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A relationship between library skills instruction and NJLA test scores

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A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIBRARY SKILLS INSTRUCTION AND NJLA TEST SCORES

by
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ABSTRACT

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A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIBRARY SKILLS AND NJLA TEST SCORES
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The purpose of this study was to determine the level of academic success of fourth grade students who experience regularly scheduled library instruction as measured by the language arts test scores on the annual New Jersey state achievement tests. After extensive research was completed, several articles from such authors as K. C. Lance and L. Starr were chosen as part of this study. In addition, Scholastic's research paper entitled *School Libraries Work* which contained many additional studies on the chosen topic was read and summarized in this proposal. Following the above research, three research questions were developed along with a plan of action.

A survey was sent out by way of e-mail, containing 10 questions. This survey was delivered to school library media specialists serving 108 elementary schools throughout counties of southern New Jersey. With approximately one-third of the schools responding, tallies and analysis of their responses were made. Using these tallies, graphs and charts were developed as part of the analysis done for this study. Results of this study did not provide strong evidence linking the impact or affect of library instruction on fourth grade students' academic success.

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

Special thanks go to Dr. Shontz and Dr. Willett for sharing their expertise in the field of Library Science. Their expertise has not only given me an appreciation for this field but has enabled me to successfully complete the course work needed to obtain my degree

I must also extend an even greater thanks to my husband, Frank who has always allowed me to follow and fulfill my dreams. Without him and the support of my children, Frank and Kathleen, this dream would have never become a reality.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

According to information obtained on the American Library Association (ALA, 2007) issues and alerts Web site, which deals with political and educational issues with regards to school and public libraries, multiple studies affirmed that there was a clear link between school library media programs that were staffed by a school library media specialist and student academic achievement. Across the United States, research has shown that students in schools with school libraries learn more, get better grades and score higher on standardized tests than their peers in schools without school libraries.

With the NCLB (*No Child Left Behind*, 2001) federal mandate, great importance has been placed on using standardized state test scores to show AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) results for each student and school. Principals, now feeling the pressure for their school to pass, are taking new avenues to achieve success. As stated above, results of research in states other than New Jersey, indicated that students get better grades and score higher on standardized tests where school libraries and school media specialists are involved with the student's education.

Purpose of the Study and Hypothesis

Hypothesis: Fourth grade students who participate in regularly scheduled library skills instruction taught by a certified SLMS (school library media specialist) score higher on the language arts portion of the New Jersey state achievement test.

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of academic success of fourth grade students who experience regularly scheduled library instruction as measured by the language arts test scores on the annual New Jersey state achievement tests. A questionnaire was sent to selected school media specialists in a given socio-economic category that inquired if their school offered library instruction classes on a regular basis to their 4^{th} grade classes. The results of the survey were then compared to the scores from the language arts portion of the annual state achievement test results of those schools participating.

Research Questions

The following research questions were the premise on which this research and the questionnaire were based. With regards to the school library media specialist, it was important to find out what library skills they taught to their fourth grade students. As to their schedule and curriculum, it was necessary to inquire if their school offered regularly scheduled library instruction classes for their fourth grade students and if the library curriculum was related to the fourth grade language arts curriculum for the state of New Jersey.

Definition of Terms

ALA: the American Library Association (ALA) was founded in 1876 in Philadelphia and subsequently chartered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Its mission is "To provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all" (ALA. 2007, p. 1).

School library media specialist (SLMS): The professional administrator of a library media center who has the appropriate degree and meets the requirements for state certification. Most states require a master's degree although some states require only a bachelor's degree. School library media specialist replaces the term school librarian. (McCain & Mererill, 2001, p. 114).

Language arts: The language arts are integrative, interactive ways of communicating that develop through reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. They are the means through which one is able to receive information; think logically and creatively; express ideas; understand and participate meaningfully in spoken, written, and nonverbal communications; formulate and answer questions; and search for, organize, evaluate, and apply information (*Language Arts CCS*, p.1).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): A national legislation act passed in 2001 that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—the main federal law affecting education from kindergarten through high school. NCLB is built on four principles: accountability for results, more choices for parents, greater local control and flexibility, and an emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research (*No Child Left Behind*, 2007, Answers ID 4).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): It is an individual state's measure of progress toward the goal of 100% of students achieving state academic standards in at least reading/language arts and math. It sets the minimum level of proficiency that the state, its school districts, and schools must achieve each year on annual test and related academic indicators (*No Child Left Behind*, 2001, Answers ID 6).

Socio-economic (SES) or DFG (District Factor Grouping system): New Jersey DFG classifications are based on United States Census data and are revised every 10 years. The Department of Education uses DFG data to analyze the relationship between student achievement and the socioeconomic status of the communities in which they reside.The six census data indices used in the DFG statistical model include the percentage of each district's population with no high school diploma, the percentage with some college education, the poverty level and unemployment rate of the district, as well as the residents' occupations and income. An analysis and weighting of these components is used to produce a statistical score for each district, which is then ranked and placed into one of eight groupings – A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I and J. Each grouping consists of districts with similar factor scores. Districts grouped as I or J scored highest on the socioeconomic scale (*DFG Classification Report,* 2004, p. 3-5).

Regular instruction: The objects, skills, and activities involved in teaching. For this study, SLMS must teach fourth grade students at least once a week; minimum of 30 times a year; for 15 minutes each visit. Topics covered must include: bibliographies, locating sources, research techniques and reference materials (McCain & Merrill, 2001, p 96).

Student academic achievement: Student achievement of basic, proficient, or advanced scores for a particular grade level. For this study achievement will be limited to fourth grade scores on the New Jersey state achievement test (*Standards and assessments*, 2003).

Standardized achievement test: It is a test with specified content, procedures for administration and scoring that have been established as valid and reliable, and for which norms and standard procedures have been established. For this study tests scores were limited to the student's achievement in the Language Arts portions of the New Jersey state achievement test (McCain & Merrill, 2001, p. 3).

Southern counties of New Jersey: Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Salem (Kinsey Associates, 2004-2005).

Assumptions and Limitations

In this study, it was assumed that the participants were state certified librarians or had emergency state certification and that they were not serving as long term substitutes. Also it was assumed that the information provided for this study was understandable to those being surveyed and that the information given on the questionnaire was accurate and truthful input was received from the SLMS.

The limitations of this study included the geographic location of the schools. All schools in the study were located in New Jersey's southern counties of Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem. Secondly, all schools were also located in the selected District Factor Grouping and administered the New Jersey yearly assessment tests.

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CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past 30 years, there have been about 75 studies that have dealt with the impact of quality library media programs on students or schools. Now with state and local governments under pressure from NCLB requirements, these studies are being revisited because school libraries are being carefully monitored for their part in assisting students to achieve proficient test scores on state achievement tests. One of the areas that has been revisited is the relationship of the school library media specialist to student achievement and its correlation to annual state test scores. Another area being updated is quality library media instructional programs and their effectiveness with regards to student academic achievement.

With budgets being cut and reallocation of dollars to provide for teacher to student ratio as a way of increasing state test scores, many SLMS are being seen as a unneeded expense rather than an asset. Yet study after study proved that quality library media programs with certified SLMS can and do enhance student academic achievement.

So what exactly did these studies have to report with regards to the relationship between strong library programs and improved student academic achievement? Also, what did they say about the effect of having a qualified SLMS, in any given school have on students' state achievement test scores? After reviewing numerous state studies, the results showed a direct correlation between both quality school library programs and

student academic achievement. Also, these studies supported that school library media specialists acting as collaborators as well as teachers improved students' state achievement tests by eight percent in elementary schools and 18 to 21 percent in the middle schools. Certainly these studies did make a good case for both maintaining SLMS in all schools and endorsing strong library media programs for all students. "As mounting evidence affirms, school libraries staffed by qualified library media specialist do make a measurable difference on student achievement "(Scholastic, 2005, p. 1).

The Impact of School Library Media Centers on Academic Achievement

Although this article was the oldest read with regards to the correlation between school library media centers and students' academic achievement, its purpose was to update the studies done from 1959-1979. "This study was designed both to update the existing research and to develop new insights into the relationship of library media centers and their programs with regards to student achievement" (Lance, 1994, p.1). Using many independent variables that included: obtaining demographic information based on United States census, district information dealing with percentage of students with regards to ethnicity and income levels, school level information regarding teacher information and fiscal information dealing with expenditures per pupil, this study was able to identify a relationship between the above independent variables to a single dependent variable, student academic achievement. Once again, the findings revealed: "In terms of the dependent variable, student achievement, analysis revealed that, in every grade, students who scored better on reading tests were extremely likely to test better on information-seeking skills and their use of language" (Lance, 1994, p.1).

School Library Program and Student Achievement: A Review of Research

Released in May of 1999, Debra Gniewek reviewed Keith Curry Lance and others' findings to support the idea that the SLMS is an important component to a total school program. The article was broken down into various areas such as: the role of the library and how it correlates with student achievement, and that academically and students scored higher on achievement tests with the presence of a SLMS in the school. "The study showed the strength of the school library programs as a clear predictor of academic achievement, reporting a positive correlation between school library expenditures, the role of the librarian, and student achievement" (Gniewek, 1999, p.1). It further went on to support the fact that there was a relationship between reading test scores and pupils' access to school libraries. "Pupils in the schools with a librarian employed in the school library scored 12 points higher on average than the pupils in schools with a teacher employed in the library" (Gniewek, 1999, p. 2,3). This article also confirmed that strong library media programs influenced student achievement. "Research findings have confirmed that a strong school library media program leads to higher student achievement as measured by scores on standardized tests" (Gniewek,1999, p.3).

Strong Libraries Improve Student Achievement

This article, written in 2000, was to inform school administrators of the importance of libraries in their schools. Questioning the decision made by the Kalamazoo, Michigan school administrators, to eliminate the school librarian position in each of their 11 elementary schools in order to solve a budget crisis, prompted a response

to "Did they make the right decision"? A response to this question by the author was an absolute "No" citing a study conducted by Colorado's Library Research Service (LRS). "Students at schools with strong media centers scored significantly higher on standardized tests than students at school with less-well-equipped and staffed libraries" (Starr, 2000, p.1). In addition, the CSAP (Colorado Student Assessment Program) study and results matched those found in studies done in Pennsylvania and Alaska. One of the main factors for this increase was the school librarian. "What the report shows, (Lance) is that the most important factor in the school media center is the library media specialist" (Starr, 2000, p.2). Lance continued, "They can teach information literacy to both teachers and students. They can provide design and support to the curriculum" (Starr, 2000, p.2).

Proof of the Power: Quality Library Media Programs Affect Academic Achievement

In this 2001 report, Keith Curry Lance did a complete analysis of four studies done with regards to the impact of school library media program on academic achievement of United States public school students. He discussed studies done in Alaska, Colorado and Pennsylvania with regards to staff, collection size, usage statistics and available technology. The results indicated that students' performance was related to library programs and the teaching of information literacy. "Levels of student performance were also related, in all three states, to the extent to which library media staff engaged in particular activities related to the teaching of information literacy and to the exercise of leadership, collaboration, and technology" (Lance, 2001, p.3). Lance also stated that the library media specialist had a twofold role. "They are teachers of students, facilitating the development of information-literacy skills necessary for success in all content areas, and

they are in-service trainers of teachers, keeping abreast of the latest information resources and technology" (Lance, 2001, p.3).

Why Should Principals Support School Libraries?

In his 2002 article, Gary Hartzell invited principals to acknowledge the important and influential roles that a qualified SLMS hold in a school. First, he asked them to consider 50 years of research which has shown that there was a positive link between effective library media programs and qualified SLMS on student academic achievement.

> Consequently, principals often leave library potential untapped despite fifty years of research evidence that effective library media programs-when led by active, involved librarians-can have a discernible positive impact on student achievement regardless of student, school and community demographics (Hartzell, p.1, 2002)

Harzell furthers went on to list eleven characteristics, when displayed in a library media service program that showed significant positive correlations between students' achievement levels and the school library media services. Finally the article strongly encouraged principals to support school libraries and to acknowledge that principals play a big role in determining the success of the library media program in their school. "Perhaps nowhere is a principal's power to affect library media programs more apparent than in the extent to which the librarian has the opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity outside the library itself" (Hartzell, p.3, 2002).

School Libraries Work

A research paper, published in 2006 by Scholastic Research Foundation, pulled together many other studies done with regards to the impact of school libraries and SLMS have on student achievement.

> Long regarded as the cornerstone of the school community, school libraries are no longer just for books. Instead, they have become sophisticated 21st-century learning environments offering a full range of print and electronic resources that provide equal learning opportunities to all students, regardless of the socio-economic or education levels of the community-but only when they are staffed by qualified professionals trained to collaborate with teachers and engage students meaningfully with information that matters to them both in the classroom and in the real world. (Scholastic, p.3, 2005)

This paper was broken down into many components discussing studies with regards to school libraries and student achievement, school libraries and their role in teaching and use of technology, and finally the importance of a qualified SLMS to the program. "Research has shown that school libraries staffed by qualified library media specialists are needed to have a positive impact on student academic achievement" (Scholastic, p.10, 2005). Although the paper discussed and evaluated studies from 16 states with regards to school libraries and SLMS' impact on student achievement; in the end the results showed that school libraries were much more.

> School libraries are much more than books. They are a learning hub with a full range of print and electronic resources that support student achievement. The school library is a gathering place for people of all ages and interests to explore

and debate ideas. The library media specialist, working collaboratively with all teachers, helps students develop a love of reading, become skilled users of ideas and information, and explore the world through print and electronic media resources (Scholastic, p.6, 2005).

Summary

There was a substantial amount of research over the past 50 years with regards to the relationship between school libraries and media specialist and student achievement. In each and every study, the results showed similar findings. There was a positive relationship between student achievement and school libraries. Furthermore, it showed that achievement increased when there was quality school media programs available in the schools and these libraries were staffed by qualified SLMS. These studies continued to state the importance of a principal's support with regard to both the library program and the SLMS. As stated by Ross J. Todd and Carol C. Kuhlthau in their report *Student Learning through Ohio School Libraries, 2004,* "When effective school libraries are in place, students do learn. 13,000 students can't be wrong" (Scholastic, p.21, 2005).

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of academic success of fourth grade students who experience regularly scheduled library instruction as measured by the language arts test scores on the annual New Jersey state achievement tests. The following research questions were addressed:

1. Did the SLMS offer regularly scheduled library instruction classes for their fourth grade students?
2. Did the SLMS include the fourth grade Language Arts curriculum with the library curriculum the library curriculum?
3. How much time were fourth grade students involved in library skills instruction?

This chapter includes the research method used to obtained information to answer the above questions. Also, included is a description of the procedure and its reasoning, population considered in this survey, its variables as well as validity and reliability.

In order to obtain the needed responses for the above questions, the researcher decided on a survey research method. This method, if handled properly, would successfully acquire the information needed to complete this study. This survey allowed for the use of a purposive sample. An e-mail questionnaire (see appendix A) was sent out to SLMS in the southern counties of

New Jersey. Each participant was asked to respond to 10 questions (see Appendix B) and return their responses, by e-mail, within a 30 day period.

Before sending out the survey, a pre-test survey was sent to six elementary SLMS not included in the sample to ensure that the questions being asked were clear in content and free of bias. In addition, it was necessary to make sure that after reviewing the responses to the questions asked, they would produce usable results for the purpose of this study.

Sample and Population

This study involved two major populations: fourth grade students who attended schools in the chosen counties of southern New Jersey and the SLMS who offered regular library instruction to these same students. With regards to the fourth grade students, no interviewing was necessary. This was because the use of language arts state test scores taken from the 2006 New Jersey state achievement test were used (New Jersey Department of Education, 2006b). This information is of public record. As for the selection of SLMS used in this study, names and e-mail addresses were taken from the New Jersey education Web site. When e-mail addresses were unavailable, phone calls were made to individual schools to obtain the needed e-mail addresses of the SLMS.

Variables

Independent variables with regards to this study were: SLMS certification, regular extent of library instruction, and library curriculum and the integration of library information skills and language arts fourth grade curriculum. The fourth grade students' 2006 New Jersey state achievement scores were considered the

dependent variable. This was due to the fact that the test score would be influenced by the independent variables mentioned above.

Validity and Reliability

"Generally speaking, research is considered to be valid when the conclusions are true and reliable when the findings are repeatable (Powell, 2004, p.43)". This study was based on similar studies showing relationships between SLMC and standard test scores during the past 50 years. Using this past research, a survey was developed to update previous study findings for elementary schools in Southern New Jersey. These same questions can be repeated especially since the state achievement test scores on which this study was based are given and made public annually. Using the above reasoning, the survey used and its findings can be considered reliable for the schools involved.

As for the validity, the New Jersey state achievement test scores were to be trusted as accurate and true to what they measure. And if repeated, they would produce similar scores. With regards to the survey questionnaire, a pre-test was performed and all responses with regards to difficulties with the questionnaire were addressed and restated to make sure the questions measured what it was intended to and no bias was involved.

Data Analysis

After receiving the responses to the questionnaire, a breakdown of responses received was completed based on the three research questions listed earlier. After sorting the responses, an analysis of the data followed ensuring that

nothing was overlooked with regards to the research questions asked and the purpose of the study. A comparison of the responses, which involved the time and material covered with each library visit by the fourth grade students, if there were lessons that correlated to the language arts curriculum with the information literacy skills developed by the SLMS and the annual New Jersey state achievement test scores of the fourth grade students.

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CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Procedures and Methods Used

In order to organize responses received from surveys sent out to school media specialists who work in the southern New Jersey public school systems, a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was developed. Within this spreadsheet, the questions were represented by a number that corresponded to the question number on the survey. Each response was then recorded and tallied on the spreadsheet.

Taking the information obtained from the literature based research reported in Chapter II, a survey was composed. This survey consisted of 10 questions with multiple choice as well as yes or no choices. Using six school library media specialists located in the Washington Township school district, the survey was pre- tested early in December, 2007. After reviewing and making all suggestions given with regards to improving the content of the survey, it was sent out late January, 2008. A total of 108 surveys were sent out via e-mail. After not receiving a response, over a two week period, the survey was resent the same school librarians. After three weeks, the survey was closed with 37 total responses received. Using the information obtained from the survey, graphs and narratives were developed to illustrate the responses.

Presentation of Results

Question 1: Are you a full time certified school media specialist, associate library media specialist or education media specialist?

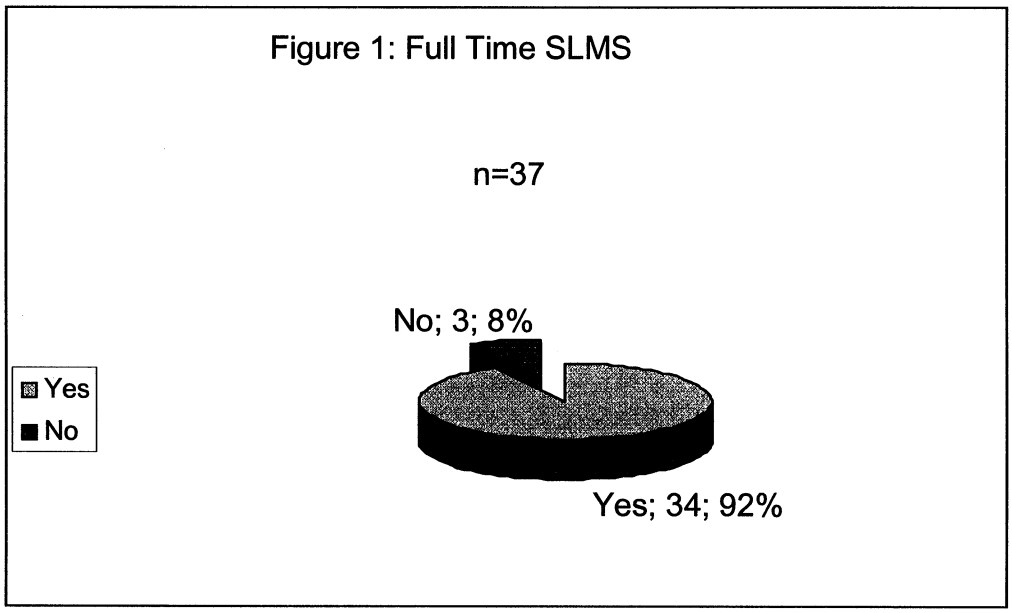


Figure 1: Full Time SLMS

Figure 1 shows a response to the question with regards to being a full time certified school media specialist, associate library media specialist or education media specialist. Of those who responded to the survey, 92% or 34 were certified; whereas 8% were not. This 8% represented three teachers who covered the library as a duty and some schools' use of paraprofessionals in the library.

Question 2: As the certified professional, do you have regularly scheduled classes?

Figure 2: Regularly Scheduled Library Classes

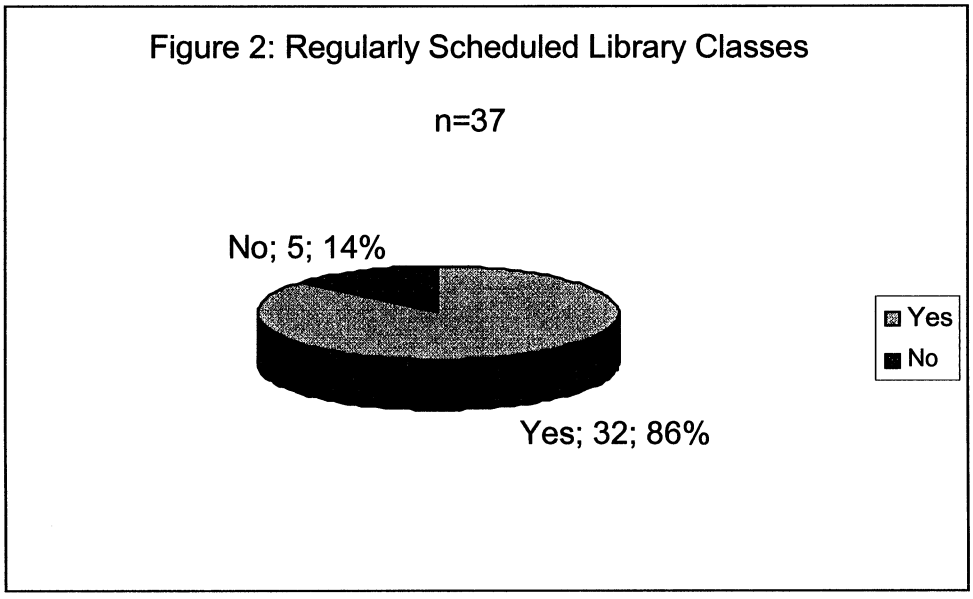


Figure 2 shows that 86% of the respondents indicated that they had regularly scheduled library classes. A total of 14% either offered no library skills classes or classes were not on a regularly scheduled time period such as a week, month or even marking period.

Question 3 and 4: Do you offer regular library instruction to your school's 4th grade students?, and, How many 4th grade students do you teach?

Figure 3 shows that 80% of those who responded indicated that regular library instruction was given to their fourth grade students. The 14% difference was the result of those schools where the fourth grade was the highest grade level in an elementary school and formal library instruction did not begin until 5th grade. Furthermore, with regards to those offering instruction to the fourth grade on a regular basis, Figure 4 indicates that

population was not a factor in determining regular library instruction for fourth grade classes.

Figure 3: Regularly Scheduled Classes for 4th Grade

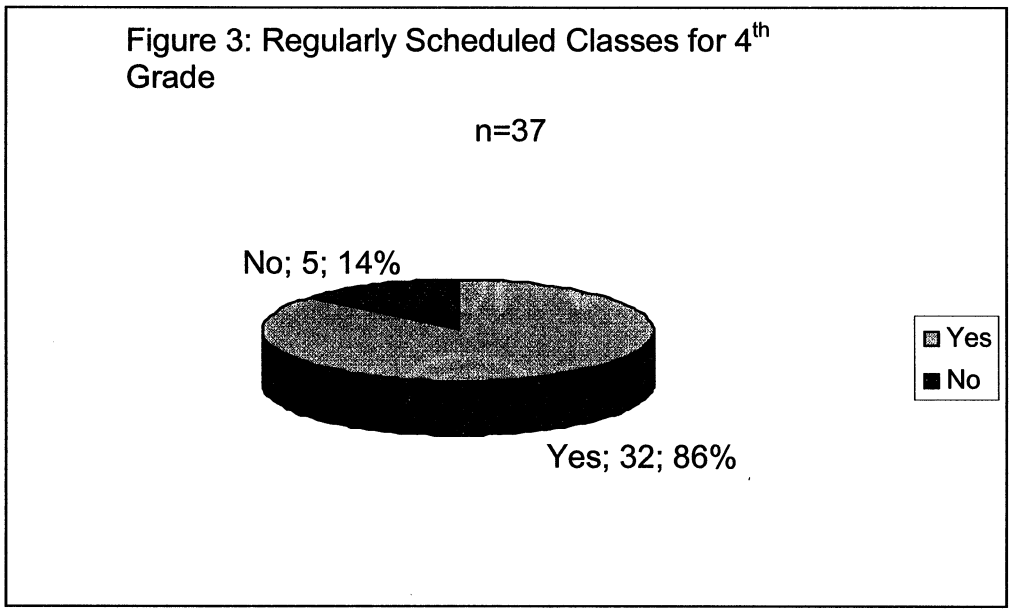
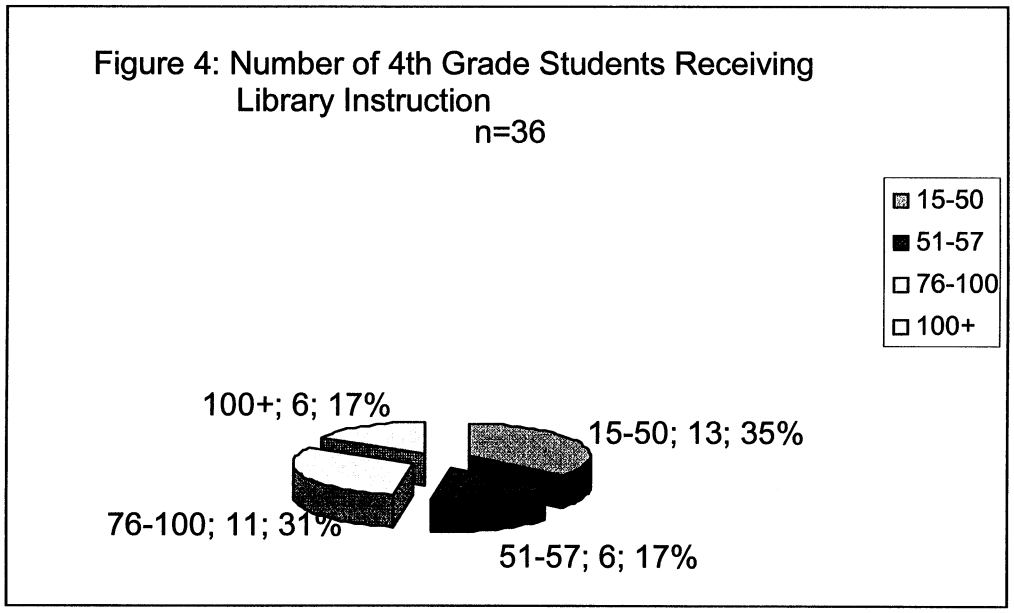


Figure 4: Number of 4th Grade Students Receiving Library Instruction



Question 5: Do you incorporate any of the following areas into your fourth grade library instruction: bibliography, location sources, research techniques and the use of reference materials?

Figure 5: Incorporation of Library Skills During Instruction

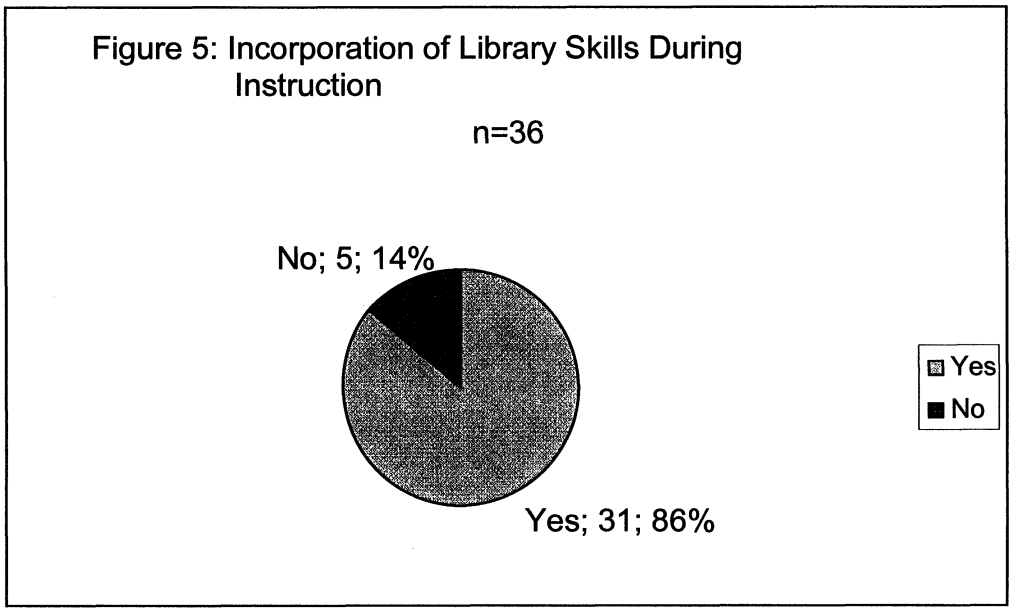
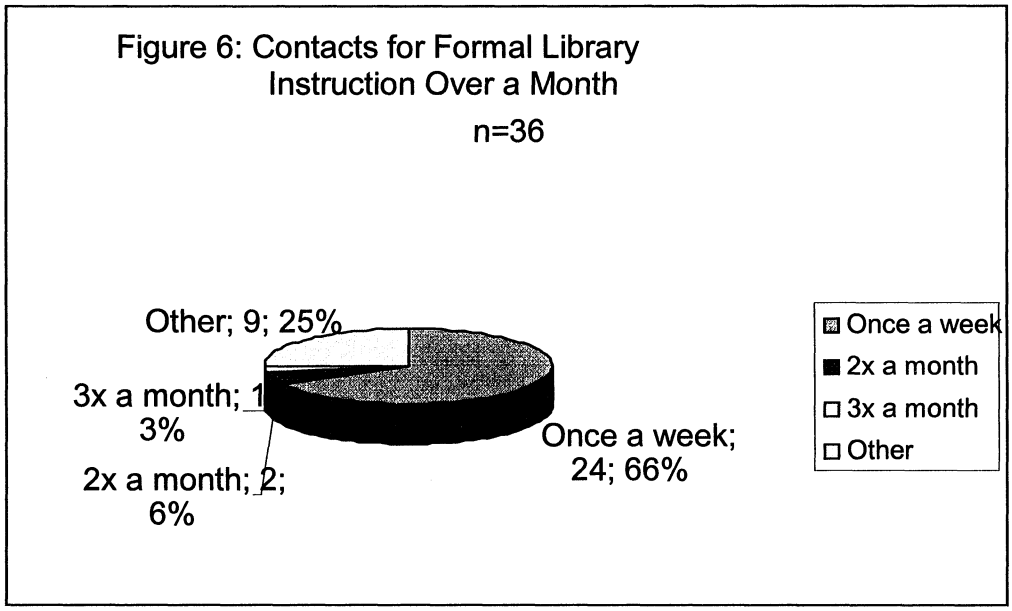


Figure 5 clearly indicates that the majority of those who responded to the survey did incorporate the skills into their fourth grade library curriculum. However, the percentage that did not incorporate any of these skills did not indicate when or if these skills were introduced to the fourth grade students at another grade level.

Question six on the survey wanted to know how often the 4th grade classes were seen over a period of a month. Of those fourth grade classes who were taught the above mentioned language arts topics, it was important to see how often the SLMS met with each group during a given month. As seen in Figure 6, the majority of librarians stated that they saw their classes once a week during a course of a month. With regards to the entry *other*, nine respondents indicated that there were other scheduling situations such as

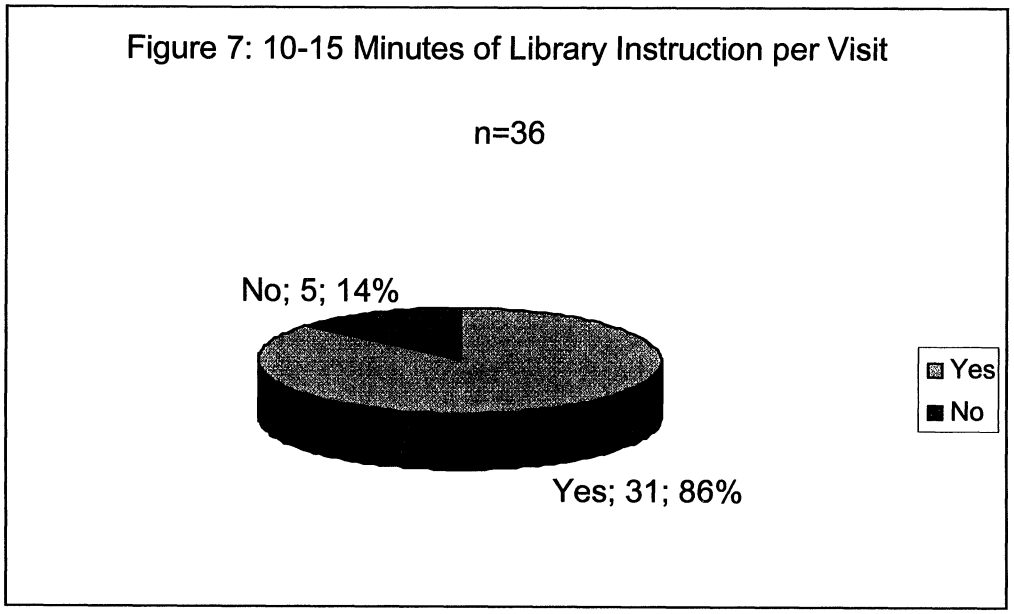
working on a six day rotation, sharing time between instruction and the students taking out books, and even sharing time with computer class instruction.

Figure 6: Contacts for Formal Library Instruction Over a Month.



Besides asking how many students were taught by the SLMS, how often these same students were seen and what was taught, it was necessary to consider how much instructional time was allowed per visit. As seen in Figure 7, the survey produced data with regards to the amount of instructional time. The majority of those who responded saw their students for instructional time ten minutes or longer for each class.

Figure 7: 10-15 Minutes of Library Instruction per Visit



Question eight inquired if formal library instruction for 4th grade students had been offered for more than two years. According to Figure 8, the majority indicated yes, with 6% offering no response to the question. Question nine, pertained to what grade library instruction began. The response to this question provided information that offered strong support to the concept that the library program was part of the education process in the majority of surveyed schools. In fact, the majority of those responding indicated that their library program began at the kindergarten level. This information can be viewed in Figure 9.

Figure 8: Formal Library Instruction for More Than 2 Years

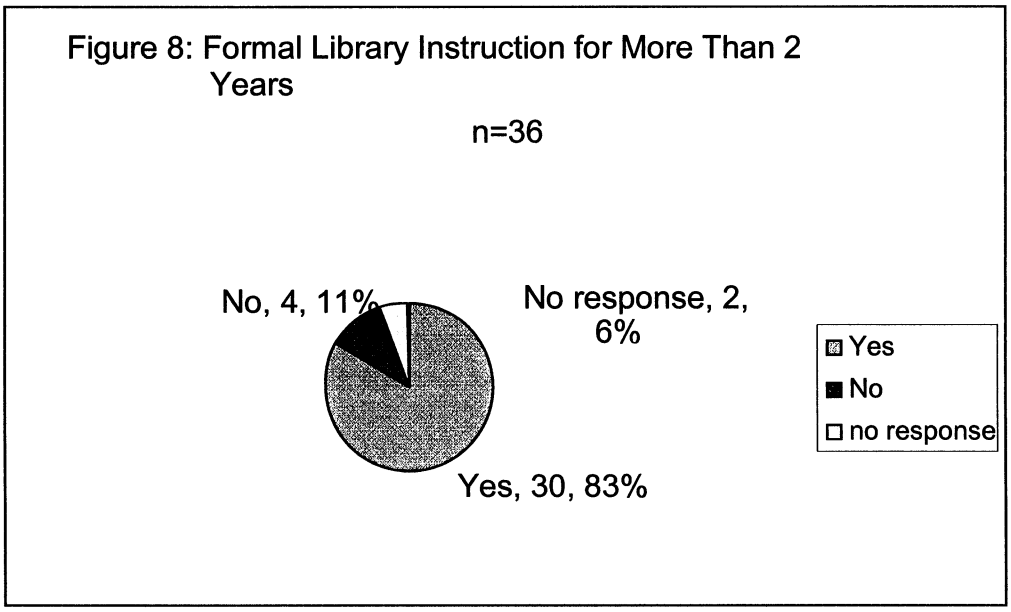
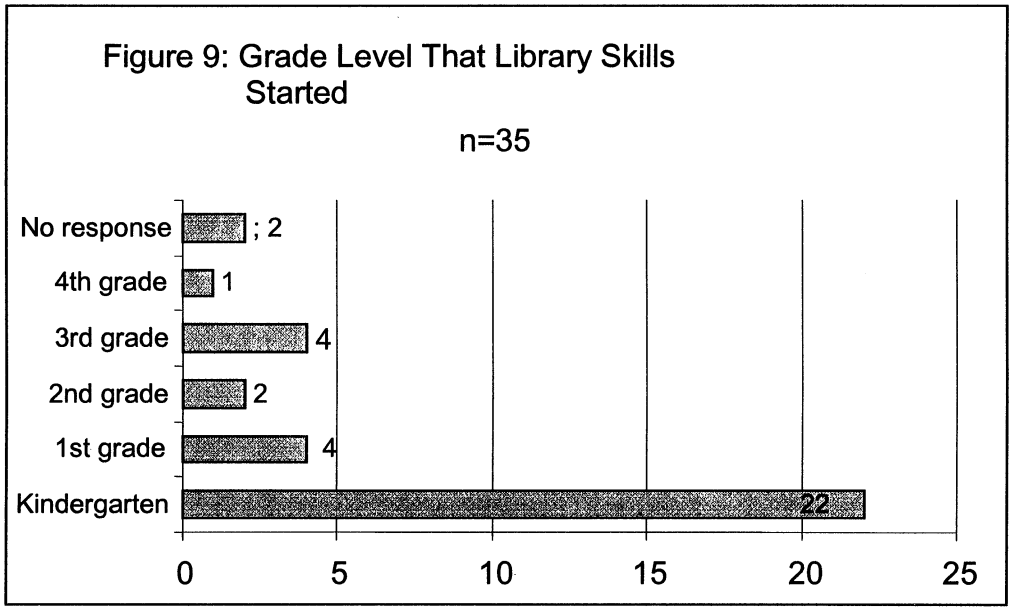


Figure 9: Grade Level That Library Skills Started



When questioned about incorporating portions of the language arts curriculum within the library skills taught, 88% responded yes. The survey did not allow for any

explanation as to why one did not incorporate portions of the language arts curriculum into their formal library instruction.

Figure 10: Incorporation of Language Arts Curriculum with Library Skills Instruction

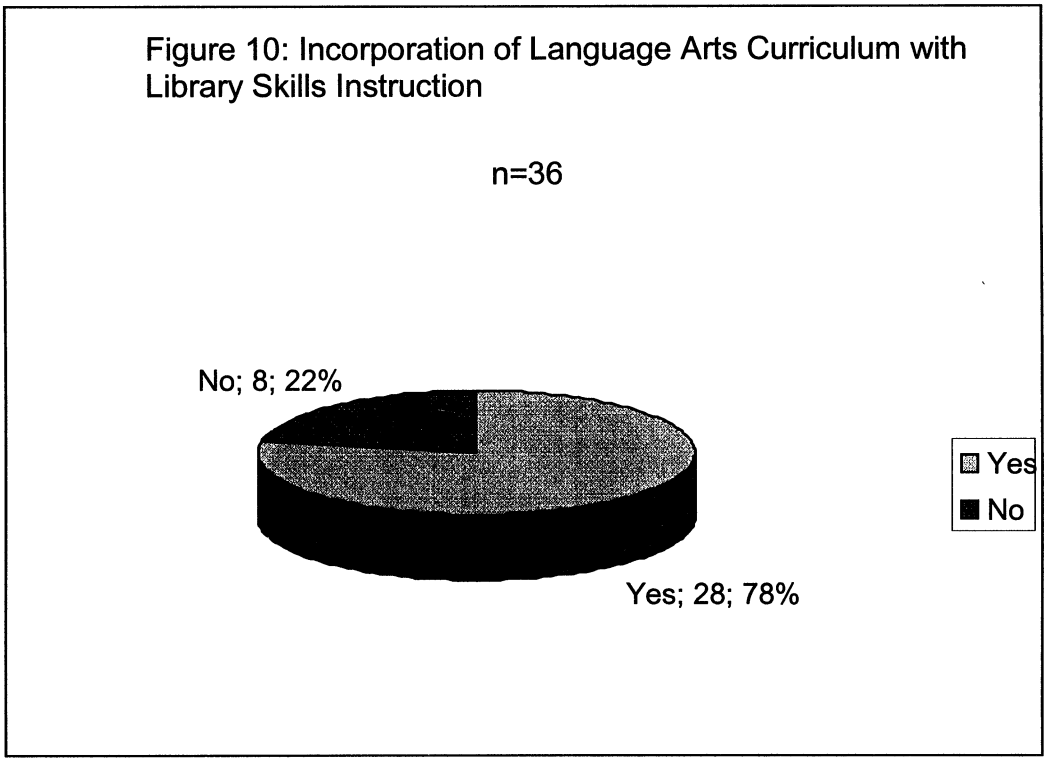


Figure 11: Proficiency on Language Arts New Jersey State Test Scores

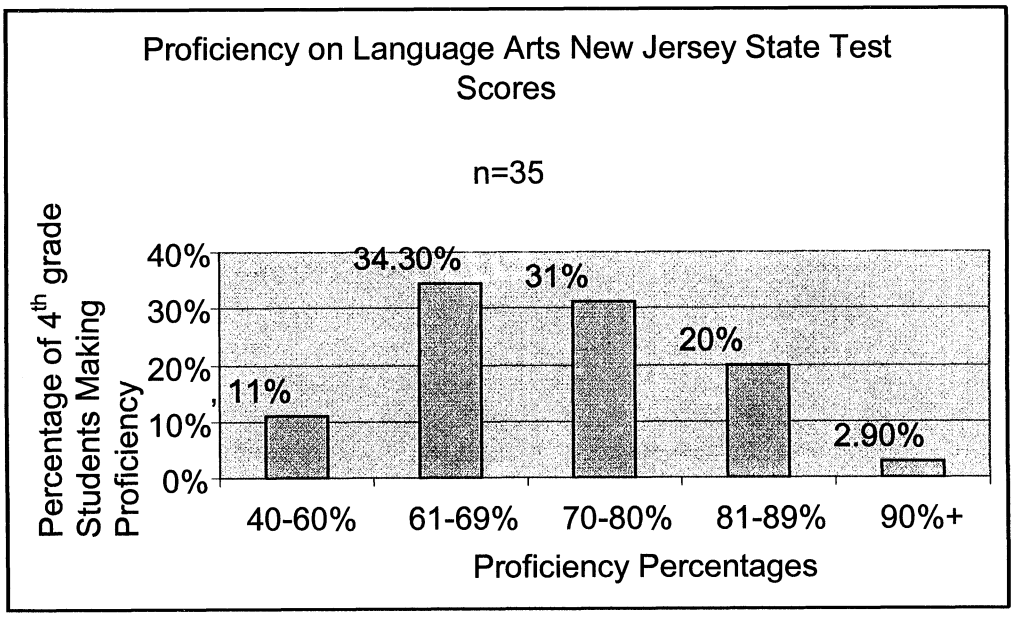


Figure 11 shows that a large percentage of the fourth grade students, who took the New Jersey state tests did well on the language arts portion of the test. Based on the guidelines set forth, by the state of New Jersey's Department of Education, the majority of the schools scored proficient; therefore meeting state standards with regards to academic success. Although the evidence obtained from the surveys did not explicitly indicate that library instruction was a factor in the test results, it was apparent that having library instruction on a regular basis and beginning at an early grade level as kindergarten did not hinder academic success. It could be considered as one of the reasons that the students achieved proficiency.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The hypothesis for this study was: Fourth grade students who participate in regularly scheduled library skills instruction taught by a certified SLMS (school library media specialist) score higher on the language arts portion of the New Jersey state achievement test. After researching, reading, and summarizing many articles that dealt with studies surrounding the idea that library instruction had a positive influence on students doing better academically, a survey was developed. This survey was sent out to 108 school librarians in elementary schools in all the counties of southern New Jersey. In addition, the results of this survey focused only on fourth grade students. The New Jersey test scores from 2006 language arts test results were used as a benchmark to measure success of the students.

With approximately 34% responding, results showed that a majority of those working and serving students in the schools were state certified. These same respondents stated that their school offered regular library instruction and those library skills such as: bibliography, locating sources, research techniques and the use of reference materials were taught to their fourth grade classes. The amount of time spent over a course of a month with their classes varied, due to scheduling conflicts, from once a week to once a month. Some librarians indicated that library instruction was split between computer

instruction times. Yet the majority of school districts had started teaching library skills as early as kindergarten.

Interpretation of the Results

Although only 34% returned their surveys, valuable and interesting information was obtained from them. It became evident that most of the school districts had state certified school library media specialists serving in their schools. Many districts seemed to understand the value of introducing library skills at a young age; as the survey indicated that 61% began their library programs at the kindergarten level. Furthermore, formal library instruction was part of the school day with the majority of the schools offering instruction at least 15 minutes a day.

However, all was not positive. Some schools indicated that paraprofessionals were used to cover the library. In addition, teachers were covering the library as part of their duty. Because of these situations, these schools offered no formal library instruction, with regards to their fourth grade students. In fact, some schools waited until high school to begin formal library instruction.

Using the published results of the 2006 state of New Jersey annual state test scores, a relationship between the language arts scores and the amount of formal library instruction was attempted. Although only a small percentage responded, some conclusions were still able to be made. With the majority of those schools responding to the survey having a certified school library media specialist in their building, the majority of those same schools had high percentages of fourth grade students scoring proficient or better on their language arts state tests. Most schools offered library instruction once a week for at least 15 minutes a day. During this time period, instruction in various library

skills and at times parts of the language arts curriculum was incorporated. Of those schools that responded to the survey, 328 fourth grades students scored between 40-60% proficient; 879 students scored in the 61-69% proficiency range; 796 students scored between 70-80%, and 652 students scored 81% and higher.

These results support the hypothesis that fourth grade students having regular library instruction taught by a SLMS did score higher on their language arts state tests. In addition, it does showed that those schools who had a full time certified school library media specialist and had formal library instruction time with their 4th grade students not only met the state standards for proficiency but had the greater percentage of their students performing in the mid to upper scoring range of the state test.

Conclusions

Districts are constantly seeking outside sources to provide help for students to improve their state test scores. Yet often overlooked, a school district's greatest resource is its school libraries. Districts that offer their students school libraries that are staffed by state certified school librarians, offer services to their faculty and students, maintain a strong library curriculum and begin offering library formal instruction as early as kindergarten offer their students the best chance to succeed academically. The responses to the survey indicated a possible trend. That trend supported the idea that properly supported and maintained school libraries promote nothing but success. Furthermore, the majority of schools where the SLMS incorporated portions of the language arts curriculum into their library skills lessons resulted in their students scoring in the proficient range of the language arts portion of the New Jersey state test.

Recommendations

If this study were to be done again, there would need to be adjustments. These changes hopefully would provide more definite and stronger conclusion to the study. The survey contained 10 questions. The purpose for using a small number of questions was to allow those SLMS, with busy schedules, to response quickly and accurately. However, the responses that were returned still left gaps with regards to response clarification. In order to alleviate this, a few more questions or sub-categories could clarify some of the areas such as did the instruction time also include time for students to take out books, more specific in the amount of time spent on instruction, and to include exactly what language arts curriculum skills were incorporated in a library lesson. This in turn may have resulted in clearer and more complete findings.

With the state of New Jersey testing every grade level, following one group of students over a three year period would have provided a stronger support for this study. This support would have presented a clearer picture with regards to the influence of library skills being developed and taught to the same group of students over a longer period of time. Although this study only dealt with fourth grade students, another study could deal with a more extensive time period to provide stronger and clearer results.

Finally, more follow up with those who did not respond was needed. The higher the response numbers, the stronger the reliability and validity the study would have held. The results would have been stronger and precise, thus giving more credence to the study's findings.

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APPENDIX A

E-MAIL LETTER

Dear School Library Media Specialist,

I am a graduate student at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey and a fellow SLMS. For my master's thesis, I am researching the impact library instruction has on 4th grade students' language arts portion of the state test scores. Please help me by completing an online survey. There are only 10 questions to answer. You can access the survey by going to
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=lVSMpp_2bHttoRR3jM_2bWSnEA_3d_3d

Your responses will be completely anonymous. However, if you would like to receive a copy of the results of the survey, please type your e-mail address in the space provided at the end of the survey. I appreciate your assistance in helping me to obtain this needed information and thus enabling me to graduate in May, 2008.

Gratefully,

Anita K. DeAngelis
Rowan University
Glassboro, NJ
adeangelis@rowan.edu

APPENDIX B

SURVEY

1. Impact of library instruction on Language Arts state test scores

Please respond to the following 10 questions. Your responses will be completely anonymous.

A

1. Are you a full time certified school media specialist, associate library media specialist or education media specialist?

- Yes
- No

2. As the certified professional, do you have regularly scheduled classes?

- Yes
- No

3. Do you offer regular library instruction to your school's 4th grade students?

- Yes
- No

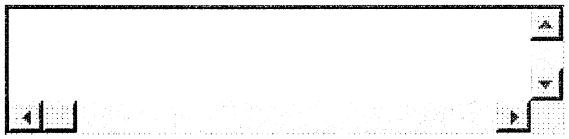
4. If yes, how many 4th grade students receive this instruction?

5. Do you incorporate any of the following areas into your fourth grade library instruction: Bibliography, locating sources, research techniques and the use of reference materials?

- Yes
- No

6. How often do you see 4th grade students for regular formal instruction over a course of a month? (check only one)

- once a week
- two times a week
- three times a week
- other:please explain in the following boxother:please explain in

the 

7. Is your library instruction usually 10-15 minutes or more?

- Yes
- No

8. At your school, has formal library instruction for 4th grade students been offered for more than two years?

- Yes
- No

9. At your school, what grade level do you begin teaching library skills to the students?

- Kindergarten
- First grade
- Second grade
- Third grade
- Fourth grade

10. Throughout the course of the school year, do you incorporate the language arts curriculum along with such library skills as: bibliography, locating sources, research techniques and the use of reference materials when you teach the 4th grade students?

- Yes
- No