



:. ontario school library association

## **The Crisis in School Libraries Continues**

Ontario School Library Association Brief

### Background:

Since the early 1990's, school libraries have continued to erode; each year more school boards must make the difficult decision to reduce proper staffing in the school library and to cut back or stop the purchasing of school library resources.

This decline is having a direct negative impact on student achievement and reading engagement. Students who are in schools without a staffed and resourced library program are not receiving the same education as students who have school libraries.

A properly resourced school library program includes a teacher librarian with library qualifications, a library technician, support staff, access to a robust digital media centre and e-resources, and a current book collection.

### Some statistics:

In elementary schools with teacher-librarians, students in grades 3 and 6 are more likely to report that they 'like to read'.

In 2013:

- 56% of elementary schools have a teacher-librarian, a figure that has been consistent for several years but is down from 80% in 1997. They are part-time in over three-quarters of those schools;
- 33% of elementary schools use library technicians only, who maintain and organize the collections;
- 11% of elementary schools have no library staff at all;
- Only 68% of secondary schools—where there is an emphasis on students' independent work and research skills—have a teacher-librarian. Most are full-time;
- In eastern Ontario, 19% of elementary schools have a teacher-librarian on staff. In the GTA, 83% of elementary schools have one.

\*From: MIND THE GAP: INEQUALITY IN ONTARIO'S SCHOOLS

People for Education Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2013

<http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/annual-report-2013-WEB.pdf>

### Why the decline?

School boards across the province have struggled with declining budgets over the past decade. Due to the fixed costs defined in the Ministry of Education funding associated with classroom teachers and building operations, the most common method to address issues of cost reduction has been through reduction of programs that have not been assigned fixed budget allocations. School libraries have been particularly vulnerable to such funding cuts, and declines in educational funding directed toward the school library have been well documented throughout North America.

### **Why is this funding needed?**

#### School Libraries and Student Achievement in Ontario:

- Schools with professionally-trained school library staff have reading achievement scores that are approximately 5.5 percentile points higher than average in grade 6 EQAO results.
- Schools without trained library staff tend to have lower achievement on grade 3 and 6 EQAO reading tests, both in terms of average achievement and attaining level 3 or higher.
- Properly staffed school library systems have a robust media centre and library collection.
- The international educational evaluations of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows a relationship between positive reading attitudes and higher student achievement. These positive reading behaviours have an impact also on mathematics and science results.
- A decline in percentage of students who like to read is linked to a decline in the percentage of elementary schools with teacher-librarians.
- September 2007, Dalton McGuinty, Premier, Ontario, announced an investment of \$120 million – \$80 million earmarked for books for elementary school libraries, and \$40 million for librarians over the next four years. To date only \$25 million of the promised \$80 million has been released for books and e-resources. In March 2010, an announcement was sent stating that funding was suspended for 2010/11.

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