

Krashen has found that there is no research that supports a connection between reading scores and computers. If the money currently being spent on computers in our schools were invested, he says, the interest generated would fund school libraries!

Jim Trelease, another researcher, found that many students have one book ("a Home-Run Book") that hooked them on reading. Krashen's research found that this is true and that one successful literary experience can be an antidote to all the negative literary experiences like skills-building exercises.

Krashen is adamant that frequent testing of students is not the way to get the readings scores higher - that is like frequently weighing an animal to make it grow faster. The answer is to feed: food for the animal, books for the students.

Krashen advocates spending money on school libraries to provide books that students will read. Students enjoy reading for pleasure (FVR) and will improve all their literacy skills, when given the opportunity and the food: great books and time for FVR! This was the powerful but simple message that we came to hear. We succeeded and so did Stephen Krashen! ■ ■ ■

OLA took advantage of Krashen's engagement at the Super Conference to call a press conference to bring his expertise to the question of the role school libraries play in reading programs and in the literacy of children in our schools (see the sidebar).

Krashen's book, The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research, is in stock at the Ontario Library Association Store.. It may be ordered on line or by toll free phone 1-866-873-9867.

Cheryl Dinnin holds the Publication Portfolio on the OSLA Council and is teacher-librarian at Caradoc Central and Parkview Schools in London.

THE OLA PRESS CONFERENCE WITH STEPHEN KRASHEN

OLA President Mike Ridley chaired a press conference at the Convention Centre to take advantage of the expert evidence available. Centring on the crisis in school libraries and the impact on reading, literacy and learning opportunities for children, the media event featured Dr. Stephen Krashen, People for Education's Annie Kidder and former OSLA President Liz Kerr from the Kawartha-Pine Ridge District School Board.

Liz Kerr provided background information about the cutbacks in school libraries since the Social Contract years and the diminishing time allocated to teacher-librarians. All of this has resulted in decreased information studies programs for students and low morale in the teacher-librarians in some boards.

Dr. Stephen Krashen stated that research shows that cutting spending on libraries is the worst mistake in education! The most powerful way to get children to read, he said, was to provide access to books. In meetings with school and board administrators, he always pushes for school library improvement. Recent research has shown that there is a strong correlation between reading scores and the quality of the school library.

Annie Kidder again shared results of People for Education's survey of Ontario schools, in which only 18% of schools have a full-time teacher-librarian. Removing teacher-librarians and their programs and closing school libraries are actions that eliminate some children's only access to books and information skills. This is more evidence of the crisis!

Mike Ridley reminded everyone that every dollar spent on libraries contributes to the long-term vision we have for our future citizens. The press conference is one of a series of events being pursued by the OLA Board of Directors to bring attention to the crisis facing children in our schools. ■ ■ ■