strain on computer resources...and on family resources as well; parents are often resistant to check out books due to the potential library fines.

Neuman, Susan. "Book Deserts: The Consequences of Income Segregation on Children's Access to Print." Urban Education (2016).
