

NEW RESEARCH:

School libraries, teacher librarians, and their contribution to student literacy development in Gold Coast schools

The recently completed SLAQ-QUT research project is now available on the SLAQ web site at: www.slaq.org/research.

This is the first research of its kind focusing on Gold Coast school libraries and teacher librarians. It presents a detailed picture of library provision and staffing at a representative group of 27 government and non-government schools at the Gold Coast. It shows links between employment of a teacher librarian and higher NAPLAN reading and writing scores. And it presents the principals' generally positive views about teacher librarians' contribution to reading and literacy at their schools.

The findings respond in part to the recent Australian Government inquiry's call for research about the current staffing of school libraries in Australia, and the influence of school libraries and teacher librarians on students' literacy and learning outcomes (House of Representatives, 2011). While the study has focused on a relatively small group of school libraries, it has produced a range of significant outcomes:

- An extensive review of international and Australian research showing impacts of school libraries and teacher librarians on students' literacy and learning outcomes
- Findings consistent with international research showing:
 - An inverse relationship between lower student to EFT library staff ratio and higher school NAPLAN scores for reading and writing
 - Schools that employ a teacher librarian tend to achieve school NAPLAN scores for respective year levels that are higher than the national mean

The study's findings are of potential interest to education authorities, school leadership teams, teacher librarians, teachers, and researchers. The findings provide evidence to:

- inform policy development and strategic planning for school libraries that respond to the literacy development needs of 21st century learners
- inform school-based management of school libraries
- inform curriculum development and teacher librarian practice
- support further collaborative research on a state or national level
- enhance conceptual understandings about relationship(s) between school libraries, teacher librarians and literacy/information literacy development
- support advocacy about school libraries, teacher librarians and their contribution to literacy development and student learning in Australian schools

This research arises from a research partnership between School Library Association of Queensland (SLAQ) and QUT's Children and Youth Research Centre (CYRC). SLAQ President Toni Leigh comments: "It is heartening to see findings which validate the critical role teacher librarians play in student literacy development and the positive correlation of higher NAPLAN scores and schools with a qualified teacher librarian. Also encouraging is the high percentage of school principals who recognise the necessity of a well resourced school library and the positive influence of these libraries on student literacy".

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House of Representatives. (2011). School libraries and teacher librarians in 21st century Australia. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ee/schoollibraries/report.htm

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