

# Keith Curry Lance: The Impact of School Libraries on Academic Achievement

by Esther Rosenfeld



In the past two years three reports on the impact of school libraries on academic achievement have been published. These related studies (Alaska 1999, Pennsylvania 1999, and Colorado 2000) confirm the finding of an earlier Colorado study done in 1993. This first Colorado study linked higher reading test scores to the level of school library program development (staffing, collection size and quality, technology integration, funding, school library program, and leadership and collaborative activities of school library staff).

Keith Curry Lance, Director of the Library Research Service in Denver, provided attendees in this session with substantial detail on the methodology for the studies and highlighted the common and specific findings in all the studies.

All four studies show that:

- Teacher-librarians can and do make a difference in the level of academic achievement by students.
- The support and cooperation of teachers and principals is essential.
- Teacher-librarians need support staff who free them from clerical tasks and allow them to be key people for teaching and learning in the school.

- Teacher-librarians have a dual teaching role as teachers of information literacy to students and as in-service leaders to teachers.
- Successful programs extend school library services and information literacy beyond the school library's walls (by using technology and by co-operating with other libraries).
- The effects of school library programs are not explained away by school differences such as teacher-pupil ratios, per pupil expenditures, and teacher or student characteristics.
- The effects of school library programs are not explained away by community differences such as adult educational attainment, income differences, and race or ethnicity.

Dr. Lance gave an overview of the original Colorado study and explained that the motivations for the more recent studies were twofold. First, there was a need to see if the original Colorado study findings could be replicated in other states, with standards-based tests, and over a period of time. Second, the researchers wanted to expand the original study to demonstrate the value of flexible scheduling, to identify specific