

Idaho School Library Impact Study – 2009



How Idaho School Librarians,
Teachers and Administrators
Collaborate for Student Success

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Idaho School Library Impact Study – 2009:

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Executive Summary

This study was contracted for by the Idaho Commission for Libraries and endorsed by the Idaho Department of Education. Its purpose was to examine the relationships administrators and teachers have with their librarians, how school libraries and librarians are valued and perceived, and how those factors affect libraries and their impact on academic achievement by students. Administrators, teachers and librarians were surveyed about:

- The library environment, including: sources of learning about libraries and librarians for administrators and teachers; practices valued by administrators and activities reported by librarians and teachers, and librarian roles as perceived by administrators and teachers and attributed to them by librarians.
- Their self-assessments of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) standards teaching in their schools and districts.
- The 2009 Idaho ISAT Reading and Language Arts scores reported for elementary, middle and high school grade levels.

The Idaho Commission for Libraries invited individual librarians from schools statewide to nominate themselves, their principals and up to two (2) other administrators, and up to five (5) of their closest teacher colleagues for participation in a series of surveys during Spring 2009. Two-hundred eighty-five (285) librarians responded to that invitation, nominating themselves, their principals and other administrators, and one or more teachers. Individuals in each of these three groups were invited to participate in surveys of librarians, teachers, and administrators, as appropriate. Numbers of survey respondents in each group are given in the box at right.

Survey Respondents	
Librarians	238
LMS	146
Non-LMS	92
Teachers	668
Principals & other administrators	176
<hr/>	
TOTAL	1,082

Relative student performance levels for elementary, middle, and high schools are represented by 2009 ISAT reading and language arts scores for grades 3, 4 and 5; grades 7 and 8; and grade 10, respectively. The analysis of ISAT scores focused on the relationships between those scores and the perceptions of libraries and librarians reported by survey respondents. For this analysis, academic achievement was represented by the percentage of students in a school at a particular grade level who received advanced scores.

Generally, for the sake of brevity and clarity, only statistically significant findings are reported. No findings were omitted because they were statistically or substantively negative.

Like all such studies, this one demonstrates the impact of what has actually happened in Idaho school library programs—not what ought to have happened. For this reason, results relative to ISAT reading and language arts scores varied by grade level. This was because real libraries and librarians at one grade level sometimes demonstrated their potential impact better than those at other levels. Given the right circumstances, these relationships could be achieved at all three grade levels.

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Following is a summary of what we learned from each educator group: librarians, teachers, and administrators. Each section of this executive summary concludes with a “bottom line” summary of its findings. Finally, recommendations for action are itemized, and sample success stories shared by the respondents are offered.

What We Learned from Librarians

Throughout the librarian survey, dramatically different responses were given by librarians who identified themselves as library media specialists and those who did not. (See Chart 1.)

Nine out of 10 LMS and eight out of 10 non-LMS librarians reported that, at least once per semester, they were asked for instructional design resources by teachers and

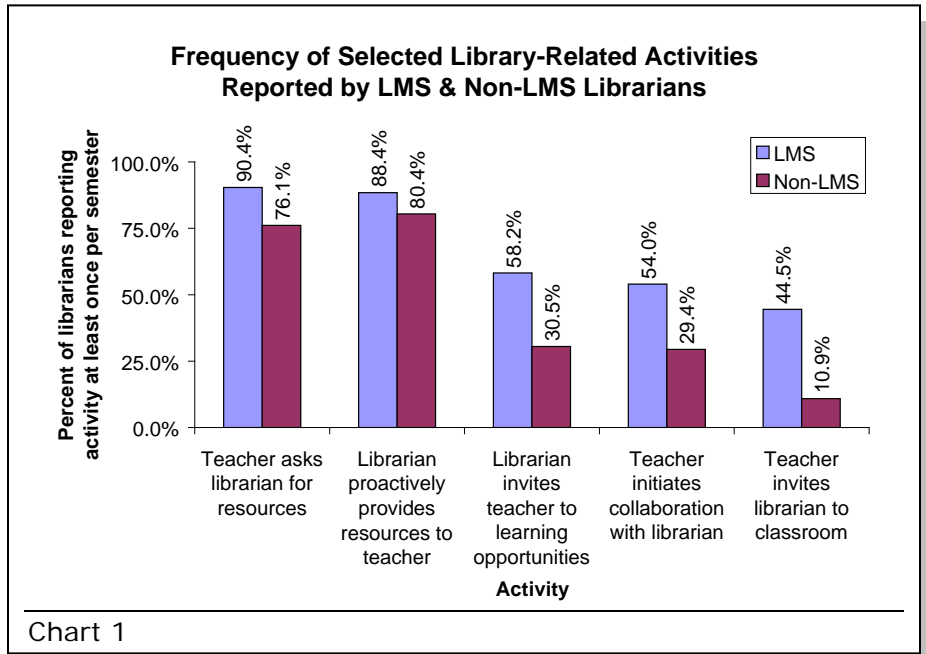


Chart 1

Percent of Students with Advanced ISAT Scores by Grade Level and Subject by Frequency of Teacher-Initiated Collaboration Reported by Librarians

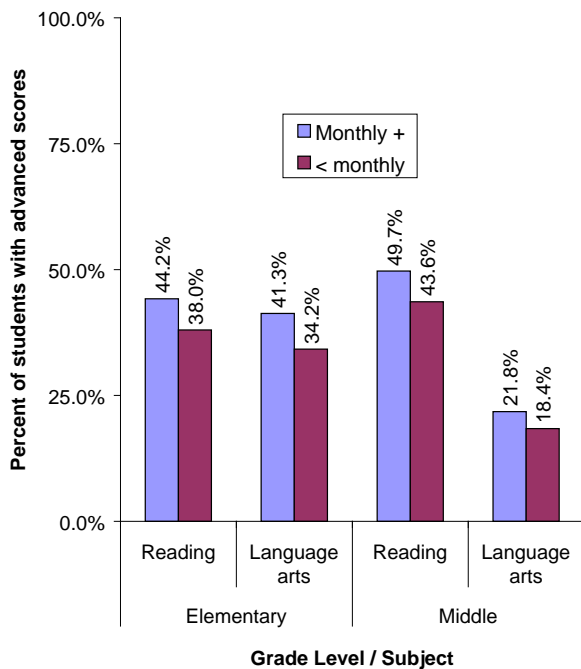


Chart 2

proactively provided such resources to them.

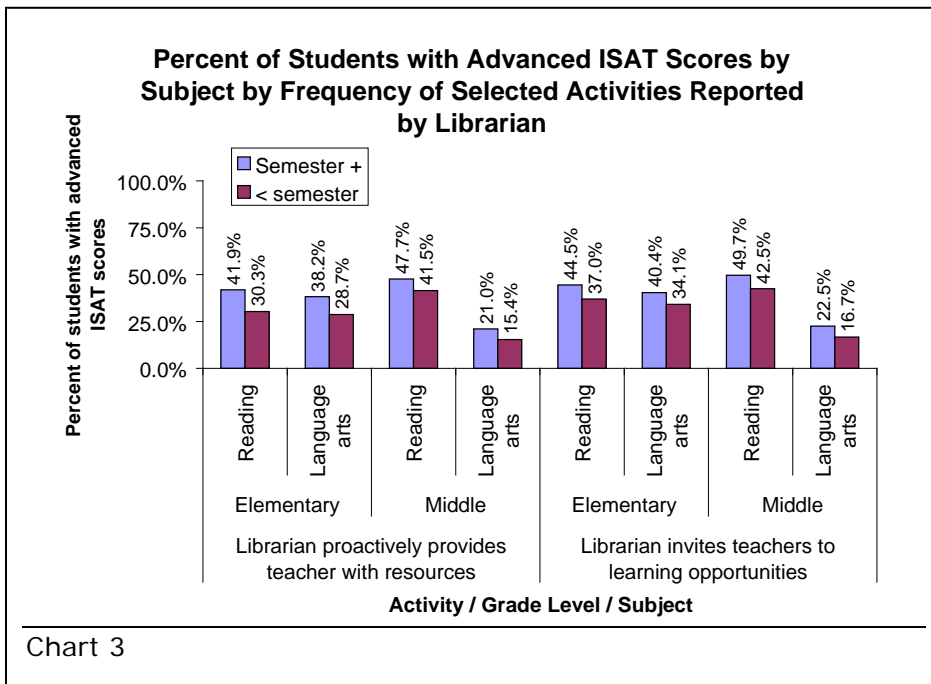
For three other activities, the gap between LMS and non-LMS librarians was much larger. At least once per semester, LMS librarians were about twice as likely as their non-LMS counterparts to report inviting teacher colleagues to learning opportunities about new information skills. LMSs were also more than four times as likely as non-LMSs to be invited by teachers to their classrooms to teach or co-teach.

These five activities—each more likely to occur when school libraries were staffed by LMSs—were related, in turn, to ISAT reading and language arts scores.

At elementary and middle schools where librarians reported at-least-monthly teacher-initiated collaborations, advanced scores in both reading and language arts were more likely than where such collaborations happened less frequently. (See Chart 2.)

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Advanced ISAT reading and language arts scores at both elementary and middle school levels are also consistently more likely where librarians reported that, at least once per semester, they

- proactively provide teachers with resources needed for instructional design and
- invite teachers to learning opportunities about new information skills.

Notably, at elementary and middle school levels, these two activities—providing teachers with resources and inviting them to in-

Chart 3

service learning opportunities—are ones that require the librarian to take the initiative. (See Chart 3.)

At the high school level, similar activities were involved; but, advanced scores on reading and language arts were more likely when teachers took the initiative by:

- asking the librarian for help finding resources needed to design instructional units and
- inviting the librarian to the classroom to teach or co-teach instructional units. (See Chart 4.)

School librarians, regardless of their position classification, are widely acknowledged as “resource people” for teachers—although even this basic role is more widely acknowledged for LMS than non-LMS librarians. It is much rarer for librarians to be utilized fully as “resident” in-service providers for teachers or as instructional collaborators (especially in the classroom).

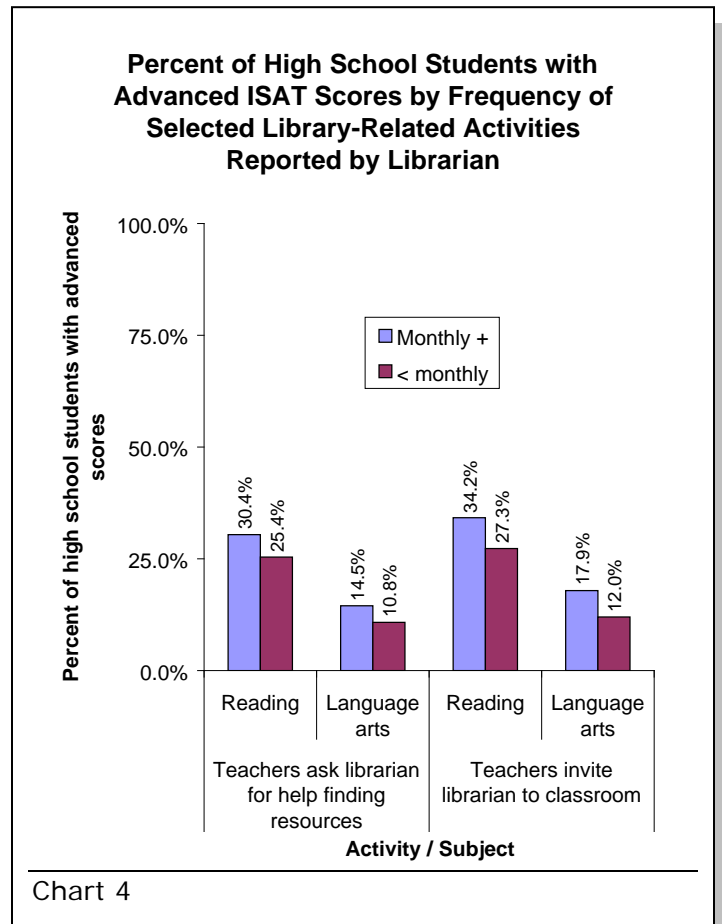


Chart 4

Bottom line

Where librarians teach students—as well as their teacher colleagues—students are more likely to succeed academically.

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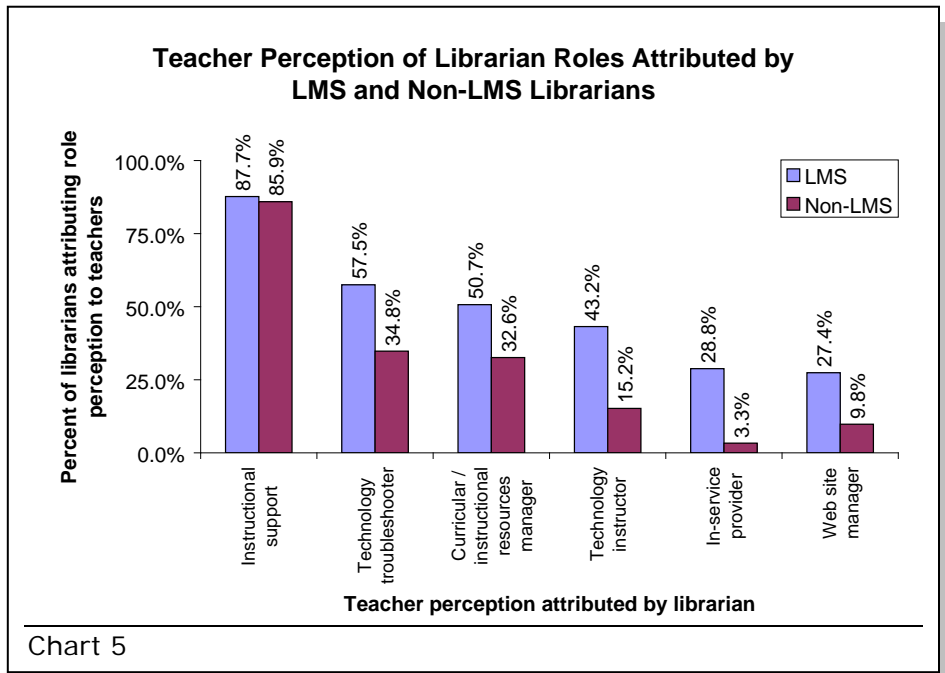
What We Learned From Teachers

When librarians were asked about roles in which they believe teachers see them, several roles were noteworthy because LMS librarians were much more likely to identify them than non-LMS librarians. (See Chart 5.)

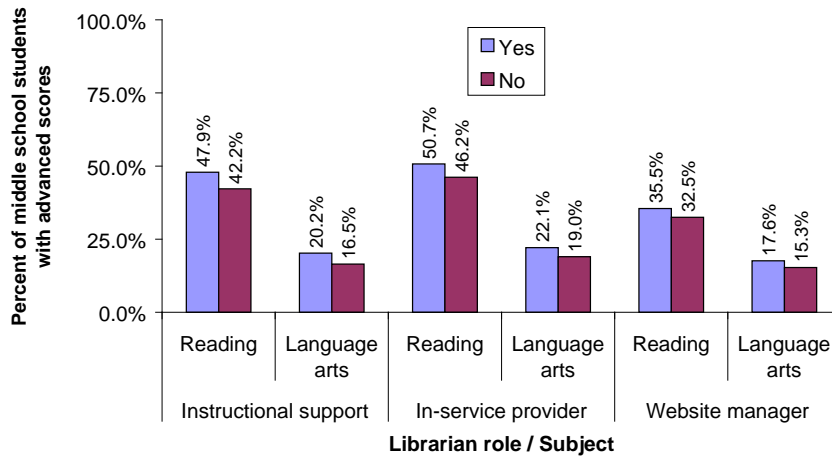
While almost three out of five LMS librarians believed teachers see them as technology troubleshooters, only about a third of non-LMS librarians felt so. Similarly, while more than half of LMS librarians believed teachers see them as

curricular/instructional

resources managers, less than a third of non-LMS librarians felt so. Differences between LMS and non-LMS librarians were even greater for three additional roles. LMS librarians were almost nine times more likely than their non-LMS colleagues to believe teachers see them as in-service providers. LMSs were also about three times as likely as non-LMSs to believe that teachers see them as technology instructors or website managers.



Percent of Middle School Students with Advanced ISAT Scores by Subject by Perception of Selected Librarian Roles by Teachers



The exception to this pattern was the role of instructional support. Nine out of 10 librarians, whether they identified themselves as LMSs or on-LMSs, believed teachers saw them in this role. (See Chart 5.)

At middle schools where teachers themselves identified librarians as instructional support, in-service professional development providers, and website managers, students were consistently more likely to earn advanced scores on the ISAT reading and

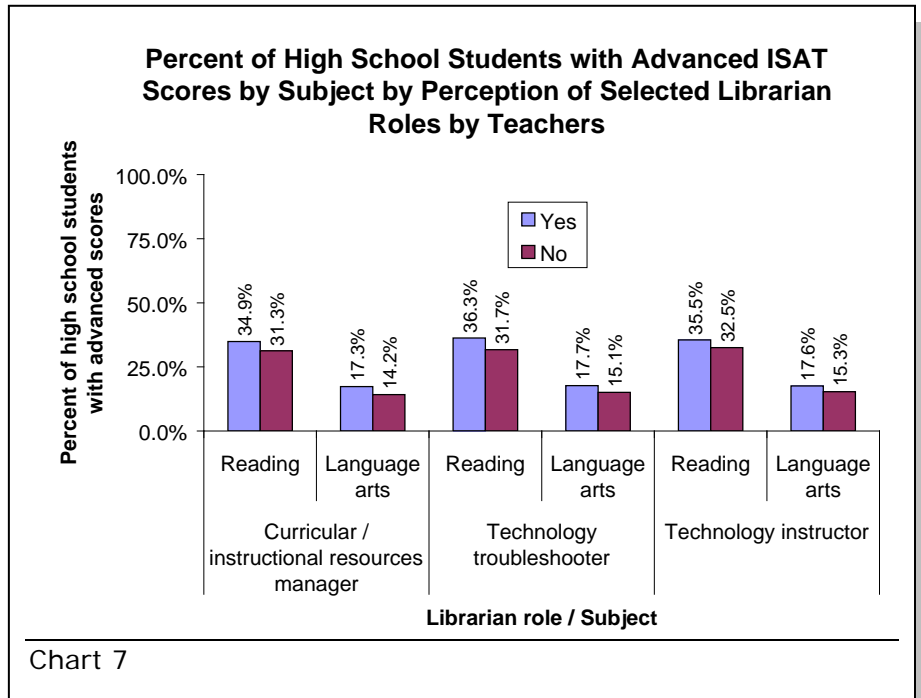
language arts tests, compared to schools where teachers did not perceive librarians to be

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playing those roles. (See Chart 6.) Notably, advanced scores on both tests were most likely where librarians are perceived as in-service providers by teachers.

At high schools where teachers perceived librarians as curricular/instructional resources managers, technology troubleshooters, and technology teachers, students were consistently more likely to earn advanced ISAT reading and language arts scores. (See Chart 7.) The positive relationships between these roles and advanced scores on both ISAT tests were remarkably similar.



As for librarians, the findings from teachers suggest that students are more likely to succeed academically when teachers perceive librarians as colleagues—ones to whom they can look for leadership in roles ranging from instructional support and technology

Bottom Line

Where teachers experience librarians as instructional colleagues and technology integrators, students are more likely to excel academically.

troubleshooting to technology instruction and in-service professional development. With the exception of instructional support, LMS librarians were more likely than their non-LMS counterparts to believe their teacher colleagues perceived them in such roles.

All three surveys offered respondents an option to share a story about a success in their professional activities, and stated that such stories might be published in this report. Many success stories were offered, too many to publish, but a representative sample, edited for anonymity, is included in text boxes like this one in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

As expected, most of the surveys received came from teachers, and there was something striking about them collectively that we feel must be reported. Nearly all teachers, and many principals and other administrators as well, included in their stories the highest praise, regard and appreciation for their school librarians. Words describing librarians as loving, unselfish, devoted, caring, talented, dedicated, essential, etc. abounded in these stories. That itself is a great success story.

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What We Learned From Administrators

When administrators were asked to assess the teaching of ICT literacy in their schools or districts, about a third rated it as excellent. For context, teachers and librarians gave very different assessments, depending on whether they were rating their own teaching or collaborative teaching with the other party. Interestingly, the greatest impact attributed to collaboration was by teachers. When collaborating with their librarians, teachers were almost three times as likely to rate their ICT literacy teaching as excellent, compared to when they taught it alone.

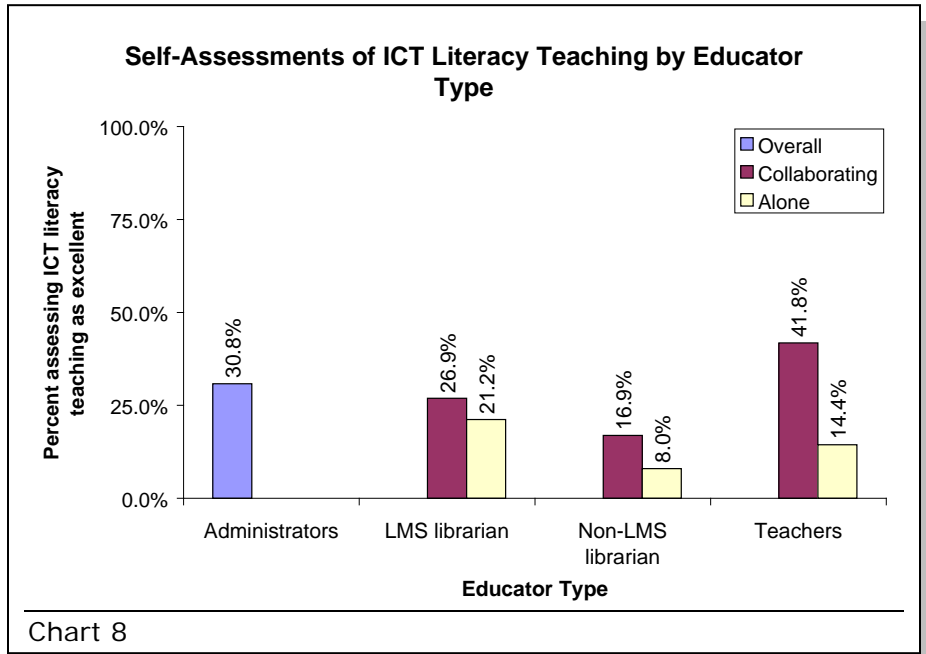


Chart 8

Administrator Assessments of ICT Standards Teaching as Excellent or Good by Value of Librarian/Teacher Collaboration

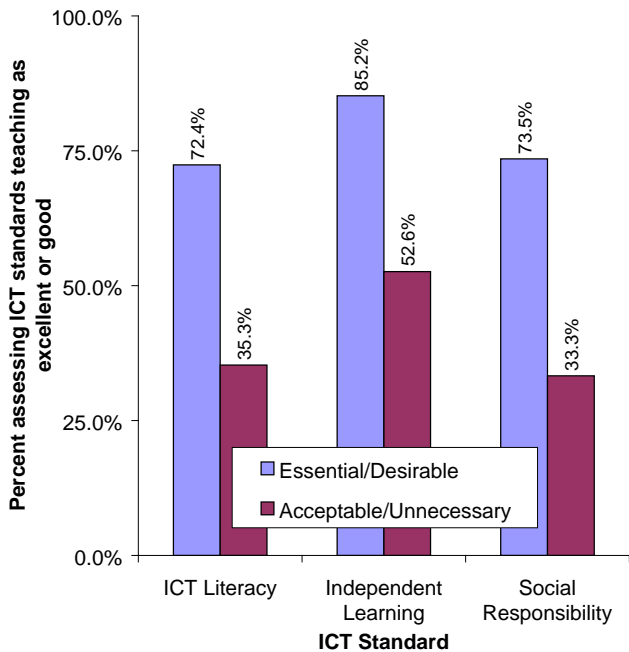


Chart 9

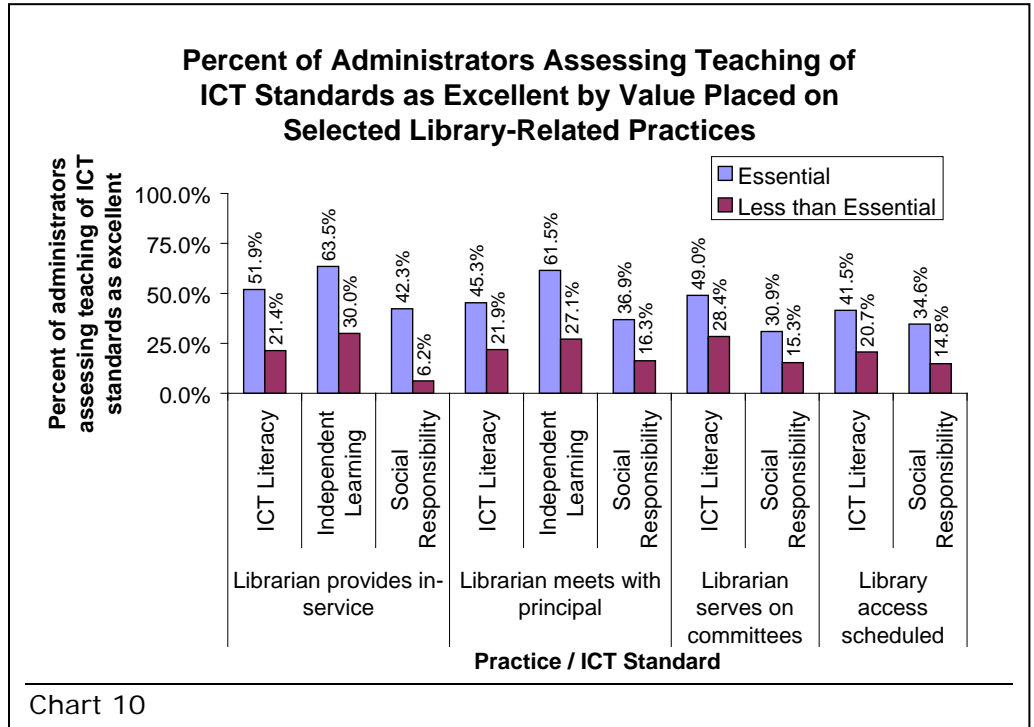
While non-LMS librarians expressed the lowest level of confidence in ICT literacy teaching—whether alone or in collaboration with teachers—they were twice as likely to assess their teaching as excellent when collaborating with a teacher. That level of confidence, however, was less than half that expressed by teachers when collaborating with librarians. LMS librarians rated their ICT literacy teaching as excellent more often than their non-LMS counterparts, whether teaching alone or in collaboration with teachers. Indeed, LMS librarians reported the smallest discrepancy in such ratings between solo and collaborative teaching. Notably, the self-assessments of collaborating LMS librarians were closest to the overall estimates of principals and other administrators. (See Chart 8.)

When administrators valued highly a variety of library-related practices, they were often at least twice as likely to rate the teaching of ICT standards highly.

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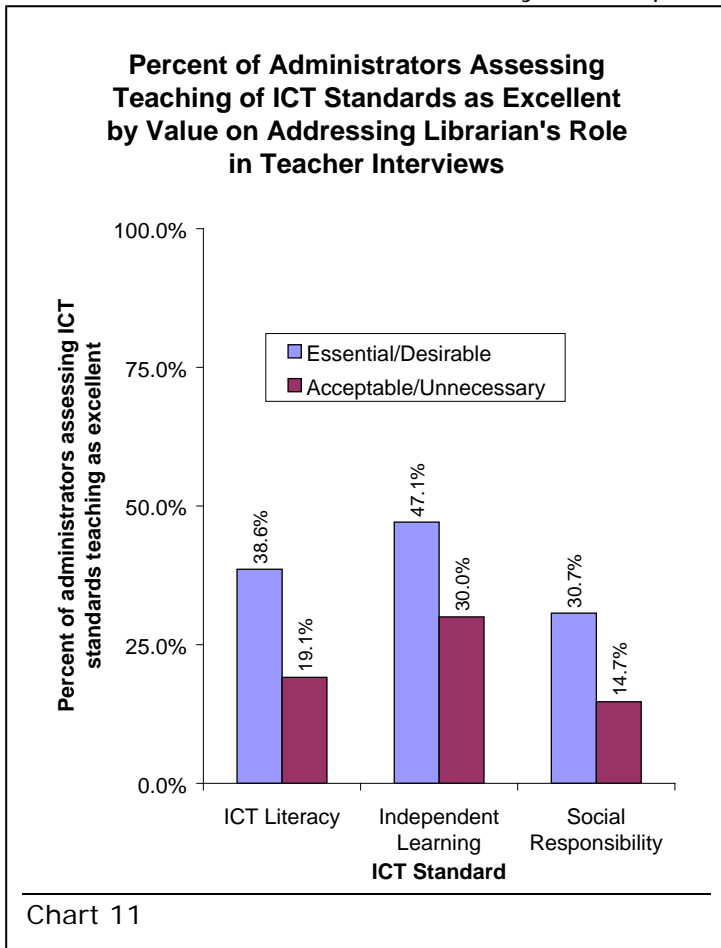
Where administrators considered it essential or desirable for librarians and teachers to collaborate in the design and delivery of instruction, they were twice as likely to rate as excellent or good the teaching of ICT literacy and social responsibility. They were also more than half again as likely to rate the teaching of independent learning so highly. (See Chart 9).



Similarly, administrators were consistently more likely to rate ICT standards teaching as excellent, if they valued as essential several additional library-related practices, including:

- librarians providing in-service professional development opportunities to teachers,
- librarians and principals meeting regularly,
- librarians serving on key school committees, and
- library access being scheduled flexibly. (See Chart 10.)

In addition, where administrators considered it essential or desirable to address the librarian's role in teacher interviews, they were more than twice as likely to rate as excellent the teaching of ICT literacy and social responsibility, and more than half again as likely to rate as excellent the teaching of independent learning. (See Chart 11.)



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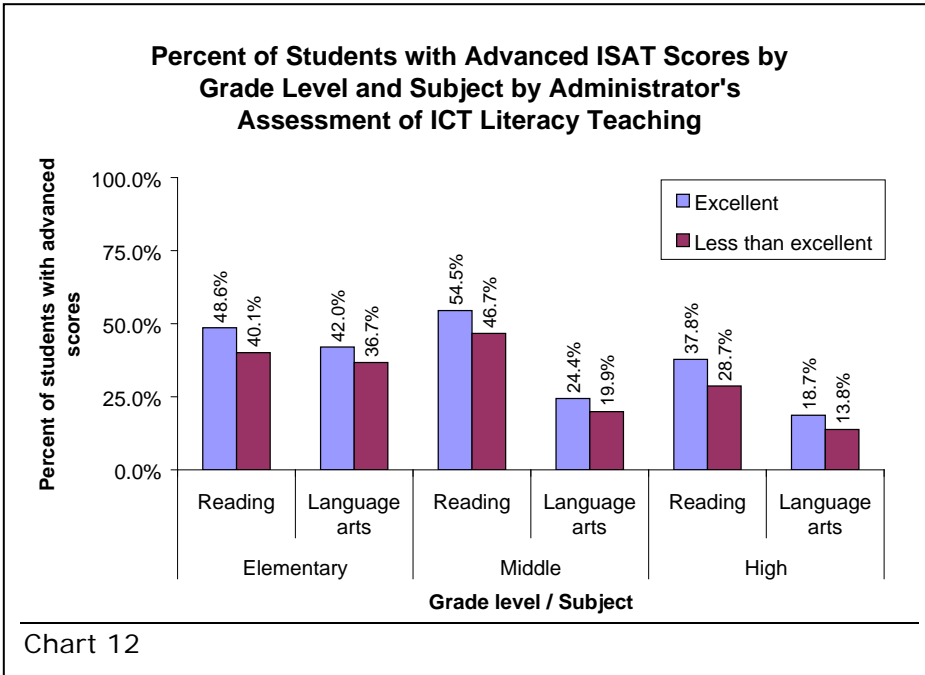


Chart 12

Where principals and other administrators rated the teaching of ICT standards as excellent, students at all three grade levels—elementary, middle and high school—were consistently more likely to earn advanced scores on the ISAT reading and language arts tests. (See Chart 12.)

Notably, while the absolute differences between groups in Chart 12 are usually single-digit percentages, the proportional differences between groups are consistently into double

digits—as well as being higher at high school than elementary level. For instance, at the elementary level, 48.6% of students in schools rated excellent at ICT literacy teaching scored advanced on reading, compared to only 40.1% of students where ICT literacy teaching was rated lower. That is an absolute difference of more than 8%; but, a proportional difference of more than 21% ($48.6 / 40.1 = 1.21$). Similarly, at the high school level, 18.7% of students in schools rated excellent at ICT literacy teaching scored advanced on language arts, compared to only 13.8% of students where ICT literacy teaching was rated lower. That is an absolute difference of less than 5%; but, a proportional difference of more than 35% ($18.7 / 13.8 = 1.355$).

These findings underscore the importance of administrator support for strong school library programs. Administrators tended to assess the teaching of ICT standards more highly where they considered certain practices to be essential (or, in one case, at least desirable). Such practices include: flexibly scheduled access to the school library, instructional collaboration between librarians and teachers, librarians providing in-service opportunities to teachers, librarians serving on school committees, librarians and principals meeting regularly, and the librarian’s role being addressed in teacher hiring interviews. In turn, where administrators self-assessed the teaching of ICT literacy as excellent, students were consistently more likely to earn advanced scores on the ISAT reading and language arts tests.

Bottom Line
 Where administrators value strong library programs and can see them doing their part for student success, students are more likely to thrive academically.

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Recommendations

On the basis of the results across the three educator groups—librarians, teachers, and administrators—three major sets of recommendations can be offered.

- **To encourage collaboration between librarians, teachers, and administrators:**
 - Administrators should set the stage for effective collaborations by making it known that they expect it to be the norm.
 - Administrators should meet regularly with their librarians.
 - Administrators should address the librarian’s role with prospective new teachers during hiring interviews.
 - Teachers should turn to librarians as fellow instructors, especially for technology integration.
 - Librarians should be receptive to teacher-initiated collaboration, especially invitations to teach or co-teach in classrooms.

- **To improve access to instructional resources:**
 - Administrators should make it school policy to schedule library access as flexibly as possible.
 - Administrators should appoint librarians to school committees that will enable them to understand as fully as possible the instructional resource needs of their schools.
 - Teachers should turn to librarians, not just as instructional support, but also as curricular/instructional resources managers and, where and as appropriate, as website managers and technology troubleshooters.
 - Librarians should ensure that teachers have the instructional resources they need, both by providing such resources proactively and by responding to teacher requests.

- **To improve the skills of teachers:**
 - Administrators should foster the creation of schedules, facilities, and librarian-teacher relationships that enable librarians to be “resident” providers of in-service professional development to teachers.
 - Teachers should turn to librarians as “resident” in-service providers.
 - Librarians should be proactive in inviting teachers to in-service learning opportunities that might improve their information, communication and technology (ICT) skills.

Bottom Line Recommendation

Generally, almost all of these recommendations are demonstrably easier to fulfill when the library is staffed by a library media specialist.

If hiring an LMS for every school is at all feasible fiscally, steps should be taken to do so.

Otherwise, non-LMS librarians, their teachers, and their administrators should be encouraged to pursue academic courses and/or professional development opportunities that will better equip them all to ensure that their school libraries do as much as possible to foster student success.

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Sample Success Stories

This is a sampling of the success stories that appear later in Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the report.

From a librarian

A... success these past couple years is collaborating with teachers on technology integration. I have co-taught with a couple of social studies teachers on research projects where the information is presented on a wiki. The teachers were responsible for the content and I taught the research and wiki skills. The students were highly engaged in the projects and the teachers felt much more comfortable trying a new technology since I was the one responsible for that part of the assignment. This year I did a similar project with a health teacher and we added podcasts to the wiki. Again the teacher was responsible for teaching the content of the podcasts and I taught the students how to use the podcast software. The students loved making podcasts to present the information they had learned!

- Library media specialist, junior high/middle school

From a teacher

My students compete in National History Day every year. They not only need to use the usual resources of school library books, encyclopedias and internet searches, they need to find primary resources. Because of the efforts and forward thinking of our school librarian, we have access to an incredible lending library. Students can "borrow" books from practically any library in the U.S.! The librarian has also set up information services by subscribing to LiLI (Libraries Linking Idaho)...The skills my students learn from our librarian has enabled them to succeed in their research for the National History Day competition. They win regularly at the regional level, many times at the State level and every few years they make it to Washington D.C. to present their projects and research...

-Teacher, a junior high school

From an administrator

The media center specialist ... is an essential and integral part of our school. We work together in order to provide our students a successful library experience. Our students have library twice each week. The first visit consists of a lesson--related to media tasks, but also tied to instruction that is taking place in classrooms. During the second visit, students are invited to check out books and then read. .. I feel that we have a great partnership between the administration, teachers, and media specialist.

- Principal, an elementary school