

**The Public Library's Role in Student Success: a Planning Grant
to Determine Best Practices for Multnomah County Library**

Final Report
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INTRODUCTION

The Public/School Library Planning Project was a one-year planning project funded in 2001 by a Library Services and Technology (LSTA) grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) distributed through the Oregon State Library. The largest public library system in the state, Multnomah County Library serves the students of eight public school systems in addition to numerous private school students and homeschooling families. This project materialized out of a concern for students' access to quality library services and a desire to evaluate and enhance the role of the public library in student success.

In February 2001 Multnomah County Library hired two librarians, Vailey Oehlke, a Multnomah County Library employee, and Mary Bush, previously with the Multnomah Education Service District, to coordinate and implement the project. Their charge was to investigate the public library's role in student success and identify best practices for Multnomah County Library in its efforts to contribute to student achievement. The scope of the project was limited to the needs of students from the eight public school districts in Multnomah County.

The connection between libraries and reading success is evident. Students' reading skills are positively affected by having access to books and time to read them. Reading success, in turn, contributes to overall academic achievement.¹ In addition, research such as that conducted recently in Oregon school libraries by Keith Curry Lance supports a correlation between strong school library programs and increased reading achievement.² Multnomah County Library is an important partner in the reading success of this county's students.

Ginnie Cooper, Director of Libraries, charged the project coordinators with answering three questions:

1. What is the current state of school libraries in Multnomah County?
2. What are some models of ways in which public and school libraries are working together?
3. What might the public library do to help schools and school libraries and what would it cost?

¹ Krashen, S. (1993). *The Power of reading*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited; McQuillan, J. (1998). *The Literacy crisis: False claims, real solutions*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. NOTE: See www.cascadelink.org/ear/pslp for this project's literature review "Public and School Library Cooperation: A Selective Annotated Bibliography."

² Lance, K.C., Rodney, M.J., Hamilton-Pennell, C. (2001). *Good schools have school librarians: Oregon school librarians collaborate to improve academic achievement*. Oregon Educational Media Association.

1. What is the current state of school libraries in Multnomah County?

We gathered data regarding school libraries in Multnomah County through surveys and focus groups.

School Library Survey Results

The grant stipulated that we assess the current status of school libraries in Multnomah County. We wanted to identify those areas where we could concentrate our support through services, funding or a combination of both. At the present time, there is no state level organization responsible for school library standards or statistics. Therefore, we conducted our own survey in February/March 2001 of school libraries, the results of which we entered into a database for analysis. Of the 166 surveys distributed, 110 (66%) were returned. Many of our questions focused on the qualities of a strong library media program outlined in the research literature.³

Several factors make us wary of representing this survey's findings as research-based conclusions:

- We learned, after the fact, that as a tool the survey was simply not rigid enough, which compromised its statistical validity.⁴
- Inconsistencies in reporting skewed the data. For instance, not all school libraries have separate budgets for books or even any budget at all, making accurate comparisons impossible.
- Many of the school library staff completing the survey had little or no knowledge of the amount and distribution of their libraries' funding.
- Frequent and recent staff turnovers made it difficult to acquire historical data.

Budget

- School libraries are inadequately funded and staffed. This is true across districts and grade levels.
- There is a wide disparity in school library funding among districts as well as among schools within the same district. Budgets range from zero to \$37,000.
- Of the school libraries with a separate budget for books:
 - High school book budgets range from \$.63 to \$10.79 per student.
 - Middle school book budgets range from \$2.13 to \$11.11 per student.
 - Elementary school book budgets range from \$.90 to \$17.96 per student.
 - Average per pupil spending on library books (these figures are for books only. They do not include spending on electronic resources or magazine subscriptions):

³ According to Lance (Ibid, p. xii), a strong library media program is one:

- that is adequately staffed, stocked and funded,
- whose staff are actively involved leaders in their school's teaching and learning enterprise,
- whose staff have collegial, collaborative relationships with classroom teachers, and
- that embraces networked information technology.

⁴ One of the recommendations that resulted from this experience is that we consider employing some version of the NCES survey for this purpose. (See Recommendations Level II.4, p.11.)

	QEM* Standard	ALL DISTRICTS	NATIONAL
ELEMENTARY	\$12.00	\$5.01	\$6.75
MIDDLE SCHOOL	\$18.00	\$6.27	\$7.30
HIGH SCHOOL	\$34.00	\$4.62	\$6.25
AVG ALL LEVELS	\$21.33	\$5.30	\$6.77

***Quality Education Model:** The Oregon Quality Education Model is helping lawmakers establish the costs of providing the education programs necessary for Oregon's children to meet the goals of the Education Act of the 21st Century. It addresses recommended levels of per pupil spending on library books. (<http://dbi.ode.state.or.us/qualityed>)

Collection

- At one middle school the average copyright date for the entire collection is 1982; its books on the hard sciences (Dewey range 500-599) average a copyright date of 1976. In one high school, the average copyright date for the entire collection is 1981; its books on the hard sciences average a copyright date of 1982.
- 64% of school libraries in all districts reported having no book on the Republic of Congo.
- The average copyright date of the books on the Congo (a country which has undergone enormous change in the past five years) is 1981.

Focus Group Results

- School Administrator focus groups: In September 2001 we conducted two focus groups of administrators from elementary schools and secondary schools from all eight districts in the county. Our findings:
 - Many principals are unaware of the extent of Multnomah County Library's services to schools, students, and educators.
 - Those principals who are aware of our services take advantage of them frequently.
 - Some of the areas in which the principals feel their school libraries are lacking include collection currency, books in other languages, professional materials for educators, and staffing.
 - From our observations, it was evident that the elementary level principals were much more intimately aware of their school libraries than of the public library.
- Teacher focus groups: In October 2001 we conducted two focus groups of teachers from elementary and secondary schools from all eight districts in the county. Our findings:
 - Again, many of the teachers are unaware of Multnomah County Library's services to schools, students, and educators.
 - They lamented the lack of professional resources in their school libraries.
 - Most of the criticism about their school libraries focused on outdated collections and cramped or uncomfortable space.
 - Transportation is a significant barrier to student use of the public library.

- **Media Specialists Focus Groups:** In December 2001 we conducted two focus groups of media specialists from elementary and secondary schools from all eight districts in the county. Our findings:
 - Most of the participants prefer to be referred to as “teacher-librarians,” emphasizing their role as educators.
 - The teacher-librarians felt that most teachers and administrators do not truly understand what they can provide to students and lamented limited contact with teachers, particularly in a co-teaching capacity.
 - They are concerned about budget issues and the tenuous nature of their jobs. Many fear that expanding the public library’s role could send the message to district officials that certified media specialists are no longer needed in the schools.
 - In order for genuine collaboration to occur between Multnomah County Library and the county schools, teacher-librarians will need assurance that doing so will not lead to their extinction.
 - There was almost unanimous agreement that one of the best things Multnomah County Library could do for teacher-librarians is to advocate for quality school library programs that include certified media specialists.
 - Unlike participants in the teacher and administrator focus groups, most of the teacher-librarians viewed their school libraries very favorably, though they did articulate concern about outdated collections.
 - Most feel overwhelmed by clerical duties that impinge on time for their professional responsibilities.
 - Teacher-librarians were much more aware of Multnomah County Library’s services to students and educators than were the administrators and teachers.
 - Teacher-librarians prefer to be the primary contact between Multnomah County Library and the schools.

Student Surveys

We conducted a survey of students (grades 2-12) in 12 of the public library’s 18 locations from May 29-June 3, 2001. Of the 308 students who completed the survey:

- 228 (84%) come to the public library for a school-related reason.
- 167 (54%) come to use the Internet.
- 58 (19%) come to meet with friends.
- 77 (25%) had used the public library more than seven times in the past month.
- 184 (60%) use the library after school hours for school-related reasons.

We also distributed a student survey in 13 schools in the county during October 2001. The students ranged from grade three through grade 12. We received over 1000 survey responses. The data consistently supports the fact that students are using the public library for both schoolwork (55%) and for pleasure reading (61%). 93% of our respondents had a public library card, attesting to the success of the public library’s library card campaigns in the schools. In addition, survey

responses indicated that students use their school libraries frequently, appreciate their school librarians, and are familiar and comfortable with the school library.

2. What are some models for ways public libraries are working with school libraries?

- Redwood City, California: a school liaison works collaboratively for both the public library and the public schools. This position is jointly funded. The public library provides the salary and the school district provides space and equipment. Schools purchase books through the public library using the library's book vendor purchasing discounts.
- CLASP (Connecting Libraries and Schools Project of the three New York City public library systems: Queens, Brooklyn and New York Public): Each public library system receives \$15.43 per K-8 student from the City of New York to develop programs, provide outreach to schools, offer trainings for school librarians and teachers, and provide all students with library cards.
- State of California: The California Public School Library Protection Fund (SB1389) and the the Budget Act (AB1656) fund school libraries at the rate of \$28.00 per student. A construction bond approved in March 2000 offers priority funding to public libraries that have a relationship with a school in their service area.
- The Multnomah County Library supports the academic needs of students by providing a variety of programs and services every day. Some of these are:
 - Collection: As of October 2001, the library owned approximately 475,000 books for school age youth (K-12). We know from our student surveys that students use the public library's collection extensively for their school work to supplement the resources of their school libraries.
 - In our libraries: Youth librarians staff all libraries and volunteer homework helpers are available at all branches during selected non-school hours to help students with their homework.
 - School Corps: A team of four librarians provides training in the schools to students, educators and school library staff. Teachers and library staff may request bibliographies and webliographies related to specific assignments via the phone or email. In the 2000/01 school year alone, School Corps services reached 75,383 students, teachers and media center staff in Multnomah County.
 - Books 2 U: Staff and volunteers visit schools and other locations (including summer school sites and after school care) to encourage and inspire students to read for personal enjoyment. This program

targets specific schools based mainly on reading test scores. Books 2 U operates primarily in elementary schools but recently implemented a pilot program at a Portland middle school and is considering the possibility of adding more middle schools in the future.

- Databases: The library provides free access to a variety of subscription databases. The cost of just 14 of the databases especially useful for students and educators is nearly \$140,000 per year. We know that many school libraries base their database subscription decisions on what is available at no charge from the public library.

3. What might the public library do to help schools and school libraries and what would it cost?

As required by the grant, the project coordinators developed a list of recommendations for library administrators to consider. They are organized into broad levels of resource allocation, from least amount of resources required (Level I), to greatest amount (Level III).

I. LEVEL ONE: Recommendations at this level would result in minimal if any additional cost.

1. Provide Advocacy

It was clear from the teacher-librarian focus groups that an effective strategy the library could pursue to assuage the threat teacher-librarians perceive from the library is to establish Multnomah County Library as an ally of school library programs.

- a) Provide a strong voice of advocacy for school libraries from the library administration level.
- b) Encourage staff and administration to advocate for school libraries among their colleagues and peers in professional organizations.
- c) Encourage library staff to advocate for school libraries within their communities.

2. Add and Enhance Programs and Services

- a) Open appropriate Multnomah County Library staff development opportunities to teachers and teacher-librarians.
 - Examples include “new and notable literature,” literature award workshops, reader’s advisory and booktalking workshops, training on library resources, and book group workshops.
- b) Consider forming an advisory group composed of teacher-librarians and other educators from around the county. The purpose of such a group would be two-fold: 1) to solicit input regarding existing or proposed school-related services; and 2) to create a formal channel of communication which could, ultimately, enhance the relationship between the schools and

the public library. This group could potentially advise the library regarding any of its services to students and schools (e.g., School Corps, Books 2 U, LIBROS, Summer Reading, etc.).

3. Concentrate on Low SES Schools

We recommend that a major focus of our outreach efforts be on those schools with a high percentage of low SES students and low reading test scores. We already use these factors to identify schools that receive Books 2 U services.

II. LEVEL TWO: Recommendations at this level would likely result in additional cost but are still within the mission of the public library.

1. Improve Communication

Through numerous feedback mechanisms, we have determined that communication between Multnomah County Library and the schools in our service area must be addressed. The extent of our services to schools is not widely known and we must investigate and implement innovative methods to reach all schools in our eight school districts. We heard from focus group participants that a variety of distribution methods is the most effective. Some like email, most do not read flyers, and many are responsive to personal telephone calls and visits.

- a) Establish stronger relationships between neighborhood libraries and local schools.
 - Encourage branch youth librarians to establish stronger relationships with schools in their communities by more active and frequent personal communication such as on-site visits, telephone calls, emails, etc.
 - Foster greater trust by being respectful, listening, and making an effort to understand the culture of education.
- b) Create an email distribution list of school staff. This may include teachers, teacher-librarians, library assistants, administrators and others.
 - Announce Multnomah County Library programs of interest to list members.
 - Announce staff development opportunities open to members at no charge.
 - Use the list as a marketing tool to promote library services and programs.
 - Use the list to provide information for school newsletters distributed to parents.
 - Use the list to distribute informational articles on new databases and resources, bibliographies and webliographies of topical interest to teachers and students.

- c) Create job-shadowing opportunities.
This arrangement would enhance communication and break down some of the perceived “cultural” barriers that inhibit collaboration and cooperation, and contribute to a better understanding of the unique roles of the public librarian and the teacher-librarian.
- To encourage and support the efforts of branch and Central librarians in developing relationships with their neighboring schools, we recommend investigating informal job-shadowing opportunities between public and school librarians. Given their inflexible schedules, it may well be that teacher-librarians are less likely to visit the public library than the reverse.

2. Improve Collection

The purpose of this recommendation is to assist schools by enhancing our collection based on the schools’ demographic and curricular needs. Ideally, this would be a collaborative effort involving staff from the eight county school districts and Multnomah County librarians and selection staff.

- a) Enhance collection in non-English language materials.
Participants in every focus group identified the high percentage of non-English language speaking students as a significant barrier to student achievement.
- Establish a committee of teacher-librarians, reading specialists, ESL teachers and Multnomah County librarians to do joint collection development in non-English language materials. The work of this committee would inform the collection development of the public and school libraries.
 - Use school demographic studies from all eight school districts to identify the preponderant language needs of each public library location.
 - Centennial School District (district office: 503.760.7990) may be a potential model as they recently received a major grant with which a team of educators selected non-English language materials to be added to the school libraries in that district.
- b) Enhance our collection in curricular areas.
Materials selectors should consider the Oregon Content Standards and Benchmarks (www.open.k12.or.us/openc02.html) when selecting materials for the public library’s collection. An ideal scenario would be one in which a team of teacher-librarians and public librarians plan collaboratively to select materials that are aligned with specific benchmarks and content standards.

3. Add Programs and Services

Multnomah County Library must take the lead in providing services directly to schools and not expect that schools will approach us for services. Schools

are understaffed, under-funded and school schedules are inflexible. Many of the library's services can be marketed through the email distribution list.

a) Present booktalking programs.

Implement joint booktalks with teacher-librarians that are offered to educators in the schools. These could be conducted quarterly and serve as a resource to learn about new and notable literature. These may also include training for library staff and educators on conducting booktalks.

b) Extend checkout periods for teachers.

One of the most frequent requests we received throughout the year was to offer teachers extended checkout periods.

- Determine a reasonable time period that will balance the needs of teachers and students with those of our other patrons.

c) Establish classroom deposit collections.

School library collections are typically inadequate and teachers often require supplementary materials for their students. In the student survey distributed throughout Multnomah County Library branches, 84% of the students indicated that they visited the public library for school-related reasons. Providing this service would save substantial time for educators as well as School Corps librarians, and would improve the quality of resources available to students.

- At the beginning of each term, Multnomah County librarians would meet with teachers and teacher-librarians to discuss, plan and select a series of classroom collections. Teachers share a schedule of the content areas being studied in the upcoming term, and Multnomah County librarians would create "packages" of materials around those content areas (e.g., Native Americans, endangered species). These collections could be organized in a similar fashion as the "In the Bag" collections which have picture books packaged around a particular concept (seasons, shapes, etc.). Teachers could check out the collection of books (which may also include a webliography or pathfinder) and have them in their classrooms as additional resources.
- Extended checkout privileges (see II.3.b above) enable teachers to keep these deposit collections for the duration of the assignment period.

d) "School-a-Week"

This is a recommendation from one of the participants of our focus groups. It would allow us to focus on individual schools and concentrate our services in a more coordinated manner.

- We cull from the database the names of low SES schools. Ideally, from that list we negotiate a schedule for the school year by contacting the teacher-librarian or staff person associated with those schools.
- In collaboration with educators at the school we devise a program of services that might include booktalks, a mini-library card campaign, a literacy promotion campaign, School Corps services or branch library tours.

4. Survey school libraries

One of the grant requirements was to “develop a method by which Multnomah County Library can annually obtain current, comparable data about each of the local school district’s school library media programs on a school-by-school basis.” We believe that a standardized survey already used and tested is more practical than developing a new survey. By using the National Center for Education Statistics’ *Public School Library Media Center Questionnaire: Schools and Staffing Survey*, school libraries in Multnomah County and Oregon can compare their own data against national standards. This survey is available for use by the public and has already been validated by stringent research methods. This will ensure accurate and consistent reporting of school library staffing, funding and collections.

- a) Create a team consisting of teacher-librarians, Oregon Educational Media Association representatives, Oregon State Library staff and Oregon Department of Education staff to modify the existing survey for statewide and local use.
- b) Multnomah County Library will annually distribute the modified version of the *Public School Library Media Center Questionnaire* throughout Multnomah County schools, compile statistics and disseminate results.
- c) Create a database into which survey responses can be entered and analyzed and from which results can be disseminated.
- d) We recommend that the Oregon Department of Education’s unique school identifier be used in all data collection.

5. Modify our Web site

We know that educators and administrators are unclear as to which programs provide the school-related services they need. Adding a link for school services to the library’s main Web page would help establish the library as a partner in support of student achievement in Multnomah County. In order to facilitate seamless and simple access to school-related services at Multnomah County Library, we recommend the following:

- a) Consider replacing the link to Homework Center that currently resides on the front page with a broader link name such as “services for schools, teachers and students.”
- b) From this new link, patrons could choose from a menu of services, one of which will continue to be Homework Center.

- c) The menu would list all the school-related services available at Multnomah County Library such as booktalks, training, tours, curriculum support tools, and a list of the classroom deposit collections (II.3.c).
- d) The service selected would determine which program the patron is linked to. For example, if a teacher-librarian selects a library catalog training in the classroom, the request will go to School Corps. If the teacher-librarian wants a training in a library agency, the request goes to a page where one enters the school name and is then directed to the community librarian responsible for that school. Requests for curriculum support tools such as webliographies or bibliographies would take the patron directly to the School Corps' request page.
- e) We could introduce and promote this new feature through our regular visits to schools as well as through the email distribution list (II.1.b).

III. LEVEL THREE: At this level, the public library would be committing substantial resources of either funding, additional staff or both.

1. Enhance school library collections

We have adopted the Oregon Quality Education Model as the potential standard on which we are basing the following recommendation⁵:

- a) Provide funding to K-8 school libraries in all eight school districts in Multnomah County based on the Oregon Quality Education Model of \$12.00 per student at the elementary level and \$18.00 per student at the middle school level for a total cost of approximately \$900,000 annually.
- b) As part of this recommendation, a team of teachers, teacher-librarians, reading specialists and Multnomah County Library staff will develop a list of recommended titles from which school libraries may purchase materials, receiving the public library discount rate.
- c) In addition, the school library must be staffed by a certified media specialist.
- d) An alternative scenario that would require less money is to consider conducting the above recommendation as a pilot project in two or three schools only. The schools would be chosen based on the number of low SES students, and the number of students reading below benchmark levels. A certified media specialist in the school library would be a requirement in this scenario as well.

2. Add programs and services

- a) School Delivery Project
Though this pilot project was considered unsuccessful at Clear Creek Middle School and Marshall High School, we believe it is still a priority recommendation. This service was requested repeatedly by educators

⁵ Originally, when this model was first conceived, we considered a supplemental levy in order to fund it. However, given the current political and financial climate, this proposal was abandoned in the late Fall of 2001.

and administrators throughout the year of our project. Focus group participants indicated that cultural differences between the public and school libraries may have contributed to contrary interpretations of the project's success. We recommend that it be re-instated as a pilot project and that we advertise it broadly, outlining the commitments and requirements for participating schools (they must have a certified media specialist, be willing to collaboratively provide training to students and staff, and be willing to be actively involved in the project's design, including developing evaluation methods) and allowing them to apply. One of the major barriers during the initial pilot was delivering materials to the schools. Scheduling and coordinating delivery was problematic because of the different schedules and expectations of the public library and the schools and students.

- Using a train-the-trainer model, train students and educators in using the online catalog and reserving materials to be sent to the schools. Students and educators could then provide this training in their own schools.
- Form a team to determine realistic standards by which we would measure the success of the program. In the initial project, these standards were established by the public library. We recommend that they be jointly created by staff from the public library and the schools participating in the project. There are cultural differences that will contribute to varying perceptions of the project's success.
- We recommend investigating the courier services of the Multnomah Education Service District and the Portland Public Schools again. Should these be unavailable, consider investigating a private delivery service such as the one used periodically by School Corps.

b) Reorganize internally

School-related services available from Multnomah County Library are currently scattered throughout several programs and agencies. There is potential duplication of services by School Corps, branch youth librarians and other programs serving students and schools, such as LIBROS and Early Childhood Resources. In addition, we hear that there is some confusion on the part of our patrons about who is responsible for providing which services. Some of the confusion may be ameliorated by a new Web link to school-related services (see II.5).

We also recommend that all services to schools be input into one centralized schedule and one centralized database. Ideally, an existing staff person will be responsible for maintaining the centralized schedule and database (see Database, below). It is the responsibility of each separate program to maintain the schedule and enter its own data. Both the schedule and the database can be accessed from any library location. Having a centralized database and schedule will identify those schools

currently under-served and avoid duplication of multiple services to one school or district. It would also ensure that all school-related services provided by Multnomah County Library could be clearly analyzed and reported.

c) Create a database

Each program or agency would continue to be responsible for its own record keeping, but data would be entered into a centralized database so that a complete picture of services to schools can readily be assessed. A database of schools served by Central and branches has already been created by Jennifer May, administrative secretary, and can be used as the foundation for the centralized database. We recommend adding one more field to that database: the “school identifier” assigned to each school by the Oregon Department of Education. This prevents confusion when school names are entered in a variety of formats. Having the unique ODE identifier would also make it easier to look at data connections in the future. ODE maintains a database of information on test scores, demographics and school information used frequently by Multnomah County library programs for statistical purposes.

We recommend using the Summer Reading Program database as a model for the school services database. Fred Davis, fiscal specialist, created and maintains the Summer Reading Program database and would be the expert to consult for this new database. The core database would be the only one that needs to be updated with school information such as addresses, contact names and directory information. By assigning the new school identifier field to all current tables and databases being maintained by School Corps and other school related programs, the information in Jennifer’s database could be linked to each program’s data. This avoids having to enter duplicate information into more than one database or table. Queries could be run against the main table by each of the separate programs. For example, if School Corps members wanted to know which of the schools they are scheduling has recently been served by Books 2 U, they could query the master database and the table for Books 2 U to obtain that information. If a request is made to provide a list of all schools served by Multnomah County Library in the last year by program and date, a query could be run that links all programs by the school name and dates served.

3. Create a School Services Coordinator position

We suggest creating a staff position under which coordination of all student/school-related library services are arranged. Such a position would address many of the communication and internal organization issues related to our services to schools. One of the concerns we have heard repeatedly during the course of this project is that in addition to not knowing of the many services the library offers, many teachers, administrators and educators do not know who

to contact regarding these services. Having one person serve as that contact would facilitate their use of our services. Ideally, this person would not necessarily provide direct service to the schools, but would serve as a sort of marketer/coordinator for the library, attending school staff meetings, maintaining contact with school boards and school administrators and coordinating the library's services to schools in an efficient and effective manner. Among other things, this person would be responsible for coordinating:

- a) joint training opportunities (I.2.a)
- b) the email distribution list (II.1.b)
- c) job shadowing opportunities for staff (II.1.c)
- d) the joint public/school library committee that would work on non-English language collection development (II.2.a)
- e) joint booktalking programs (II.3.a)
- f) extended checkout periods for teachers (II.3.b)
- g) the annual survey of school libraries (II.4)
- h) the school delivery project (III.2.a)
- i) any internal reorganization of library services to schools (III.2.b)
- j) the database (III.2.c)
- k) the "School-a-Week" project (III.2.d)

Bigger Vision

Multnomah County Library is not solely responsible for the implementation of the following recommendations. However, as the largest public library in the state, we consider it important that the library endorse the following:

1. Programs and Services

We encourage the Oregon State Library, the Oregon Library Association and the Oregon Educational Media Association to continue to work toward state-wide networking, statewide consortium purchasing of electronic resources, and statewide document delivery.

2. Staffing

School districts should re-instate district level library/media coordinators to monitor, administer and advocate for their school libraries.

3. Standards

All libraries in Oregon should advocate for school library standards and legislation. We recommend those standards require certified media specialists in all schools and funding based on the Oregon Quality Education Model.

4. Future Direction

We encourage the OLA/OEMA Committee on School/Public Library Cooperation to continue the work begun with this planning grant. We hope that it considers these recommendations a foundation for further study and implementation. This committee would be an ideal venue within which to modify and distribute the school library media survey, work toward legislation for school library program

standards and for developing guidelines for collaboration that can be replicated throughout Oregon.

CONCLUSION

School libraries in Multnomah County public schools are in bad shape. We know this from surveys we distributed throughout the 166 schools, from state and nationwide data, and from research studies done by other educators and librarians.

There is currently no legislative body in Oregon responsible for standards for school libraries. There are no standards for school library collections. Site-based management at the local school level has created vast disparities among school libraries even within the same district. Many school libraries have no funding for books. We have seen the devastation to school libraries that property tax limitations created in California and are deeply concerned that it is happening to our school libraries here in Multnomah County.

The public library values its role in our young people's reading success. School-aged youth are among the highest users of our services and collections. Surveys we conducted throughout the project year repeatedly document the fact that students use the public library for school-related needs. Research demonstrates a strong correlation between access to a wide variety of books, self-choice in reading selection, free time to read, and increased reading test scores (see bibliography, www.cascadelink.org/ear/pslp/). Evaluating the efficacy of the public library in terms of its contribution to student academic success, particularly reading success, remains challenging. We know that the public library, with its collection of over 475,000 items for school-age youth and its myriad services aimed at students, plays a vital role in the academic and reading success of this county's young people. However, many disparate variables, such as the home environment, mobility rates, poverty, and parents' education levels contribute to a student's preparedness to learn. Keith Curry Lance recently applied for (but did not receive) an LSTA grant with which he planned to investigate the correlation between the public library and students' reading scores. This type of data is not only elusive, but is typically costly and somewhat inconclusive.

After all of our research, however, it seems appropriate to say that more substantial and structured collaboration between the public library and school libraries, using the recommendations outlined in this report, can only improve our students' academic and reading success.

For more information, links, an annotated bibliography and related documents, please see our Web site:

<http://www.cascadelink.org/ear/pslp/>

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