



School library review submission

INTRODUCTION

The key role of a Library in any school is not, as some people seem to believe, to provide a roof over the books and computers. It is to provide a centre of excellence which supports and enhances student learning in a unique way. Life-long learning skills and personal capacities are developed through well-planned Library programs delivered by Teacher Librarians. Skills such as Information Literacy, digital and visual literacy, exposure to the pleasures of recreational reading, and socialising in a safe environment are among the learning and experiences that students gain from their school Libraries. Research such as the PISA longitudinal and the work of Ross Todd confirms the value of Teacher Librarians in education.

STAFFING

We are particularly concerned about the trend of Principals employing non- Teacher Librarians to manage libraries. This is happening especially in primary schools in our region and is beginning to occur in the secondary sector. It is a trend that needs to be stopped for the sake of the quality of learning in our communities. We believe it is primarily a cost saving action. It is one which reflects very short-term thinking. The only benefit is to the school's bottom line not the learning outcomes of students.

The school community benefits greatly from a library staff who has dual qualifications. A teacher with library training possesses the knowledge that makes the library relevant and responsive in meeting the needs of learners and educators.

Teacher Librarians have the deep understanding of the learning process and learners. Teacher Librarians are trained to understand the learning process and are able to assist students access suitable resources, and to plan and complete their learning and assessment tasks. A non-teacher Librarian is not trained to do this. Teacher Librarians co-design and co-plan assessment tasks with teachers because they have the curriculum and pedagogical knowledge and skills to do so. Assessment tasks need to cover all learning styles, levels of complexity, be age appropriate and

meet the required assessment outcomes. A Teacher Librarian knows and does all this.

We the under-signed enhance student learning by leading the following programs – Literature Circles; Wide Reading; Book Clubs; author visits; Premier’s Reading Challenge; and Book Week Celebrations. We lead the construction of Library Intranets and Learning Management sites and provide professional development opportunities to teachers in their use for teaching and learning. In conjunction with the class-room teacher, the Teacher Librarian develops student Information Literacy skills so that students learn a scaffolded and supported research process which enhances and improves their immediate results and which will have life-long value.

RESOURCE SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Resource selection and management requires staff with the appropriate knowledge and skills to be effective, efficient and good value for the money invested. We thank the government for the grants that allowed the purchase of many new computers in our schools. They now need to be used effectively. A Teacher Librarian has the skills to oversee the development and management of e-Learning in the school. In fact, it is well documented that innovative Teacher Librarians took the initiative with electronically-based learning over ten years ago. They assist students in acquiring digital and information literacies when they come to the library during classes and at other times during the school day. Their pedagogical knowledge, combined with their technological knowledge makes them amongst the most valuable assets in any school today.

Teacher Librarians are the enablers – those people who encourage and assist students to select just the right kind of book that will sustain their reading interest and have them come back for more. Studies have shown that voluntary reading has greater benefits to all other areas of the curriculum, even Maths, than compulsory reading. Their vocabulary, grammar and spelling skills are improved. Teacher Librarians are perfectly placed to address the literacy needs of the school community, which is an area of the highest priority in the Federal Government’s education plans.

Many Libraries are experiencing budget-driven staffing cuts which are impacting profoundly on the breadth and depth of services offered, the hours Libraries can remain open and on the health of the remaining staff. If this trend continues, it will be to the very great detriment of student learning outcomes and level of specialist support available to teachers.

BUDGET

Schools across the secondary sector have, for the last four to five years, significantly reduced Library budgets as schools have had to fund the reduction of the students to computer ratio. The life-cycle of knowledge is far shorter today than in the past. Just as technology today changes very quickly, so knowledge changes very quickly also. This means that Libraries have to focus on keeping their resources updated and relevant far more frequently than in the past. With this in mind we ask that all schools have more affordable access to the major on-line databases such as EBSCO, the ANZ Reference Centre, online encyclopedias (not Wikipedia) and a variety of Web2.0 tools. Evaluation and selection of appropriate resources that meet the needs of the curriculum and the learners is undertaken most effectively by Teacher Librarians who are specifically trained to meet these needs in a school environment.

CONCLUSION

If there is no Teacher Librarian the school community misses out on a teacher with specialist training who is committed, enthusiastic and can develop the essential 21st century skills – being a discriminating user of information, able to identify synthesize, create new knowledge using 21st century technologies.

These essential life-long skills will not be developed unless libraries are sufficiently funded and staffed by qualified Teacher Librarians to deliver excellent programs that will be reflected in federal initiatives like NAPLAN.

The value of Teacher Librarian professional associations and networks can be seen in the collaborative sharing of emerging technologies such as the Web2.0 tools. Education cannot afford to lose the intellectual vigour that Teacher Librarians bring to schools.

With recent funding the Federal Government has clearly recognized the need for, and value of, libraries in education. We want recognition of the value added work that we provide to students and staff in our schools. What we are asking for is continued funding to maintain existing libraries with qualified Teacher Librarians with a budget adequate to meet current needs and the needs of GenZ and beyond.

We value the opportunity to have input into this Inquiry.

Anne Fuller

/ . \
---000--O--000---

"God answers knee-mail"

Teacher Librarian

Head of Library

Berwick Campus

St Francis Xavier College

75 Ridgemont Drive 3808

"A teacher preserves the past, reveals
the present and creates the future"

Fay Pattison

Teacher Librarian

Sacred Heart Girls' College

113 Warrigal Road

Oakleigh Victoria 3166

Maggie McCann

Head of Library

Hallam Senior College

Frawley Rd

Hallam 3803

Victoria.

Diana Borge-Manche

Teacher Librarian

Kambrya Secondary College

68 Bemersyde Dve

Berwick

Vic 3806