



Dear committee members,

I recently re-trained as a teacher librarian after 15 years as an English and ESL teacher (including a number of years as a regional ESL coordinator) with special expertise in literacy and critical literacy. The reason for this career change was to make my skills available on a much broader scale for teachers and students across all Key Learning Areas and to influence the directions high schools are now taking in terms of critical and information literacies. This is a common theme among students currently enrolled in teacher-librarian courses across Australia.

High school curricula couple highly specialised subject content with:

(a) basic literacy and numeracy skills (reading and writing formal and informal texts including letters, reports, debates and essays; interpreting and creating visual and graphical information on tables, charts and graphs),

(b) information literacy skills (finding, evaluating, using and creating information),

(c) critical literacy skills (assessment, interpretation and creation of information according to particular situations, audiences, and purposes) and

(d) digital literacy skills (both cybersafety and the ability to use technology - including business-standard software and hardware - to demonstrate the above skills).

While many students will use little of their knowledge of chemistry, ancient history or economics (for example) in their adult lives, critical and information literacies are crucial in developing students as life long learners capable of fulfilling the personal social and occupational goals which are ultimately vital to Australia's long-term development. With their specialised knowledge of librarianship (information management) and pedagogy (ie the process of teaching and learning) school librarians are uniquely placed at the forefront of literacy development in our schools.

School library and information programs and services are integral to the mission, objectives, and teaching and learning goals of every school. As an integral partner in the school's teaching and learning team, successful teacher librarians have a key role in the planning, implementation and evaluation of education policies, curricula, learning outcomes and programs, with particular reference to the development of information and critical literacies. Their thorough grounding in a range of literacies) and cross-curricula knowledge is vital to best practice teaching in any school; without a specialised teacher-librarian, schools would be unable to build effective library and information services and programs which which add value to existing educational structures.

Existing research shows that school libraries can have a positive impact, whether measured in terms of reading scores, literacy or learning more generally, on student achievement. There is evidence to show that a strong library program that is adequately staff, resourced and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the adults in the community.

Lonsdale, M 2003, Impact of school libraries on student achievement: a review of the research, report for the Australian School Library Association, ACER, Camberwell, Vic., p. 27.

I have personally assisted the development of literacies in my school by:

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creating a safe and attractive learning space for students and staff
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developing and implementing school policies to address equity and access to resources and learning opportunities for all students regardless of ability, socio-economic status, race or gender
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developing an extensive collection of physical and virtual resources to support staff and student learning
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developing reading programmes at a variety of levels to support basic and critical literacies, including reading circles, blogs and competitions
- *
in-serving teachers in various forms of literacy and assisting teachers with the development of tasks which assess skills-based outcomes
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assisting teachers with programming for special needs and gifted/talented students, including the provision and supervision of extension learning centres open both during and after school hours
- *
designing cross-curricula units and rich tasks which promote critical and information literacies
- *
developing and implenting leadership programmes which support lifelong learning, including opportunities for students to target real audiences and purposes
- *
assisting with the implementation of DER including teacher and student training and the provision of suitable resources for best practice cyber-learning
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attracting new users including support staff and parents, resulting in an increased awareness of critical and cyber literacies in this clientele

Teachers and politicians have of common goal of creating active citizens who can and will contribute to the free flow of information and ideas in the interest of all Australians and a thriving culture, economy and democracy, so I urge you, as our elected representatives, to recognise the vital role of school libraries and teacher librarians, particularly in the areas of literacy, lifelong learning, cybersafety, information literacy, critical literacy and digital literacy skills. Adequate funding, together with educational and professional development opportunities, are essential to achieve the best educational and social outcomes for young Australians.

By endorsing the principle of 'a teacher librarian in every school' and implementing the actions necessary to achieve this, you will be promoting a generation of intelligent, literate and cyber-skilled young people who will serve Australia's long-term economic, intellectual and social development.

yours sincerely,

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