



Submission on inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

Submitted by Elizabeth Williams

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

The school library is an essential part of the education of students in a school.

However the imposition of Release from Face to face in many school libraries in NSW has meant that librarians have not been able to carry out their function to the fullest. Many RFF school libraries merely process endless classes all day to provide the necessary RFF rather than really support and assist the teachers and students in their information needs. My current experience is one of working in 40 minute blocks, making it almost impossible to do much of value and interest with the students

Ideally the librarian should be released from this role so that he/she can go about the core business of providing information services working along side teachers in a co-operative planning and teaching situation. Classes could then visit the library to work on information tasks using the library facilities.

The BER is providing our school with a brand new library which is fantastic. My hope is that it will not merely be used as an RFF facility and that the teacher librarians will be funded to act as information professionals.

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

I believe that an enjoyment of reading and books is one of the most essential components to literacy. If a child is exposed to good literature which he or she enjoys, the result is improved literacy. A love of reading will continue throughout the school years and into adult life. High reading levels means an improvement in writing, spelling and in grammar, certainly all desirable for an educated society.

Wide reading (facilitated by the TL) exposes children to others life experiences, stories and improves creativity. If students enjoy reading, enjoy libraries and the library experience, they will read more and as a result have a higher level of literacy.

Teacher librarians also teach information literacy, an essential skill for life long learning. This would include all media whether it be books, video or websites.

The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians

Teacher librarians need to be highly educated and motivated. This depends to a large extent on adequate training provided by universities. At the moment the number of courses is inadequate. Teachers and teachers in training need to be shown that teacher librarianship is an interesting career path – which might also have the benefit of more men entering this branch of education. How positive it would be to see more males in school libraries and what a great impact this could have on the education and literacy of boys in our schools! Imagine that, a man in every second school library.

However regardless of gender a highly education trained and motivated teacher librarian is essential in our schools.

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

With the advent of new libraries with the BER program – and our school is the lucky beneficiary of a new library - governments need to ensure that they adequately staffed

Governments also need to set policy, standards and curriculum involving information literacy.

It is important too that educational leaders are made aware of the research showing the positive impact that a good library program can have on educational levels in a school

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

Books are here to stay. Regardless of whether books are in print or digital form, students still need guidance with choosing literature and finding good books to read.

Students need help with information and how to be information literate regardless of where information is sourced from – and in an age where so much information is available it has become even more essential that we have teacher librarians to assist our young in their information needs.