



∴ ontario library association



∴ ontario school library association

De-Valuing of Teacher Librarians in School Boards

OLA Brief: 2013

For the past 12 years the association has witnessed an erosion of qualified teacher-librarians responsible for school library programs. School library programs are in jeopardy across the province.

School boards are facing difficult decisions in light of declining enrollment combined with a fiscally austere government. However, placing unqualified staff in charge of the school library program is not an economic decision.

A Teacher-Librarian is a teacher who has taken additional qualifications in librarianship. This contributes significantly to the following 21st century skills needed for students to achieve:

Information and digital medial literacy skills:

- A teacher-librarian is qualified to engage and teach students about information literacy including finding, evaluating, using, creating and sharing of information for both print and online information environments. This includes appropriate uses of social media, attention to copyright and appropriate citations.
- A teacher-librarian is not only qualified to instruct students and teachers on how to use technologies, but also on the appropriate and effective uses of the resources accessed using these technologies.
- A teacher-librarian is an instructor on digital citizenship, which includes educating students and teachers about digital footprint, cyber bullying and safety, information ethics, and responsible use.

Reading engagement

- A teacher-librarian instills a love of reading with students. In recent years, **there has been a sharp decline in student reading enjoyment**. The decline matches the decline in qualified teacher librarians in schools. We know that a positive attitude towards reading has a direct positive impact on all subject areas, particularly science and math. EQAO scores are higher in schools with school library programs.
- Teacher-librarians are qualified to select appropriate reading resources for school library collections and are adept at matching students with the materials that are best suited to them.

Whole school place and approach:

- Teacher-librarians can lead a whole school approach (teachers and students) to support critical thinking, inquiry and research skills.
- The actual space a school library provides has been cited as both a haven and oasis for students meeting diverse and varied learning needs. Students need this space before, during, and after the core school hours. Many school library programs offer reading clubs and activities.

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 fiction & non-fiction book collection. The ability to have a properly resourced program will be a challenge for smaller schools and school boards. In these cases, it is crucial that there is at least a qualified teacher-librarian who is responsible for directing the strategy and plans for the school library program, and a plan to keep the library space open and available to meet student learning needs.

OLA encourages school boards and other interested parties to contact us if interested in learning more. Our interest is in ensuring students have the best possible education and we wish to help in any way possible.

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