

LITERACY SYMPOSIUM

AT THE FOREFRONT OF LITERACY LEARNING



INTRODUCTION

Happy and healthy July, everyone!

I hope this July issue of *At The Forefront of Literacy* newsletter finds you and yours well and enjoying the summer. Thank you for being a member of the [UCF Literacy Symposium](#) community. I am excited to share with you that we currently have 4,000 newsletter subscribers!

In line with the 2022 UCF Literacy Symposium theme, *Reigniting Literacy Collaborations*, this month I chose to focus on the importance of reigniting literacy collaborations with school media specialists or school librarians. Why? Because school librarians are guardians and champions of reading and literacy, play multiple roles in schools, and support students and teachers.

Research shows a positive relationship between high-quality library programs and students' reading achievement. [The 2020 International Literacy Association's \(ILA\) What's Hot in Literacy Report](#) identified, "providing access to high-quality, diverse books and content," as one of the top five most critical issues in literacy education. Although some schools do not have a school librarian, there is a renewed focus on the role of school librarians in creating and supporting school-wide literacy. Increased instructional literacy demands also call for collaborations between teachers and school librarians. How can we talk about literacy and not include school librarians in our conversations, collaborations, and schoolwide efforts?

I hope this newsletter supports your literacy and learning needs. I would love to hear what you think about this content or ideas you have for future topics and resources—feel free to share your feedback

here: LitSymposium@ucf.edu.

As you know, we will continue to offer virtual webinars and workshops, so stay tuned for updates. We will send notifications of upcoming professional development to all event subscribers via email and will also post them on our [homepage](#).

Until next time, wishing you a healthy and restful summer!

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RESEARCH BITES: LONG STORY SHORT

This question guided my search: *In what ways does research inform us about the importance of teacher and school librarian collaborations on literacy teaching and student learning?*

I reviewed three studies on collaborating with student librarians to support students' literacy and learning (i.e., Lance & Kachel, 2018; Merga, 2019a, 2019c) and a research report. I selected to share with you insights from the new International Literacy Association (ILA) literacy leadership brief, titled [The Essential Leadership of School Librarians](#) (ILA, 2022). This report includes a comprehensive summary of research on the topic and relevant suggestions for K-12 teachers, specialized literacy professionals, school administrators, and local and state policymakers.

Here are some research bites from this report:

- In the 2018-2019 school year, 1/5 of U.S. school districts had no librarian--1/3 of rural districts and 1/4 of urban districts did not have school librarians.
- A 2019 report by the *American Library Association* showed that 91% of U.S. schools have school libraries, but only 61% have full-time librarians.
- A school librarian or school media specialist is a literacy and information leader, a champion of students' rights to read, and a linchpin for a culture of literacy schoolwide.
- School librarians view the text through the eyes of the student and make student-centered decisions about texts and materials.
- School librarians play multiple roles in schools:
 - Teach students how to use reference materials and online databases.
 - Assist students to develop information literacy skills, locate, and evaluate online information, and develop digital citizenship skills.
 - Provide access to materials to students in underserved communities and support language learners and struggling readers.
 - Promote classroom literacy practices and help create communities of readers.
 - Collect print and digital offerings and stock school libraries with a variety of texts and genres.

- School librarians positively influence students' motivation to read for pleasure, support their reading engagement and achievement, and extend literacy learning beyond the classroom/school walls.
- Research shows positive correlations between high-quality library programs and student achievement. Reading/writing scores and graduation rates are higher in schools that have certified school librarians.



RESEARCH TO PRACTICE TAKEAWAYS

The following takeaways can help you *reignite* your literacy collaborations with school librarians.

1. School librarians are knowledgeable literacy partners. They can support teacher instructional planning, help teachers find print and digital texts and materials, and provide them with technology and information literacy support.
2. Teachers can benefit from sharing their literacy goals, needs, and ideas with a school librarian and plan together.
3. Are you looking for diverse print and digital texts and materials? School librarians foster equitable access to text and materials—they can help you select culturally relevant materials for your classroom.
4. Effective collaboration requires sustained conversations about enhancing your literacy instruction and scheduling a regular time to meet and plan instruction, resources, and literacy activities.
5. School librarians consider collaboration to be one of their major roles. As instructional partners, they aim to support students' reading/literacy achievement and learning inside and outside the school library.
6. School librarians can model and support independent reading, engagement, reading comprehension, and the use of technology for research and learning.
7. Teachers and school librarians can co-design, co-implement, and co-evaluate lessons and units of instruction that help learners increase their reading and literacy skills through inquiry learning experiences.
8. Teacher-school librarian collaborations can result in the integration of paper and online reading comprehension strategies in library instruction that further supports students' development.

9. Collaborative partnerships with school librarians can contribute to schoolwide literacy initiatives, implementation of new standards, reading interventions, reading incentive programs, and family literacy.
10. School leaders can harness school librarians' knowledge by allowing them extended time to collaborate with teachers and engage with students in meaningful literacy-based instruction and activities.



1 QUESTION FOR YOU

Here's some food for thought...

What is one small, attainable action you can take to *reignite* your literacy collaborations with a school librarian?



RESOURCES

These resources can inspire and facilitate your collaborative goals.

FL Department of Education Resources

- [Florida Power-Library School \(FPLS\): Quality Library Programs Improve Student Achievement!](#)
- [Check out the 2021 FL School Awardees](#)
- [Focus – Investigate – Note – Develop - Self-Evaluate \(FINDS\): Florida's K-12 Library Media Research Model](#)
- [FINDS Infographic for Classroom Use](#)
- [READS- Florida's K-12 Integrated Library Media Reading Instructional and Promotional Activities and Guidelines](#)

Additional Resources

- [3 Key Roles of School Librarians](#)
- [A Digital Library -- at Cypress High School in Weston, FL -- Spawns More Reading](#)
- [Collaborating with Your School Librarian](#)
- [Outstanding FL Librarians!](#)

References

International Literacy Association. (2022). *Librarianship and literacy* [Literacy leadership brief]. <https://literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/the-essential-leadership-of-school-librarians.pdf>

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Merga, M. K. (2019a). Collaborating with teacher librarians to support adolescents' literacy and literature learning. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 63(1), 65–72. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.958>

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