CERTIFIED TEACHER LIBRARIAN PRACTICES

FOSTERING SUCCESS IN UTAH'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

A UTAH LEADING THROUGH EFFECTIVE, ACTIONABLE, AND DYNAMIC EDUCATION

INNOVATIVE PRACTICE REPORT

ULEAD
EDUCATION

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ABOUT
THIS REPORT

Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable, and Dynamic (ULEAD) Education was created to find, research, and highlight proven practices in Utah schools for replication statewide. ULEAD partners with practitioners, researchers, and education organizations to develop and curate resources, foster collaboration, and drive systemic change for improved student outcomes. The ULEAD Clearinghouse is a growing repository of innovative, effective, and efficient practice resources and tools to support educators.

The ULEAD Steering Committee, composed of current Utah educators and stakeholders, meets quarterly to inform the focus priorities that ULEAD will research. ULEAD uses data to find positive outliers in each focus area and create reports, such as this one, illuminating the practices and policies that lead to positive outcomes. At the time of this report, these priorities include: Student Attendance, Educator Retention and Job Satisfaction, Strategic Engagement through Technology, Middle School Mathematics Success, and Multilingual Learner Achievement. Additional priorities are under review.

This report addresses the practices of Certified Teacher Librarians that may positively impact student success in elementary school. ULEAD collaborates with Institutes of Higher Education and education practitioners to develop Innovative Practice Reports. This report was developed in partnership with Utah State University.

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Dr. Kelli Munns leads the School Library Program at Utah State University in addition to teaching and mentoring Instructional Technology & Learning Sciences graduate students. Munns earned her MEd in Leadership in Education and Administration Development at Southern Utah University. Her doctoral research was focused on using simulation technology as a feedback modality for performance competencies with an emphasis on feedback literacy. Prior to joining USU faculty, Munns was the keynote speaker for the USU Empowering Teaching Excellence (ETE) Conference in 2017 and was named the Animal, Dairy and Veterinary Sciences teacher of the year in 2018. Currently, she serves on the Board of the Utah School Library Association and is an avid equestrian.

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(Soulen & Tedrow, 2022, p. 624)
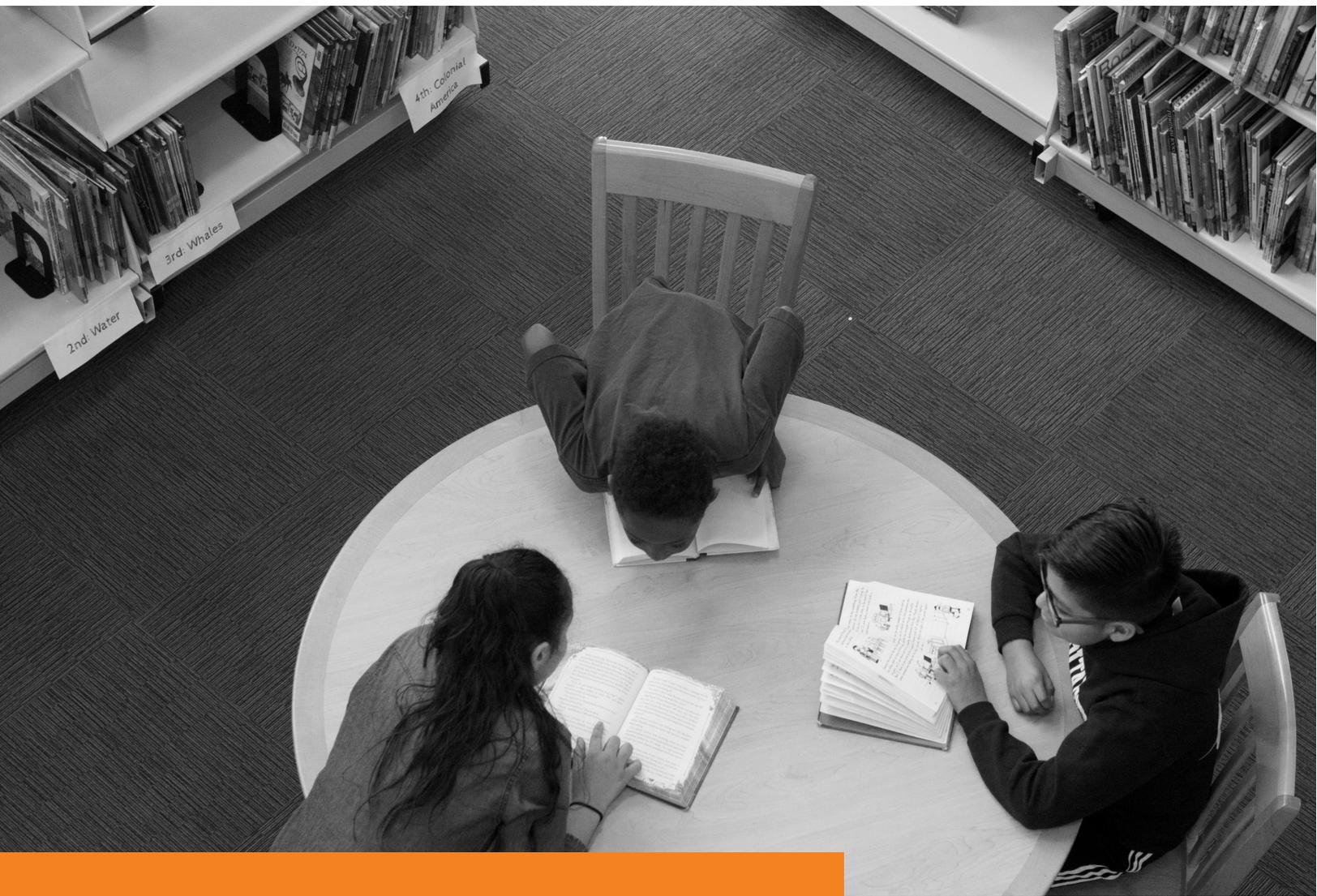
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Two elementary schools in Salt Lake School District were identified and examined to determine which innovative and intentional practices were implemented by their certified teacher librarians.

The practice sites for this study included two elementary schools in the Salt Lake City School district.

To be considered an outlier, a school had to demonstrate achievement in the 85th percentile or higher in the state for the included grade levels over two school years. This criterion identified the top 15% of schools for each school year. Schools also had to employ a full-time certified teacher librarian.

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Research and state impact studies have demonstrated that **there is a positive relationship between student academic achievement and the quality of a school library program**, expressly when operated with a certified teacher librarian (CTL) (Lance & Kachel, 2018). Library experiences have the potential to impact student success. According to Wine et al., 2023, "The school library is one of the microsystems that students and teachers interact with in the school environment. These interactions with the school library and school librarians provide opportunities to influence student learning" (p. 1).

This study examined CTL practices through the five standards outlined in the Highly Effective Schools Through Librarians (HESTL) framework. Expertise and training in the field of librarianship were evidenced by both teachers across the five practices including:
- **Planning**
- **Instruction**
- **Leadership**
- **Environment**
- **Management**

When CTLs and classroom teachers collaborate as instructional partners, the library becomes a learning environment that enhances and supports student learning outcomes. School libraries and the roles of CTLs are strengthened by administrative support of the CTLs as educators with expertise that improves student learning, fosters 21st century competencies, and facilitates technology integration.

One limitation to instilling a CTL is the availability of full-time certified positions, yet the impact may be worth allocating a CTL position. Tim Miller, Beacon Heights Elementary School Principal, "I don't think our teachers would let [our librarian] go. The Beacon Heights' teachers have had a certified librarian for so many years that they wouldn't want to be in this school without one. They realize that **expertise in that space is very valuable.**"

REVIEW OF RESEARCH

Understanding School Libraries & Certified Teacher Librarians

State impact studies and current research on school libraries have demonstrated there is a significant correlation between student academic success and the quality of the school library, especially relating to the intentionality of the library programming and the level of school librarians' expertise. This expertise can encompass a variety of qualifications, including a degree in library science, a teacher-librarian certification, or certification or training as a paraprofessional (Lance & Kachel, 2018).

While nearly 90% of schools have a librarian, only 60% of those librarians are employed full-time. Between 2000 and 2018, approximately 20% of school librarian positions, or roughly 10,000 positions, were eliminated (International Literacy Association, 2022; Martinez, 2024). Trained school librarians have been replaced by non-certified and less costly paraprofessionals, and in some cases, libraries have been dismantled and removed entirely from schools. The National Center for Education Statistics reports a 20% decline in school librarians since 2010 (Maughan, 2023).

Professionals in the field have long anticipated the concern for school libraries being at risk in the public school landscape and have sought to emphasize the value that a school library and teacher librarian add to student academic achievement. As early as 1963, a study examined 271 schools across 13 states and found a positive correlation between certified teacher librarians and student achievement (Gaver, 1963). Emerging in the 1990s, a profusion of research focusing on the effect of school libraries came to light. By the early 2000s, bolstered by the emphasis on standardized testing through the No Child Left Behind Act, more than 20 states had conducted library studies on what is now called a "school library impact study" (Kachel, 2013).

Across these school library impact studies, findings consistently demonstrate that a school library with a certified teacher-librarian positively impacts standardized test scores, interpersonal and affective skills, and literacy outcomes (Burress et al., 2023; Todd et al., 2010). A 2018 review of 26 statewide impact studies, including one in Utah, found that the positive impact of full-time, qualified school librarians on standards-based tests, regardless of student demographics or school characteristics, was the most 'substantial and consistent finding' (Lance & Kachel, 2018).

The leading factor influencing student success through school libraries is the employment of a full-time certified teacher librarian (CTL). Prior studies have reported that students' state standardized test scores were higher when they had a full-time CTL compared to a part-time CTL or no CTL (Buress et al., 2023; Wine et al., 2023; Coker, 2015; Dow et al., 2012). This impact is potentially more significant for students of low socioeconomic status, students with disabilities, and students from historically marginalized demographics (Lance & Kachel, 2018; Soulen & Tedrow, 2022). These positive findings explicate how the school library is an extension of the classroom. CTLs are educators who support and enrich learning by what they actionably do during students' library time and the library space and resources, as well as how they integrate with teachers and administrators (Russell et al., 2020; Buress et al., 2023).

Actions of Certified Teacher Librarians Providing Quality School Library Programs
(Lance & Kachel, 2018, p.17)

- Instruct students (with classroom teachers and independently)
- Plan collaboratively with classroom teachers
- Provide professional development to teachers
- Meet regularly with the principal
- Serve on key school leadership committees
- Facilitate the use of technology by students and teachers
- Provide technology support to teachers
- Provide reading incentive programs

Effective CTLs use student library time to improve thinking-based competencies (e.g., analysis, knowledge synthesis, cognition processes), cultivate learning management skills (e.g., independent learning), support reading development outcomes, and teach the library media curriculum (e.g., information and media literacy, research skills, computational thinking) (Wine et al., 2023; Todd et al., 2010). CTLs are especially effective in the areas mentioned when they can collaborate through instructional partnerships with classroom teachers and are valued and supported by their administration (Johnston & Greene, 2018). As stated by Burress et al. (2023, p. 15):

> District and school administrators should be taught and reminded that highly qualified school librarians can do everything they are taught in coursework above, plus serve in leadership capacities such as school/district improvement teams, curriculum, budget, technology, and diversity committees, IEP meetings and more. School librarians work with every student and every teacher in the school and when highly qualified for the position, they can have a significant impact on student learning.

Elementary school libraries are in particularly unique learning spaces compared to their secondary counterparts. Elementary students typically spend time in the library through the compulsory class visits scheduled to allow classroom teachers preparatory time. Elementary school libraries are positioned to help students with literacy and writing since these competencies are a prominent curricular focus of this age group (Lance & Kachel, 2018).

Existing studies have proven young learners have increased reading comprehension when they read from print sources, self-select materials, and have adult models foster reading for pleasure. In their study of extended school library closures during the pandemic, Soulen and Tedrow (2022) anticipated significant and lasting impact on reading comprehension due to decreased access for 6-10 year olds. These findings expand the importance of elementary school children's access to their school libraries, including access to a certified teacher librarian who is trained to help guide appropriate book selection based on student reading level and interest, something young students often cannot do autonomously (Wine et al., 2023).

Studies have found that access to school libraries and librarians vary widely, but there are some trends within student subgroups. Nationally, students in smaller or rural districts typically have fewer librarians. Districts with higher rates of poverty are twice as likely to lack a library versus higher income areas. Similarly, districts with a majority Hispanic population and those with the most multilingual learners (top quartile) are both twice as likely to lack a school librarian (SLIDE, 2021a).

There are no federal requirements to have school libraries or librarians. A

2021 survey of state librarians found that only 26 states require school librarians by law or education code (Kachel & Lance, 2021). Of those, some librarians reported the law was not enforced and there were variations in funding support. Similarly, requirements for school librarians vary by state with some local education agencies given license to set their own requirements (School Library Connection Archive, 2023).

In addition to teacher certification, some states require a Bachelor's degree in education and a Master's in library science or library media education from an American Library Association accredited school. Many states additionally require the related Library Media Specialist Praxis II with a minimum score and additional education endorsements.

Utah School Libraries
As of the 2024 school year, Utah had 975 public K-12 schools, encompassing 332 secondary schools, 621 elementary schools, and 22 K-12 schools. Additionally, there were 172 special purpose schools serving various needs such as Pre-K, vocational, alternate, and virtual education.

According to the Comprehensive Administration of Credentials for Teachers in Utah Schools (CACTUS) database, in the 2024 school year Utah employed 236 certified teacher librarians (CTLs) and 662 library paraprofessionals. It is important to note that while the CACTUS data provides the most accurate available information for this analysis, the CTL counts are not entirely complete. This warrants cautious interpretation of the results.

Librarians in Full-Time Equivalents

| | 0-399 FTE | | 400-799 FTE | | 800-1199 FTE | | 1200+ FTE |

Librarians per School

| | 0-0.24 | | 0.25-0.49 | | 0.50-0.74 | | 0.75-1.00 |

Students per Librarian

| | 0-499 | | 500-999 | | 1000-1499 | | 1500-1999 |
| | 2000-2499 | | 2500-2999 | | 3000+ |

The School Librarian Investigation: Divergence & Evolution (SLIDE) is a multi-year investigation of school libraries and librarians bringing together a project team from across universities. SLIDE used more than a decade of available data to assess patterns and trends in school librarian employment, continues to monitor school librarian employment, and develops interactive data tools. In their national comparison, Utah was one of the states with the fewest full-time librarians (<400 statewide), fewest librarians per school (<0.25 per school), and most students per librarian (>1,500 students per librarian) (SLIDE, 2021b).

The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) does not mandate the employment of CTLs to operate school library media centers. Some districts elect to run media centers with paraeducators. To support school libraries statewide, the USBE provides a state library media specialist and implements the Utah Core Standards for Library Media. If a school employs a CTL, that person must be a licensed educator with the Library/Media Specialist endorsement. The endorsement existed prior to 1990, but that is the earliest date listed in the CACTUS system.

Most school districts require certified teacher librarians at the sec-

ondary level. In contrast, elementary school libraries are often staffed by paraprofessionals (non-certified, classified staff), with three notable exceptions: Salt Lake City, South Summit, and Park City school districts, which require certified teacher librarians at all their schools. Certified teacher librarians in all Utah schools face challenges due to budget constraints, misconceptions about library impact, and competing educational priorities.

A recent Utah study highlighted a disconnect between teacher perceptions and practices regarding information literacy instruction. While teachers believed this responsibility should be shared with school librarians, the majority did not collaborate with them (Fullmer & Strand, 2023). This discrepancy suggests a lack of recognition among many teachers and administrators regarding CTLs' expertise and potential contributions in collaborative teaching and leadership roles. Consequently, CTLs are often underutilized as instructional partners and leaders, and instead find themselves overburdened with support tasks like substitute teaching, testing duties, and clerical work (Fullmer & Strand, 2023). As stated by the Utah Parent Teacher Association (2021) resolution report, EDU 2021-2:

Teacher Librarians and School Library Media Programs: The Utah PTA and its constituent associations encourage local school boards to find new methods to hire, at all levels, teacher librarians, who have earned teaching certificates and library media endorsements for professional tasks, accompanied by library assistants for clerical tasks, to provide equitable opportunities in all schools and give all Utah students, irrespective of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, the opportunity to succeed academically. (p.1)

Advocacy for certified teacher librarians in all Utah schools has a long history evidenced through Utah Parent Teacher resolutions. In 2019, the resolution report "EDU 2019-2: Support for Quality Literacy Education" further underscored the importance of school libraries employing certified teacher librarians and support staff to enhance early literacy outcomes and bolster school library resource collections. This report itself builds upon a legacy of literacy advocacy that can be traced back to the 1997 resolution report "EDU 1997-1."

Recently, the value of school libraries and librarians has garnered renewed attention as school leaders and policymakers prioritize improving early literacy outcomes (as

Median Percentage of Students Who Checked Out an Item from School Library
2023 Utah Library Program Status Survey (Appendix A)

At Schools With CTL 37%

At Schools Without CTL 3.3%
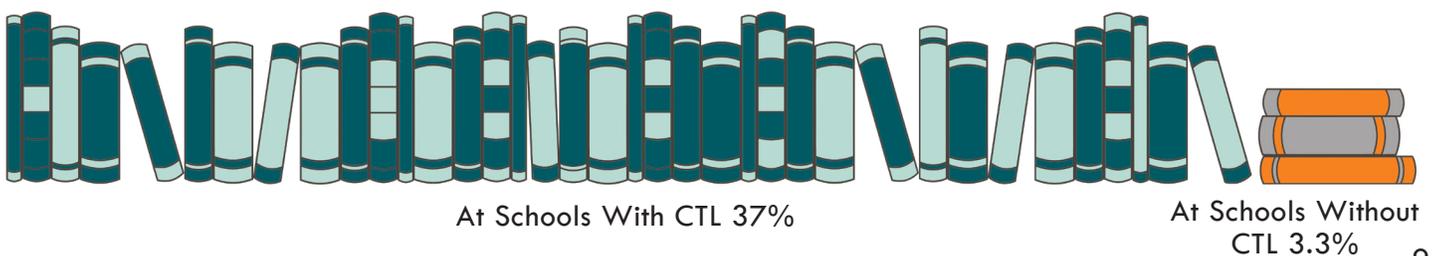
Librarian Collaboration in at least one PLC per month

2023 Utah Library Program Status Survey (Appendix A)

emphasized by the legislative enactment of S.B. 127) and grapple with the complexities of addressing book challenges and sensitive materials (highlighted by H.B. 29 and Utah Code 53G-10-103). This confluence of factors suggests that Utah is undergoing a transformative period, prompting a reevaluation of the vital role of school libraries and librarians in the education system.

The 2023 Utah Library Program Status Survey, with 240 Utah school library staff respondents, including CTLs, paraprofessionals, media specialists, and library coaches, offered valuable insights into the impact of certified teacher librarians in Utah schools. The survey data revealed striking differences between schools with CTLs and those without, particularly in student engagement, library integration, professional development, collection management, funding, and resources (see Appendix A).

Schools with CTLs exhibited significantly higher student engagement with library resources, evident in a considerably higher median percentage of students checking out items (see graph page 9). This suggests CTLs actively foster a culture of reading and resource utilization. Furthermore, CTLs are more deeply integrated into the school's academic fabric, with library programs and funding more frequently tied to School Improvement Plans.

CTLs commitment to professional growth and collaboration was evident in their active participation in district-level meetings, collaborative instruction with teachers, and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (see graph, left inset). Additionally, schools with CTLs benefited from significantly higher funding levels, allowing for greater investment in both books and materials to support student learning. CTLs were also more likely to lead professional development initiatives and maintain proactive communication with school principals.

The survey also highlighted the CTL's role in collection development, with more frequent analysis and weeding processes ensuring relevant and up-to-date resources. The increased prevalence of maker spaces in schools with CTLs further underscores their focus on fostering creativity and hands-on learning. Overall, the 2023 survey data reinforces the associations of roles, resources, and support of CTLs in Utah's school libraries. Their presence correlates strongly with increased student engagement, deeper academic integration, robust professional collaboration, and effective collection management. However, it is important to note

that this survey was not mandatory, responses regarding budget and circulation were not validated, and not all Utah school districts are represented in the data.

An analysis of Acadience Reading outcomes for Utah students in grades 1-3 during the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years revealed mixed associations between the presence of a certified teacher librarian and student achievement (see Appendix B). While racial minorities, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners demonstrated higher achievement in schools with CTLs, the overall student population and low-income students showed slightly higher achievement in schools without CTLs. However, these differences in achievement were minor for all student categories, ranging from 0.3% to 2.4%. In contrast to the mixed associations with achievement, student growth was consistently higher across all student groups in schools with CTLs compared to those without, although these differences were also minor, ranging from 0.4% to 2.2%.

It's important to emphasize that these findings represent correlations, not causation. Other student-level factors (such as prior academic performance and other socioeconomic status) and school-level factors (such as teacher quality and available resources) can significantly influence achievement and growth. This analysis did not control for these additional factors, so it's not possible to definitively attribute the observed differences solely to the presence or absence of CTLs.

METHODOLOGY & DATA COLLECTION

This project employed a mixed-method descriptive research design. Data were gathered from participants through surveys and interviews to identify effective practices and programs implemented by certified teacher librarians to support student academic success.

Participant Identification
The elementary certified teacher librarians involved in this study were selected based on criteria established in previous state-level school library impact studies (Coker, 2015; Kachel, 2013; Wine et al., 2023; Todd et al., 2010; 2011). A key factor in selection was high student achievement on standardized reading tests. Specific criteria included:

School District, Salt Lake City School District (SLCSD). Utah has only three school districts that require certified teacher librarians at the elementary level. SLCSD was selected of these three to enhance generalizability of findings. Compared to the other two districts, SLCSD has a more diverse student population and a median household income closer to the state median, making findings more broadly applicable (NCES, 2018-2022).

School Level, Elementary, grades 1-3. Elementary schools were selected because they serve students developing foundational skills, particularly in literacy, an area where libraries can play a key role. Lance & Kachel (2018) found elementary libraries to be uniquely positioned to support literacy and writing com-petencies though compulsory class visits. The focus on certified teacher librarians at this level is significant because most Utah elementary school libraries are staffed by paraprofessionals.

School Years, SY22 and SY23. Data from the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years were included to ensure results were consistent and not anomalous.

Assessment, Acadience Reading. This benchmark assessment is administered three times annually to Utah students in grades K-6. Statewide implementation began in the 2016-2017 school year.

Outcome Measure, Percentage of Students at or above benchmark. Student achievement was measured by the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the benchmark on the End of Year Acadience Reading test. Acadience Reading benchmarks are research-based target scores indicating adequate reading skills for a given grade and time of year.

Acadience Reading benchmarks were developed through research examining the predictive validity of scores compared to later Acadience Reading and other external assessments. Students at or above benchmark have an 80-90% chance of reaching subsequent benchmarks (Acadience Reading Inc., 2021).

Analysis of Outcome Measure, Percentile. To be considered an outlier, a school had to demonstrate achievement in the 85th percentile or higher for the included grade levels for both school years. This criterion identified the top 15% of schools for each school year.

Librarian Responsibilities & Duties Actions. "The most universal finding [in library studies on educational gains of school library programs] is the presence of full-time, certified school librarians and appropriate support staff who implement a quality, school integrated program of library services" (Kachel, 2011, p.4). As such, the school librarians had to meet these requirements:

1. Had a teaching license and a school library media endorsement.
2. Taught the Utah Standards for Elementary Library Media.
3. Curated intentional book collections for their student population.
4. Collaborated with classroom teachers.
5. Assessed and evaluated how to expand their library access and programming.
6. Received support from the building administrator (i.e., principal) and/or district administration (i.e., specialists).

Eight SLCSD schools met the school outlier criteria. Ultimately, nine participants were interviewed from two of these schools, Beacon Heights Elementary and Uintah Elementary.

Data Collection

Prior to enrolling these schools, the researcher notified the Salt Lake City School District's (SLCSD) Superintendent and Executive Director of Teaching and Learning via email, informing them of SLCSD's selection for the elementary library ULEAD report. Subsequently, the principals and librarians at Beacon Heights and Uintah Elementary were emailed details about the study, including participant criteria, recruitment material, and an informed consent document. Upon receiving consent from both schools' principals and librarians, interviews were scheduled.

Quantitative Data. Each of the eight participants completed an online Qualtrics survey. This survey gathered data on the participants' perceptions of their librarian and library program based on the five standards of Highly Effective Schools through Libraries (HESTL) (see Appendix #). The survey comprised 13 Likert-scale questions with the following scale: 1-Basic, 2-Partially Proficient, 3-Proficient, 4-Accomplished, 5-Exemplary, and Not Applicable. After the participants' last interview, the researcher emailed them the online Qualtrics survey link. The Likert scores were calculated to produce an overall average score.

Qualitative Data. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the CTLs, principals, and classroom teachers from the two high-performing elementary schools, focusing on their perceptions of programs and practices that contributed to student academic success. The interviews were guided by the five HESTL standards. Thematic coding was then applied to the interview data using a codebook based on the HESTL framework. Coded data was extracted, grouped, and counted, with the codes organized into a matrix to visualize the conceptual themes and study outcomes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
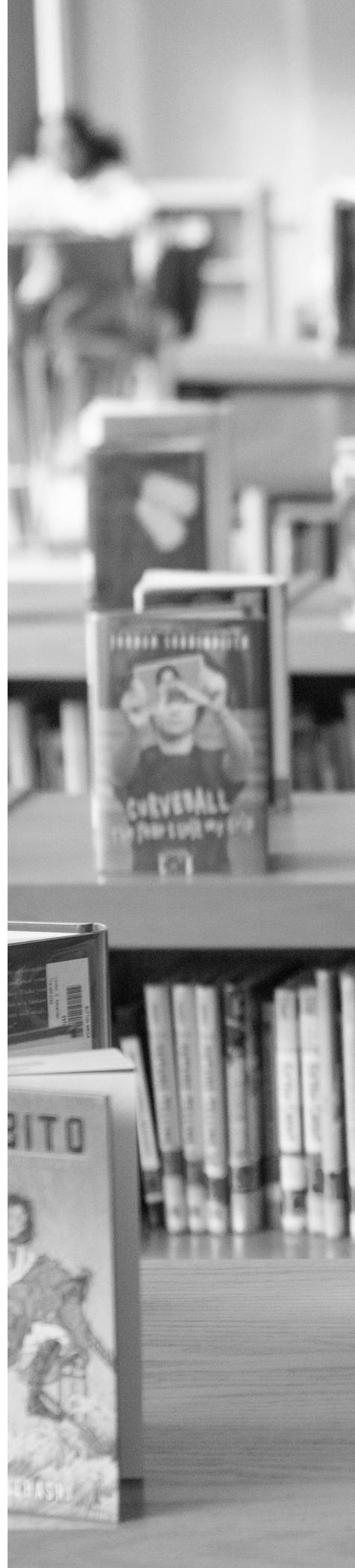
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Salt Lake City School District

The Salt Lake City School District (SLCSD), situated in Utah's largest metropolitan center, serves nearly 19,000 students speaking over 80 languages. The state's flagship district, SLCSD's boundaries mirror that of Salt Lake City. The district includes 22 elementary schools, 1 K-8 school, 5 middle schools, 5 high schools, 2 charter schools, and 1 specialty school. The district also has three community learning centers which are a partnership between the district and community resources. As an urban minority-majority district, SLCSD's student population is 59% ethnic minority and 34% of students are English language learners. Thirteen percent of SLCSD students have a disability while 53% are economically disadvantaged.

- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- Two or more races
- White

Beacon Heights Elementary

Beacon Heights Elementary enrolls approximately 350 students from preschool to sixth grade. The school has significantly higher achievement rates than the district and state averages including 74% of students meeting literacy proficiency and 75% meeting mathematics proficiency in the 2023-2024 school year (USBE, 2024). Teachers at Beacon Heights are experienced with 88% of teachers having 7 or more years of experience and 52% having been at the school at least 3 years.

14%
Economically
Disadvantaged

17%
Students with a
Disability

14%
English Language
Learners
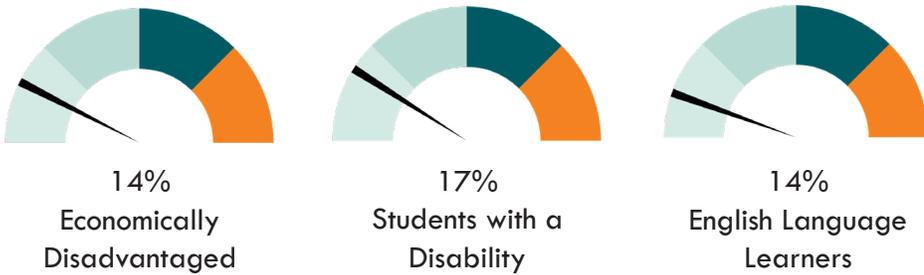
Uintah Elementary

Uintah Elementary serves just over 400 students from kindergarten to sixth grade. The school has significantly higher achievement rates than the district and state averages including 78% of students meeting literacy and mathematics proficiency in the 2023-2024 school year (USBE, 2024). Teachers at Uintah Elementary are likely to stay; 86% of teachers have been at the school at least 3 years, and 82% of teachers have taught for 7 or more years (USBE, 2023).

10%
Economically
Disadvantaged

12%
Students with a
Disability

3%
English Language
Learners
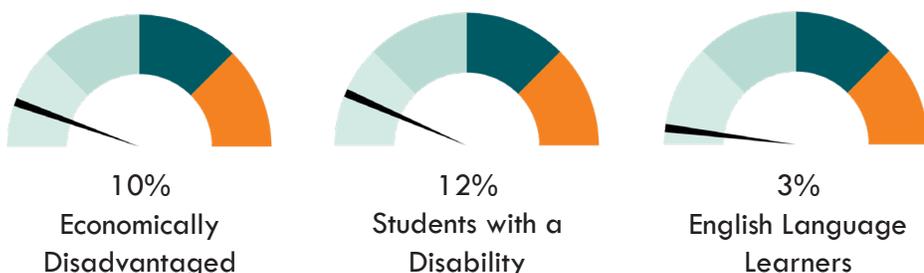
SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

Certified teachers may work as Library Media Specialists in schools, but, currently, only Park City, South Summit, and Salt Lake City School Districts require certified teacher-librarians. The state school board first attempted to require all public and school librarians to be certified in 1925 (Evans, 1971). Full-time librarians have been in place in Salt Lake City School District since the early 1960s. In 1962, voters approved a leeway tax to provide full-time school librarians at each school. The deputy superintendent at that time, Dr. Marion G. Merkley, stated that the $8,000 book allotment for each elementary school was "wasted capital" (Smiley, 1962, p. 17) because librarians were needed to help students access and engage with reading materials.

Ten years later, the district faced declining enrollment and rising costs when the legislature granted $1 million to ensure the continuation of various enrichment programs, such as elementary library services (Cummins, 1972). However, at some point, services were evidently cut back, because, by 1974, another increase in leeway tax was used to reinstate a full-time librarian at each elementary school and ensure high schools had two librarians (Cummins, 1974; M. Karpisek, personal communication, May 4, 2024). Between 1981 and 1995, there were several calls to save money by cutting elementary librarians to half-time, but the Supervisor of School Libraries, Marian Karpisek (personal communication, May 4, 2024), continually advocated for the use of the leeway tax to provide full-time librarians.

In the 1990s, the state recategorized dedicated library media funds into general educational funding to allow districts to make more localized spending decisions, but Salt Lake City was able to use the leeway tax to maintain specific librarian funding (Riding, 2020).

Salt Lake City School Library Mission Statement

The mission of the Library Learning Center is to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information. A strong Library Learning Center program, administered by a certified Library Technology Teacher, positively impacts student achievement. The Library Technology Teacher is a certified teacher, instructional partner, information specialist and program coordinator.

- As a **certified teacher**, the Library Technology Teacher collaborates with members of the learning community to analyze learning and information needs, to locate and use resources that will meet those needs, and to understand and communicate the information the resources provide.

- As an **instructional partner** and member of the educational team, the LTT promotes and models curriculum development and effective, collaborative teaching.

- As an **information specialist,** the Library Technology Teacher provides leadership and expertise in acquiring and evaluating information resources in all formats.

- As a **program coordinator,** the LTT works collaboratively with members of the learning community to define the policies of the library media program and to guide and direct all the activities related to it.

(Salt Lake City School District, n.d.)

PRACTICE IN ACTION

Overview & Objectives

The certified teacher librarian (CTL) is a dynamic educator who offers a wealth of knowledge and skills that positively impacts every aspect of an elementary school. When CTLs are regarded for their expertise, they become an instrumental asset in enriching student learning, leading schools in technology innovations, providing an inclusive space that embraces advocacy, access, and inclusiveness, and offering resources that better prepare students for their transition into secondary schools.

Some Utah schools and districts have been able to employ certified teacher librarians. The distinction between a CTL versus a paraprofessional is that CTLs must have a teaching license and library media endorsement representative of a standardized level of competency in librarianship and pedagogical practices, whereas paraprofessionals has no such requirements. By the very nature of their certifications, CTLs are positioned to provide a high-quality educational library program and maximize the library as a resource for students, teachers, and leaders.

Understanding the practices of elementary CTLs may help provide elementary level school leaders with a framework to leverage hiring a CTL that can maximize the school library as an effective and valuable educational resource. These practices will also be beneficial for providing models that other elementary CTLs and library paraprofessionals can use to elevate the impact of their library programming and practices.

Framework for Effective Practices

There are several frameworks for the development of effective school librarians. The American Library Association (ALA), American Association of School Libraries (AASL), and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) have developed the ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards that provide guidance for developing effective librarian education programs. According to the standards, preparing successful librarians is "predicated on the philosophy and mission of the national guidelines for library programs" (ALA/AASL/CAEP, 2019, p. 4) as elaborated on in the National School Library Standards for Learnings, School Librarians and School Libraries.

The preparation standards are grounded in the six common beliefs set forth in the NSLS. These beliefs were identified as central to the school librarian profession. The beliefs include:

1. The school library is a unique and essential part of the learning community.

2. Qualified school librarians lead effective school libraries.

3. Learners should be prepared for college, career, and life.

4. Reading is the core of personal and academic competency.

5. Intellectual freedom is every learner's right.

6. Information technologies must be appropriately integrated and equitably available (ALA, 2018)

Utah has Effective Teaching Standards, but Effective Librarian Standards have not been developed at the time of this report. In 2015, the Utah Library Media Supervisors created a Continuum of Practice for Library Media Teachers to be used with the Utah Effective Teaching Standards and the Utah Standards for Library Media (Utah Library Media Supervisors, 2015). While these Utah and national resources set groundwork for how libraries should operate and how librarians should be prepared, they were not designed as a framework for evaluating highly effective libraries.

Created in 2012 and later revised, the Highly Effective Schools through Libraries (HESTL) framework from the Colorado Department of Education outlines five program standards (i.e., planning, instruction, leadership, environment, and management) that a school library and faculty must meet to be consid-

ered highly effective (Colorado Department of Education, 2024; Russell, 2016). The HESTL framework sets the guidelines for the state credentialing program that aims to "recognize outstanding school library programs and school library professionals" and to "provide guidance in school librarianship best practice" (Colorado Department of Education, 2024), making it applicable to the investigation of outlier school library practices that impact schools.

Librarians can be credentialed in each of the five areas and there is a

HESTL Program Credentialing Standards

(Colorado Department of Education, 2024)

designation for principal collaboration credential and a school designation for joint recognition of the librarian and the school. Credentials are designed to promote ongoing professional learning and must be renewed.

One of the critical elements of this HESTL framework is that achieving exemplary status requires administrators and teachers to support the practices and programming of a school library. Using the five HESTL standards, the researcher interviewed and surveyed two high-performing elementary schools' CTLs, principals, and classroom teachers about the programming and practices that may have contributed to student academic success.

Using the interview data, the innovative practices and programming of Emily Dejong from Beacon Heights and Michele Edgley from Uintah are highlighted below as indicators of a CTLs' positive impact on student achievement. Additionally, graphs of the survey data averages for the participants' perceptions in each of the five HESTL standards are provided below. The survey was completed by all nine participants: Emily Dejong, Michele Edgley, Beacon Heights' principal, Uintah's principal, two Beacon Heights classroom teachers, and three Uintah classroom teachers. Below, practices are organized by the five HESTL standards: planning, instruction, leadership, environment, and management.

HESTL Program Standard: Planning

Certified teacher librarians can impact student achievement when library program planning encompasses creating a vision with core values and goal setting that aligns with the school's plans and involves administration. Both librarians in this study were acutely aware that the vision and goals they put into action in the library were valuable to the broader school goals. The components of planning practices identified were:

- **Incorporating the school improvement plan.** Both CTLs identified that their school improvement plan was integrated into their library vision. Dejong stated, "When I think about the goals that I have for the library, I do want to know where our focus is for improvement, and right now, the goal is we want all students, or most students, to be reading on grade level at grade three. And so, then it's, 'How can I support that?'". For Edgley, an essential factor was to get out into the classrooms and see the school improvement plan in action and what school-wide initiatives they could support in the library. For example, she found the library could support literacy by incorporating the Wonders reading program used by the classroom teachers.

- **Evaluating standardized test scores to inform practices that promote student academic growth.** If language learners were not developing or progressing in specific competencies, the CTL evaluated which practices they could implement

to support students in making growth. Conversely, librarians continued efforts and practices that produced positive growth and high achievement scores for each grade level. The data from the standardized testing was used as an informative tool to help enrich and adjust the librarians goals to continue to support every student in addition to what they were receiving in their classrooms.

- **Administration Support.** In developing a library vision and goal setting, the CTLs were successful in implementation due to the extensive support they received from their school principal and district specialists. Instead of tasking the CTLs with clerical duties or roles of classified staff, principals provided opportunities for them to participate in PLCs and attend conferences (i.e., hiring a substitute), added paraprofessional staff to support library duties (i.e., reshelving), and gave them a "seat at the table" when it came to allocating discretionary funding.

The district specialist was also held in high regard. They advocated for the value of school libraries and librarians and give school librarians a voice in district decision making. Specialists were also the buffer for the librarians for broader rules and regulations affecting libraries, such as book challenges. The librarians leaned on specialists to provide guidance for what action they need to

follow, making them feel like their library was not operating in a silo.

The most profound justification of support for CTLs came from the Beacon Heights principal, who stated, "If I had funding for an additional FTE, and I could add another teacher to have a smaller class size for a grade level, or I could use that FTE to hire a certified librarian...well, the fact is that research tells us there is not a huge difference in kiddos in a class of 15 versus 25. If you have a great teacher in a class of 25, those kids will learn, right? And if my choice as a school principal is to have a full-time certified librarian that affects every classroom K through 6 versus being able to decrease the class size in one grade level. It's almost a no-brainer. I'll take the librarian. If you can get this process where the librarian contrib-

> "If I had funding for an additional FTE...It's almost a no-brainer. I'll take the librarian...It's just a win-win for everybody."
>
> - School Principal

utes to the entire school and students' success, is willing to take on some of those responsibilities, and collaborates with teachers, It's just a win-win for everybody."

- *Secondary School Ready.* A core value of each library was to help students develop the competencies they need to be 21st century learners and prepare for the transition to secondary schools. The CTLs integrated instruction on various technology tools, developed skills to work independently, were competent in information and media literacies, and knew how to navigate a library's different digital and print resources.

Survey data indicated that, on average, teachers, principals, and CTLs perceived the library's environmental practices as "accomplished."

Interestingly, CTLs tended to score themselves more critically than other school employees, raising perception scores in every category when the librarians' personal perceptions were omitted.

Participant Perceptions of Library Planning Practices

An exemplary teacher librarian identifies their core values and vision for the library. The they work alongside the building administrator(s) and teachers to align their vision with the school's goals/focus in mind. They are intentional about creating several year and multi-year goals for teaching and programming with annual review that will result in students and staff who will thrive and grow.

Based on this criteria of Planning how would you score your school and/or school librarian?

The teacher librarian, the teachers, and principal collaborate to create school library program goals that are aligned with the school improvement plan.

All Participants — 4.1
Non-CTL Participants — 4.6

The teacher librarian uses data and reflection to measure the implementation of goals and their impact on students.

All Participants — 4.0
Non-CTL Participants — 4.3

1 = basic 2 = partially proficient 3 = proficient 4 = accomplished 5 = exemplary

HESTL Program Standard: Instruction

Certified teacher librarians in this study were instructional partners in the school, collaborating with teachers to enrich classroom curriculum as well as providing education on information, media, and digital literacies as outlined in the Utah Core Standards for Library Media. The CTLs and their fellow teachers embraced a collaborative approach to instruction and student learning. The components of instructional practices were identified as:

- *Instructional Designers.* Each CTL reported various instructional design strategies they implemented to tailor learning for all grade levels, encourage critical thinking skills, and meet the diverse needs of all students. For example, Edgley helped sixth grade students think "outside of the box" during their biography assignment. Students wrote cover letters and resumes through the lens of their historical figure. She explained, "Helen Keller - what kind of a cover letter and resume would they write? And it makes students step outside themselves to think about how it would be to live as this historical figure or someone else. What kind of a job would they be going for? What kinds of skills have they had to develop to overcome whatever their challenge was?"

Another instructional activity was designed to encourage oral expression and foster different perspectives. Students were placed into groups and given a picture book to create a text narrative for every fourth page.

Then, the narratives were combined, and a guided discussion occurred for students to discuss the vocabulary used, what was emphasized and expressed in the pictures, and how they could combine all the narratives into a cohesive book.

- *Collaborative Relationships.* A strong theme in every interview was the abundance of collaboration between classroom teachers and the CTL. Within these collaborative relationships, both CTLs frequently checked in with teachers to inquire about what resources they could provide, purchase, or get through interlibrary loan services. One example was a teacher wanting to support her students in creating a book club, so she worked with the CTL to help provide the students with book collection options.

Teachers felt their librarians were accessible and willing to help them troubleshoot the curriculum, improve a project, and brainstorm ideas on integrating technology appropriate for their grade levels. One teacher noted that **the students were doing more than just checking out books** or listening to a read-aloud; they were using critical thinking skills, being taught how to use digital tools (i.e., Canva, PowerPoint, Sora, Kittle), research, and present, which were **valuable learning activities that support what is going on in the classroom.**

As Beacon Heights' principal, Mr. Tim Miller, explained, "[Students] go to the library, as Emily teaches them, she's using the computer, using her projector, using instructional technology while in her teaching. But then also there's a time where the kiddos go over and pick up a laptop and are doing something that she's assigned to them online…. They can be working on a project with technology, with laptops and the computers, save the work to a file in the library, go back to their classroom and access that same project. **It's seamless and collaborative between the teachers and [the librarian].**"

- *Measuring Impact and Growth. Standardized test scores are a measure of student achievement and academic growth.* In addition to those indicators, both librarians did a significant amount of informal assessment to evaluate their effectiveness for student success, including usage data from book circulations and online databases and attendance in the library during open access times. A consistent element was how the CTLs frequently observed the students' interests, participation, and engagement during instructional activities and used this anecdotal data in discussions with classroom teachers. As a Beacon Heights teacher stated, "Emily and I have the same interest in student engagement and student success, and this is

impactful and makes a huge difference because **the students know that we are a partnership and that we are working together to help them learn these skills and complete projects.**"

Survey data showed that, on average, teachers, principals, and CTLs rated the library's instructional practices between "accomplished" and "exemplary."

Again, librarians tended to be more self-critical about their own activities. While the scores still fall within the same accomplished category, non-librarian staff percieved the librarian to be more effective than librarians credited themselves with.

Participant Perceptions of Library Instructional Practices

A highly effective teacher librarian plans relevant library lessons/projects with intentionality and begins with the end in mind taking into consideration the essential learning skills for learners (whether young or adult). The teacher librarian perseveres and secures administrative support to work with staff on collaborative co-teaching opportunities, realizing that co-taught lessons is a strategy that better meets the differentiating needs of students and adults. A highly effective teacher in this area embeds learner reflection into lessons to adjust instruction. The teacher librarian values student and adult voice and choice in designing learning opportunities that learners find authentic in the real-world.

Based on this criteria of Instruction how would you score your school and/or school librarian?

The teacher librarian's use of instructional strategies (e.g., backwards design, differentiated instruction, reflection, and other promising practices) actively engage all learners and help them thrive.

All Participants   4.3
Non-CTL Participants   4.6

The teacher librarian provides meaningful and authentic learning opportunities for students.

All Participants   4.3
Non-CTL Participants   4.7

The teacher librarian assesses and adjusts instruction for students and adult learners (if they do professional development)? For example, they gather input from teachers through various means in order to adjust lessons for the future and communicates the improvements with educational staff and administrators.

All Participants   4.3
Non-CTL Participants   4.6

1 = basic 2 = partially proficient 3 = proficient 4 = accomplished 5 = exemplary

HESTL Program Standard: Leadership

Certified teacher librarians served as school leaders, curated technology and information/media literacy resources, and lead professional development initiatives. They fostered strong relationships with all school stakeholders—students, families, faculty, and district personnel—and actively engaged with local, state, and national professional library associations. Standout leadership practices and characteristics included:

- *Proactive.* Administrators and teachers highlighted how CTLs proactively leveraged their expertise to enhance the libraries' educational offerings and provided valuable learning opportunities for colleagues. At Beacon Heights, the CTL took the initiative in demonstrating and providing professional development on new technology and programs. They also actively participated in committees like the Community Council and PTA, strengthening connections with parents and the broader community. At Uintah, the CTL's technology proficiency proved invaluable, with them often serving as a de facto technology coach for colleagues. Additionally, they strategically pursued grants to secure funding for critical library needs.

- *Statewide Leaders.* Notably, both CTLs in this study have served as past presidents of the Utah Educational Library Media Association, demonstrating their commitment to the profession and fostering strong connections within their professional net-

work. This involvement was vital for their ongoing professional development and directly benefited their schools by keeping them informed about current library initiatives, practices, and programs.

- *Support Technology and Reading Initiatives.* Principals, teachers, and CTLs alike emphasized the robust technology and reading initiatives offered by the libraries. Reading initiatives included promoting district-wide reading challenges, hosting author visits, and creating informative library newsletters for families and fac-

ulty. Technology also played a central role in CTLs' contributions, with library time being seen as crucial for developing students' technology skills. Teachers acknowledged that CTLs were well-versed in digital resources and technology programs, providing valuable support in this area.

Survey data showed that teachers, principals, and CTLs generally viewed the library's leadership practices as highly effective, averaging between "accomplished" and "exemplary" with staff perceiving librarian leadership very favorably.

Participant Perceptions of Library Leadership Practices

The teacher librarian is viewed as a leader by administrators, staff, and community. They work in partnership with the principal and administrative staff to help all learners in the school community (staff, students, administrators, parents) grow and thrive. As a result, the administration supports the vision/direction of the teacher librarian by providing adequate funding for materials to meet the diverse needs of a wide variety of learners. If the library position is staffed by a highly effective teacher, the administration recognizes the need for support staff to manage the library day-to-day operations.

Based on this criteria of Leadership how would you score your school and/or school librarian?

The teacher librarian demonstrates leadership within the school, district, and/or in broader educational contexts (i.e., leadership in professional associations, leads teams or professional development, etc.).
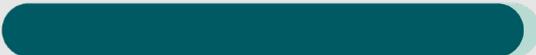
All Participants	4.4
Non-CTL Participants	4.9

The teacher librarian's engages in school improvement and student achievement-focused committees, both within the school and potentially at the district level.

All Participants	4.2
Non-CTL Participants	4.7

1 = basic 2 = partially proficient 3 = proficient 4 = accomplished 5 = exemplary

HESTL Program Standard:
Environment

Despite the two libraries having very different layouts and locations within the school building, each one cultivated an inclusive and culturally responsive space that served all students. The libraries are welcoming, safe, visually appealing, accessible, and could be adapted for multiple learning uses.

**Beacon Heights Elementary School**
Dejong created ways to help the students know and feel that they belong in the library and that the space and materials are for them. Standout components of her library environment were identified as:

- *Welcoming.* The library was welcoming and felt very student-centered. Posters of the students reading in unusual places were all around the room. The space was bright and organized with furniture that was appropriate for the age group.

- *Encouraged Literacy.* Bulletin boards were used to cultivate student interest featuring "book flicks" highlighting new books and information about the Battle of the Books reading challenge. Baskets were strategically placed on the bookshelves.

- *Culturally Responsive.* Library jargon presented in multiple languages helped multilingual learners connect and engage in discussions. Several of the posters and outward facing books represented a diversity of individuals and cultures, which made the space feel like everyone was represented and included.

- *Flexible Seating.* Although Dejong would have loved to change out the furniture for even more dynamic seating, they have adding seating throughout the space including some colorful block-like seats that could be easily moved by students.

Becaon Heights students program a robot in the library. (Beacon Heights Library, n.d.)

Becaon Heights Library (n.d.) new book selections purchased with a grant.

Uintah Elementary School

Edgley viewed her library as a dynamic learning hub for Uintah Elementary. Asked if she enjoyed working in a quiet library, she responded that hers was rarely quiet, and she loved it. The library could be a quiet place for reading books, but it was also a place for students to be excited about information and learning. Standout components of her library environment were identified as:

- *Dynamic.* The library space was a long, rectangular, open space that Edgley sectioned into three distinct areas. One end of the library was a computer lab, the middle area was the bulk of the books and intermittent seating for reading, and the opposite end had shelving and books along the walls but was much more classroom-like, with tables and chairs occupying the bulk of the space. Edgley said she found herself using all three spaces with students throughout the day.

- *Engagement Through Novelty.* One of Edgley's favorite parts of the space was the long learning space. She said when the kindergarteners came to the library for class time, students wanted to run from one end to the other like a football field because it is so unusual for them to experience such a long learning space. This space was intentionally left open because it added novelty and excitement to the student experience, which encouraged their engagement with the library and piqued their interest in what learning can be accomplished in the space.

- *Technology Innovation.* A third of the space was dedicated to computers which were available for the students for multiple uses including schoolwork, research, and entertainment. In addition, Edgley continuously added new technologies that could foster students' excitement. Recently, OzBots were added to the repertoire and for students to start learning about coding and applying computational thinking.

- *Vibrant Atmosphere.* The library had a vibrant energy that was flexible and adaptable for multiple learning activities. For instance, the fourth graders got to turn the library into a wax museum to portray historical figures they researched and then their parents, grandparents, and other individuals came to see their representations.

An infographic highlighting library activities at Uintah Elementary (Uintah Library, n.d.).

A selection of new books from Uintah Library (n.d.).

Uintah Library's (n.d.) "stained glass" windows and book display.

Survey data indicated that teachers, principals, and CTLs generally perceived the overall library environment as "accomplished," however, the flexibility and adaptability of the library spaces received the lowest scores relative to other survey points. This could be attributed building designs limiting the physical infrastructure of the library spaces, particularly as library uses have changed over time. Uintah Elementary began construction in 1993 while Beacon Heights was reconstructed in 2004.

Participant Perceptions of Library Enviornmental Practices

The library is an inviting learning space that is adaptable at any point of need. Learners and community members are able to easily use the space for a wide variety of activities and learning. Materials are easy to access by many different types of learners. The community views the teacher librarian and/or library staff as warm, welcoming, and trusting professionals. Students feel their voice is valued by the teacher librarian and/or library staff.

Based on this criteria of Environment how would you score your school and/or school librarian?

The school library has flexibility and adaptability of the physical space in accommodating various learning opportunities. *Consider factors such as movable furniture, easily rearrangeable bookshelves, and collaborative efforts with administration for funding and utilization alignment with the school's needs.*

All Participants	3.9
Non-CTL Participants	4.4

The appeal of the library space, such as decor, furniture, and materials, contribute to a warm and inviting atmosphere? *Consider aspects such as shelf spacing, out-facing displays, comfortable seating, the presence of natural light, and the perceived welcoming nature of the checkout points, with a focus on fostering curiosity, wonderment, and enjoyment of learning.*

All Participants	4.4
Non-CTL Participants	4.4

There is a sense of safety and welcome in the library space. *Consider factors such as positive communication of space expectations, clarity of signage, comfort and ergonomics of furniture, materials, and technology access.*

All Participants	4.1
Non-CTL Participants	4.4

1 = basic 2 = partially proficient 3 = proficient 4 = accomplished 5 = exemplary

HESTL Program Standard: Management

The school libraries prioritized accessibility and equity, ensuring library resources were available to all. This involved maintaining a current, accurate, and inclusive collection. Clear policies and procedures were in place for material selection, weeding, donations, student privacy, and handling challenged materials. Exemplary management practices observed included:

- *Supporting Volunteers.* Despite not having dedicated support staff, the CTLs effectively utilized volunteers, including trained older students, to assist with tasks like book checkouts, reshelving, read-alouds, and helping students find books. This freed up the CTLs to focus on more impactful activities with students.

- *Library Management.* Beacon Heights and Uintah managed their libraries with an open access policy, multiple book checkouts, and the full utilization of books and resources. Student were encouraged to access the library at their point of need. For example, if a student finished a book during the school day, they could replace it the same day — access was not limited to scheduled class time. The CTLs accomplished this access by utilizing a self-checkout system, which allowed the student to get their next book even if the librarian was busy with a class.

There were also no limitations to multiple book checkouts. A student did not have to bring back a book to check out a new one. As a Uintah teacher expressed, "[Edgley] is good about making sure that students get to check out a book even if they didn't bring their book back. I think that's important because I have been at schools where kids just don't use the books because they're not encouraged or allowed to, really."

Students were also not restricted by book choices or what they could do with the book. For example, Edgley would never stop a student from selecting a book that interests them, even if it might be above their reading level. Similarly, Dejong strongly believed in full autonomy over books regardless of the student's age. She explained, "Sometimes librarians have rules that kindergartners are not taking their books home because they will get lost. And **I feel strongly that they need to be taking their books home. It's exciting to have a book you chose that nobody helped you choose, and, of course, they want to take it home. That's truly the beginning of literacy. So, maybe we lose some books, but this is far more critical.**"

- *Collection Development.* Both librarians prioritized developing responsive and culturally diverse collections that reflected student interests and aligned with curricular needs, balancing popular titles with high-quality literature. Book talks and other strategies were employed to introduce students to a wide range of books, encouraging them to explore beyond their comfort zones.

The libraries needed a policy and procedure that helped them weed the collections informed by circulation data to help them stay up-to-date and keep the bookshelves navigable for the students. A reported element of weeding practices was that while circulation data had merit, it was important to know why certain books may have low circulation numbers. For example, **books representing aspects of diversity may have had low circulation numbers; however, for those students who felt represented by them, the books helped honor their voices and gave them a sense of belonging.** Therefore, weeding books based on circulation numbers alone would have been disservice so weeding relied on the CTLs' knowledge of students needs.

Survey data showed that teachers, principals, and CTLs generally viewed the library's management practices as highly effective, averaging between "accomplished" and "exemplary" (4.5 on a 5-point scale).

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Participant Perceptions of Library Management Practices

The teacher librarian and school administration supports the library space/library staff/volunteers to fulfill management of book collections, a healthy/diverse collection, policies and procedures, and data privacy.

Based on this criteria of Management how would you score your school and/or school librarian?

The library's policies, procedures, and practices for collection management align with the school's values, goals, and community needs.

All Participants	4.6
Non-CTL Participants	4.7

The library's collection actively encourage diverse perspectives and thinking.

All Participants	4.4
Non-CTL Participants	4.6

The library's collection is current, responsive, and aligned with the needs of students and staff.
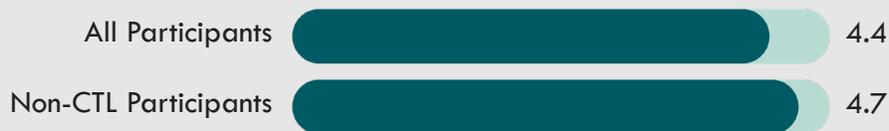
All Participants	4.4
Non-CTL Participants	4.7

1 = basic 2 = partially proficient 3 = proficient 4 = accomplished 5 = exemplary

HESTL Program Standards

School librarians, staff, and administrators in this study spoke about their school library practices and perceptions in addition to completing surveys. The frequency of practices related to each of the five HESTL practices is shown. Instruction, specifically instruction concerning collborative relationships, leadership, and managment were most frequently discussed. Within leadership, the ability of the CTL to demonstrate leadership was highlighted most often.

Frequency of Practices Reported Within Standards of Highly Effective Schools Through Libraries (HESTL)

REPLICATION & LIMITATIONS

When considering replicating this practice, the primary factor in choosing a certified teacher librarian (CTL) over a paraprofessional is financial resources. Employing a paraprofessional is significantly less expensive than even a part-time licensed professional. It is crucial to weigh the initial cost savings against the broader benefits a CTL brings to the entire school community.

Ensuring the elementary school library adheres to best practices aligned with the five HESTL standards is essential for maximizing the library's contribution to student engagement and academic success, along with a commitment to the Utah Effective Teaching Standards. When available, librarians should reference the Utah Effective Librarian Standards. These standards provide a framework for how the school library program can effectively impact student learning and encourage collaboration among all stakeholders.

Scaling

Administrative buy-in is critical when scaling the decision to hire a CTL. The administration must not only allocate funds but also have a strategic plan for integrating the CTL and library resources into the school's educational objectives. The administration plays a pivotal role in empowering the CTL as an instructional partner to classroom teachers, a technology specialist, and an expert in information and media literacy competencies.

If employing a CTL is not financially feasible, consider providing school library media training to paraprofessionals or hiring a district/LEA-level school library media specialist. While these individuals may not possess the same depth of knowledge and pedagogical training as a CTL, providing training to paraprofessionals can enhance their skills and improve library practices. A dedicated district specialist overseeing all elementary school libraries can also offer valuable support and guidance to paraprofessionals.

Limitations

This practice report acknowledges several limitations. First, positive outlier schools in SLCSD were identified based solely on high achievement in Acadience Reading benchmark percentages. The direct causal relationship between these scores and the presence of a CTL is unknown, as numerous variables could contribute to high test scores. While this report recognizes a potential correlation between best library practices and some degree of standardized assessment achievement and/or growth, it lacks direct causal evidence.

Second, the comparison between schools with CTLs and schools without CTLs relies on CACTUS data, which has known validity concerns. Since each Local Education Agency (LEA) can input school librarian titles variably (e.g., "Technology Specialist"), it's uncertain whether the data comprehensively captures all CTLs and non-CTLs. Third, the identified CTL practices in this report are based on factors correlated with student success in previous studies and state impact reports. It's possible that other crucial CTL practices, not captured in these studies, also contribute significantly to the role.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this report strongly aligned with the five qualities identified in the Highly Effective Schools Through School Libraries (HESTL) framework, which outlines key indicators for CTLs and library programs that foster student success.

The coded data highlighted Instruction, Leadership, and Management as areas of strength. Certified Teacher Librarians effectively utilized standardized test scores to inform instructional strategies and promote academic growth. Their collaborative approach to instruction and expertise in the Utah Core Standards for Library Media (encompassing 21st-century skills) were key factors in their success.

Furthermore, the CTLs demonstrated leadership beyond their schools, actively participating in state and national professional communities. This involvement allowed them to advocate effectively for library resources and stay abreast of best practices. Additionally, the CTLs showcased innovative library management, ensuring resources, book collections, and policies were inclusive and accessible.

Planning practices, as identified by the CTLs, emphasized the integration of school improvement plans into library visions, strategically aligning library goals with broader school objectives. They also highlighted the importance of leveraging administrative support for successful implementation. Finally, all participants recognized the positive impact of the library environment, particularly its inclusivity and adaptability to meet diverse learning needs.

Employing a certified teacher librarian has potential to positively impact student learning and academic success. When considering the reach of an elementary school library program, every student can receive additional instruction that aligns with classroom curriculum as well as develop competencies specific to certified teacher librarians' expertise (i.e., information and media literacy).
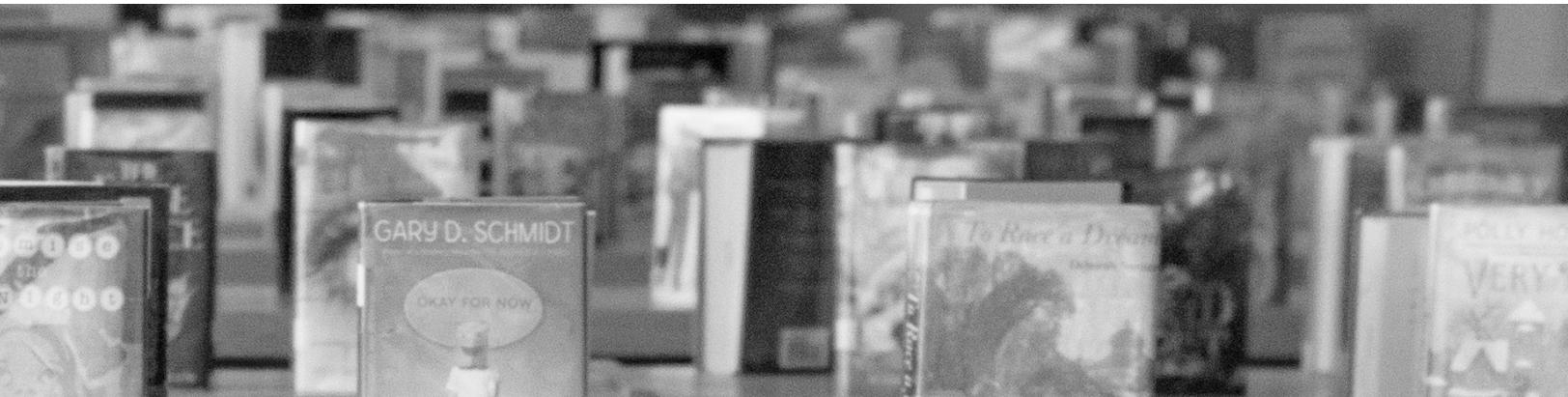
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APPENDIX A

2023 Library Program Status Survey Data

Measure	Certified Teacher Librarian	No Certified Teacher Librarian
Respondents		
Count	86	154
School demographics		
Median school enrollment	1054	540
Planning		
Library program was written into School Improvement Plan	26.7%	15.8%
Library funding was tied to School Improvement Plan	40.0% (n=12)	21.7% (n=23)
Librarian implemented Utah Library Media Standards into curriculum	49.3%	28.3%
Budget for purchase of library books during school year was at least $5,000	65.3%	32.9%
Budget for purchase of library materials (other than books) during school year was at least $1,000	58.6%	12.3%
If needed, were substitutes available for staff to attend conferences/workshops	73.0%	47.4%
Instruction		
Library classes were taught without a classroom teacher	31.5%	88.6%
Librarian planned collaborative instructional unit with teacher at least once per month	64.4%	31.3%
Leadership		
Librarian communicated/collaborated proactively at least once per month with principal	65.8%	64.8%
Librarian was called upon to provide/lead Professional Development	54.8%	21.4%
Had a partnership with local library	40.7%	29.2%

| Measure	Certified Teacher Librarian	No Certified Teacher Librarian
Environment		
Library has maker space	48.9%	27.5%
Median percentage of students at school who checked out an item	37.0%	3.3%
Management		
Library staff me at least monthly at the district level for planning and professional development	58.1%	42.1%
Librarian collaborated at least once per month in PLC	78.2%	29.7%
Collection development processes that included analysis of the collection occurred at least once per month	69.5%	46.2%
Collection development processes that included selection and purchasing of the collection at least once per month	86.4%	48.7%
Collection development processes that included weeding/de-selecting occurred at least once per month	64.2%	52.0%

APPENDIX B

Acadience Reading Achievement and Growth: Schools with and without Certified
Teacher Librarians (SY2022-SY2023)

Schools with CTL: Benchmark Pct

Category	Percentage
All students	64%
Racial Minority	55%
Low Income	53%
Multilingual Learner	43%
SWD	38%

Schools without CTL: Benchmark Pct

Category	Percentage
All students	64%
Racial Minority	53%
Low Income	54%
Multilingual Learner	41%
SWD	37%

Schools with CTL: Typical or Better Pathway Pct

Category	Percentage
All students	68%
Racial Minority	63%
Low Income	63%
Multilingual Learner	59%
SWD	58%

Schools without CTL: Typical or Better Pathway Pct

Category	Percentage
All students	68%
Racial Minority	62%
Low Income	62%
Multilingual Learner	57%
SWD	57%

*Achievement measured as grades 1-3 EOY Benchmark Percentage
*Growth measured as grades 1-3 EOY Typical or Better Pathway Percentage

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