# Why Do New York's Kids Need Strong School Libraries?

### *School libraries are essential for student achievement.*

More than 60 studies nationwide have shown that students in schools with good school libraries learn more, get better grades, and score higher on standardized tests than their peers in schools without libraries.

- Students at schools with better-funded libraries tend to achieve higher average reading scores, whether their schools and communities are rich or poor and whether adults in the community are well or poorly educated. (Lance, ERIC Digest, 1995, 2002)
- Comparing Iowa elementary schools with the highest and lowest reading scores, the highest-scoring students use more than 2 1/2 times as many books and other materials during library visits. (Lance, 2002)
- Research in Oregon shows that whatever the current level of development of a school's library program, incremental improvements in its staffing, collections, and budget will yield incremental increases in reading scores. **(**Lance, Rodney, Hamilton-Pennell, 2001)

### *School libraries provide much-needed access to books and resources for students, especially those in low-income communities.*

Highly performing schools have school libraries with significantly more resources per student than poorly performing schools.

- School libraries offer access to print, audio, and electronic resources that help to equalize opportunities for success for students who may be at risk and whose families are unable to provide these resources. (Queen's University and People for Education, 2006)
- The Ontario Ministry of Education's Expert Panel on Students at Risk (2003) found that "Students need the opportunity to select their own reading material…and they need access to a wide variety of accessible materials. These are critical factors in ongoing reading achievement." (Ministry of Education, 2003)
- The presence of a well-stocked and staffed school library can be an essential element for the success of students at risk. (Queen's University and People for Education, 2006)
- In Illinois, fifth-grade reading and writing scores increased by about 8 percent, eighth-grade writing scores by almost 14 percent, and 11th-grade college-entrance scores by almost 4 percent from schools with smaller to larger collections. (Lance, Rodney, and Hamilton-Pennell, 2005)
- A Texas study of school libraries found that among those variables associated with Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test performance was volumes per student in the school library, (Smith, Ester. 2001.

### *School libraries encourage and enhance literacy.*

Research has shown that school libraries have the tools to inspire literacy in learners of all ages, offering the opportunity to read stories and explore information that matters to them.

- Literacy develops in settings that provide resources and opportunities for children to become involved with its cultural tools. (Celano and Neuman, 2001)
- Many families in poverty may value literacy, but have only minimal connections with schools. Therefore it is important to strengthen these connections and build on community assets such as school libraries if literacy is to be a cultural, social, and cognitive achievement for all children. (Celano and Neuman, 2001)
- School library programs in North Carolina elementary, middle, and high schools have a significant positive impact on standardized reading and English test scores, and scores tended to increase when libraries in the schools had newer books and were open and staffed more hours during the school week. (Burgin and Bracy, 2003)
- Hundreds of studies have shown that the best readers read the most and poor readers read the least, supporting the theory that high exposure to print has a positive impact on word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, general knowledge, and reading comprehension. (National Reading Panel, 2000).