

Exploring Our Library

Educational researcher Stephen Krashen (1998) argues that a key to improving student reading is access to large quantities of books. To have access to lots of books, schools need well-funded libraries staffed by qualified librarians. Others have argued that students should have access to books that reflect their own cultural heritage and those of many other cultures. You and your group can choose to investigate one of the following questions. You may need to interview librarians, school district officials, school board members, or others, as well as do some research online.

1. What is the ratio of certified librarians to students in your school, school district, state, and nation? Make graphic representations of the data and then reflect on why there are differences, what impact these differences have, and what might be done to improve the situation.
2. What is the ratio of books in your school library to the number of students in your school? Contact other schools or use the Internet to find similar data for other schools. Compare and contrast the data from urban, suburban, and rural school districts. What actions might be necessary at your school?
3. Who is represented in the biographies in your school library? Count the number of biographies and autobiographies in your library. Calculate the percentage of books in your library that are in these categories. Make graphs showing the percentage of biographies that are about different groups of people, such as:
 - Women/men
 - African Americans/Latinxs/Asian Americans/Native Americans/Arab Americans/European Americans
 - People from outside the United States/people from the United States
 - Rich people/poor and working people

What do you think would be a “fair” representation in your school library of these various categories? What would have to be done to make sure there is an improvement in representation at your school?

Questions to consider as you do your research:

1. Identify the variable(s) that is/are correlated to literacy. How is each variable defined? How is it measured?
2. What is the relationship between your variable(s) and literacy?
3. Can you create any algebraic expressions or equations that help summarize your data? What other representations might help organize and represent your findings?
4. Based on what you learned in the research, what could you and your classmates do to make a difference and raise literacy rates in your school or community?

Organize your research and decide how you want to present your findings to your classmates.