

The National Library Power Program [1p]

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"Our library has changed so much! Last year, all we did was go in there for 30 minutes, picked out the book we wanted for 15 minutes, and listen to a story for 15 minutes. Now we can go anytime with a library clip. And we can earn time! We go in there, pick out a book, lay down, get a pillow, and rest and read. The library just changed. Researching is fun in the library because we have a computer. It has almost everything in it. It will print almost 10 pages on anything. I love my library, and you would too!"--Vallery Lomas, Third Grade, Jefferson Terrace Elementary School, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Vallery is a third-grade student at a Library Power school in Baton Rouge, Louisiana Library Power school and Her observations are testimony to the changes in teaching and learning that are happening as a result of the National Library Power Program.

The National Library Power Program is designed to create public elementary and middle school library programs that improve the quality of educational services for children. Using the school library media center as a catalyst for school reform, the Library Power Program is demonstrating new ways of educating young people, and is making an impact on children in 702 schools nationwide.

The DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund started the National Library Power Program in 1988 in New York City public schools. In the first three years of the program, more than 100 school library media centers were renovated and improved. New York City Library Power director Sheila Salmon said, "Libraries in New York City schools went from being a subject in school to a real part of school life; from being barren warehouses to rooms that are the hubs of schools."

Based on that success, the Fund expanded the program nationally and, by the end of 1992, grants had been made to local education funds in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Cambridge and Lynn, Massachusetts; Paterson, New Jersey; Providence, Rhode Island; Rochester, New York; and Tucson, Arizona. In 1993, five additional sites: Chattanooga, Tennessee; Cleveland, Ohio; Denver, Colorado; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Miami, Florida: received Library Power grants. And the final round of Library Power sites were added in 1994. They are Atlanta, Georgia; Berea, Kentucky; McKeesport, Pennsylvania; and Raleigh, North Carolina. Berea and McKeesport Library Power projects are the first rural school districts to be involved in the program. Both are also multidistrict sites with

Forward in the Fifth, the Berea local education fund, working with four school districts, and Mon Valley Education Fund, the McKeesport local education fund, working with five school districts.

The National Library Power Program is being implemented in 20 sites throughout the country; the Fund's investment in the 463,000 children in Library Power schools totals more than \$40 million.

Library Power grants have been awarded to local education funds, not to school districts. Local education funds are tax-exempt, nonprofit, community-based organizations that work to build community support for high-quality public education. Though each Library Power project is unique, they all are working to achieve the National Program Goals and to change teaching and learning for children. The National Program Goals are:

- To create a national vision and new expectations for public elementary and middle school library programs, and to encourage new and innovative uses of the library's physical and human resources.
- To create exemplary models of library media programs that are an integral part of the educational process.
- To strengthen the role of the librarian as a teacher, information specialist, and learning facilitator who assists teachers and students in becoming effective users of ideas and information.
- To encourage collaboration among teachers, administrators, and librarians that results in significant improvement in teaching and the learning process.
- To demonstrate the significant contributions that library programs can make to school reform and restructuring efforts.
- To encourage the creation of partnerships among leaders in school districts, public libraries, community agencies, business communities, academic institutions, and parent groups to improve and support school library programs.

Library Power grant funds are used to provide professional development for teachers, school librarians, and administrators; to renovate school libraries; to match public funds for books and other library materials; and to hire project staff.

As part of their contribution, Library Power school districts must provide a full-time, certified library media specialist in each Library Power school library; commit to keeping Library Power school libraries open throughout the day with schedules that allow students to go to the library individually, in small groups, and with their classes; support all release-time costs for staff to attend Library Power professional development activities; and cover labor costs for remodeling or renovating the school library.

As Chattanooga Library Power Director Barbara Stripling described, "Making schools and libraries learner-centered: which means kid-centered," is really the primary goal of this national school reform initiative.

Frank J. DeTardo, principal at Cleveland Library Power's Woodland Hills School, described the transformation in his school:

"The Library Power program has sparked interest and enthusiasm in Woodland Hills school library. The brightly painted walls and motif provide the background for a rejuvenation project that enlisted the volunteer services of staff and parents alike. But, Library Power's real change at Woodland Hills is the new attitude that is evident as teachers and the librarian plan together, devising research projects and lessons for their students. At Woodland Hills, the library is quickly becoming the hub of learning activities for everyone: students, teachers and parents."

DeTardo's description is indicative of the changes that are taking place at the building and district levels in Library Power school districts. Lynn, MA associate superintendent Lou Perullo explained, "We're rethinking the role of the library in the school. We see the library as a major integrator of the teaching that's going on. It's far more than a traditional library."

Community-wide collaborative activities have been another important component of Library Power projects. All projects are making connections with the local public library, but as Lincoln Library Power director Trixie Schmidt said, "Library Power is bringing together groups that don't normally work together. Schools can be so busy with the process of teaching that there isn't time to bring in the community." Collaborative projects with businesses, social service organizations, the media, and colleges and universities are being implemented in Library Power communities.

And Library Power is having an impact that reaches far beyond the walls of the schools. When Library Power came to Paterson, New Jersey, none of its elementary school library media centers had full-time school librarians, and the community did not have a bookstore. Today, there are full-time librarians in 20 elementary schools, and a specialty bookstore recently opened. Local education fund director Irene Sterling said, "We've raised the expectations of the community: especially the kids."

National Program Coordinator Ann Carlson Weeks (also executive director of the American Association of School Librarians) said, "The National Library Power Program has enabled us to work with communities to implement the concepts outlined in *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*." The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has a grant from DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund to coordinate the national program and provide expert technical assistance to Library Power sites.

"Teaching and learning are transformed as library media specialists, teachers, and administrators jointly receive the staff development and the support they need to plan collaboratively to help students become effective users of ideas and information," Weeks concluded.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Library and Information Studies

recently received a grant from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund to conduct a four-year evaluation of the National Library Power Program. The evaluation will be lead by Professor Douglas L. Zweizig and Associate Professor Dianne McAfee Hopkins. Other members of the evaluation team include David Loertscher, president of Hi Willow Research and Publishing; and Debra Wilcox Johnson, of Johnson and Johnson Consulting.

Library Power sites will provide models for the best practices in school library media programs well into the twenty-first century, and the results of the national evaluation will guide the development of the profession. However, the best evaluators of the National Library Power Program are the children in Library Power schools.

Kaylan Malm, Ryan Kehn, and Carolyn Sobeck Chase, fifth-graders at Denver Library Power's Louisville Elementary School, described the changes in their learning environment:

"Then . . . I remember what the library used to be like. We came in once a month and we didn't get to choose our books. The carpet was ugly, and when I was little it scared me. No one was ever in here, and the books were too thin. A long time ago, the librarian never let us speak about what we thought about the books.

Now . . . it's more lively in here, it smells fresh. With that old carpet, you couldn't breathe. Now you can breathe! Now we have books that are exciting to learn from; I can learn about anything. I really want to learn about the future: what space technicians and scientists will do about the ozone layer; how to get rid of pollution; can we save the wolves?"