



### What do good libraries say about schools?

The old expression "put your money where your mouth is" should be considered as school districts across the state begin the painful process of cutting their budgets - most for a second year in a row. The programs and resources schools value become starkly apparent during reductions. As does a district's philosophy of education - in practice, not just in lip service.

School mission statements often contain catch phrases like "life-long learning" and "independent problem-solvers" and "21st century schools." All are worthy aspirations. A very simple way of determining whether a school actually believes in these goals is to watch how it treats its libraries as budgets are reduced and reduced again. A school with a good\* library program:

1. Believes that education is about teaching kids how to ask and answer questions, not just know the "right" answers, and that asking questions is a sign of intelligence, not stupidity.
2. Believes that kids should have access to a diversity of topics and points-of-view and be taught the skills to make informed opinions of their own.
3. Believes that it is as important to create kids who *want* to read as it is to simply create kids who can read. (Although dozens of studies show that good library programs also raise test scores.)
4. Believes that access to good fiction helps kids meet developmental tasks and reading fiction can foster empathy, and that kids' personal interests are legitimate areas of study .
5. Believes that kids should be content and information creators not just content consumers.
6. Believes that it is important to have more research skills than simply being able to Google a topic - and that it is important to have a professional who helps kids master those skills.
7. Believes that edited, quality commercial sources of information should be available to all kids regardless of whether their family can afford to purchase books, newspapers, and magazines.
8. Believes that technology use in education is about creativity, problem-solving and communications, not just drill and practice or testing or record keeping.
9. Believes that the classroom is not the only place where learning occurs.
10. Believes that kids, like adults, sometimes need a "third place" where they feel welcome, comfortable, and productive.

After extensively examining schools in this country, author Jonathan Kozol in his book *Savage Inequalities* wrote "... children in one set of schools are educated to be governors; children in the other set of schools are trained for being governed. The former are given the imaginative range to mobilize ideas for economic growth; the latter are provided with the

discipline to do the narrow tasks the first group will prescribe." Unfortunately our country, our own state, still has those two types of schools.

I want my grandchildren, well, all our state's grandchildren in schools that have good teachers, small class sizes, vital art, physical education and music programs, and safe, well-maintained buildings. But I also want them in a school that puts its "money where its mouth is" by supporting a library program that helps the school realize its mission statement. Libraries are a visible sign that a school is educating governors, not the governed.

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