

Faculty Perceptions of Effective School Libraries

Student Learning Through Ohio School Libraries, Part 2: Faculty Perceptions of Effective School Libraries Ross J. Todd ; Carol C. Kulthau *School Libraries Worldwide* Seattle: Jan. 2005 Vol.11, Iss. 1; pg. 89, 22 pgs

This is the conclusion of the article.

School faculty do value the school library and do see it playing an important role in student learning in tangible ways. The extent and levels of help provided to the students in the quantitative analysis, which are strongest in terms of using computers, finding and locating information, and using information to complete school work, appear to triangulate nicely with evidence of help as identified in the qualitative analysis. This evidence focuses on the outcomes of library helps such as quality products that reflect effective researching and engaging with information meaningfully to construct new understandings, soundly developed research skills, and the capable use of information technology to meet information needs. Ranked lower in the quantitative analysis were reading dimensions, independent learning, and academic achievement dimensions, and these correspondingly provided fewer statements of evidence. It is also acknowledged that reading for pleasure and independent learning often take place away from the school environment and not under the direct observation of school faculty.

It is clear in this study that the perceived value and contribution of a school library is not a given by virtue of the presence of a library facility and a credentialed school librarian in the school building. Faculty say that many learning opportunities abound in a school library and that it takes effort, commitment, and shared leadership on the part of the whole school to realize these opportunities and to identify and celebrate the learning outcomes that flow from them. This study provides insights into how this shared leadership may play out. First, the provision of a strong informational infrastructure, centering on diverse sources in multiple formats targeted to learning levels, learning styles, and interest levels, and a backbone of state-of-the-art information technology are fundamental. The faculty see these as critical to effective learning in an Information Age school, and they form the backbone for meaningful learning initiatives. second, the transformational role of the school librarian working as an information-learning specialist ensures that this backbone enables students to engage purposefully and meaningfully with information in order to learn successfully. The faculty value this instructional intervention, particularly when it is a shared and negotiated process and where the library becomes part of the classroom. Part of creating effective school libraries is a credentialed school librarian who has the pedagogical background to engage in shared instructional initiatives to help students learn and achieve. Faculty in this study identify this as a key element to making visible the helps of the school library. The role of information-learning specialist embeds a range of expertise. First is an instructional designer who creates and delivers information literacy instruction at class, group and individual levels. second is an educational partner-leader who collaborates, negotiates, and plans with

school administrators, teachers, students, and even parents to implement effective information-learning throughout the school curriculum. Third is a school library program administrator who negotiates, plans, and implements a whole-school program that articulates the integration of information, transformation, and formation, as well as the managerial and organizational dimensions of the role. Fourth is as a partner-leader in the provision of learning-oriented professional development targeted to the whole-school success of learning goals. Fifth is facilitating all stakeholders to engage in sustained and action-oriented discussions in the context of continual improvement of the necessary resources, technology, and instructional and staffing requirements needed to maximize learning opportunities through school libraries.