INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND TEACHER LIBRARIANS IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

TERMS OF REFERENCE

To inquire into and report on the role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia's public and private schools.
Please comment on:

The impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities

When new schools are developed in Queensland, buildings are built on the projected number of students. Therefore classrooms, science labs and other specialist rooms are designated according to projected future growth, **except for the library**. Libraries are built according to the **present** numbers of the school. To build a library at the beginning means building a small room, unable to cope with the growth of the school. Queensland Education does not consider libraries to be an important factor in student learning.
The latest Building the Education Revolution funding has given this school a new science laboratory and language laboratory, but no library, even though the school does not have a dedicated library. The library is moved around and placed in temporary buildings.

The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy.

Teacher Librarians help students with independent reading, provide programs to coincide with literacy programs occurring in classrooms, create different literacy programs for different levels of literacy throughout the school community and help classroom teacher's resource literacy programs. Teacher Librarians develop and create such programs as literature circles and book clubs all of which raise literacy levels in schools. (Please refer to Lonsdale Report 2003. Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement: A Review of the Research. http://www.asla.org.au/research/Australia-review.htm)

Teacher Librarians (TL"s) also develop information literature programs throughout the school. 'To be information literate an individual must recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the information needed…
Ultimately information literate people are those who have learned how to learn.'(Curriculum Corporation, 2005, p1) Information literacy prepares students for lifelong learning. Students need to develop a process of learning that enables them to draw on a variety of skills and use a variety of sources of information. This process constructs student learning and will allow them to keep learning long after they have left school.
TL's assist students with resources and technologies, assist students with research and evaluation of information and provide opportunities for whole class or group work. TL's sustain professional development, document policies, participate in curriculum planning and participate in the development of technology. TL's promote student information literacy across all subjects and participate in planning and collaborating with other teachers.

The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians.

Funding is a major factor in employing Teacher Librarians in schools.
There are many relevant and reliable courses offered through universities to train teachers in becoming librarians. Many Teacher Librarians have funded their own training in this area, as schools are reluctant to help with this area as well.

The role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians.

Teacher Librarians in this area have a strong working relationship. Regular term meetings are held along with establishing annual professional development courses. Regardless of the different schools each Teacher Librarian represents, all are helpful and supportive of one another.
The local town library is also a strong supporter of the schools in the area. Without their support small schools would have difficulty supplying resources to teachers and students. This includes technology as well as print material.
State libraries are another source of resources for schools and a welcome support.

The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians

Laptops, whiteboards and social networking will not produce an increase in results from students unless Teachers and more specific Teacher Librarians (TL's) use information literacy training to deepen and enhance student thinking, communicating, inventing, problem solving. 'Educational research has confirmed that technology alone does not deliver educational success. It only becomes valuable in education if learners and teachers can do something useful with it.' (Virkus, S. 2008, p.272)
Teacher Librarians that are experimenting and learning with digital technologies will be able to introduce this technology into library programs, model responsible behaviour with this technology, instruct teachers and students on how to incorporate this technology into an educational context and encourage students to use the library to enhance their learning. Teacher Librarians can also teach students and teachers the new skills required to utilise digital technologies appropriately and educationally.

In Conclusion

Lonsdale concluded "a strong library program that is adequately staffed, resourced and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the adults in the community." (Lonsdale, ACER, 2003) Please refer to http://hubinfo.wordpress.com/background/research/ for further information.

References

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