

Revesby South Public School

*Students, Staff & Parents
Working Together*



21/4/10

**SUBMISSION TO NSWPPA'S INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND
TEACHER LIBRARIANS IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS.**

Person/organisation making this submission: Ms Sarah Morgan (teacher librarian)
on behalf of REVESBY SOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOL.

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

It can be argued that the LACK of policies in regards to school libraries is one of the major difficulties for teacher librarians. A teacher librarian (TL) is exactly that – a teacher AND a librarian. Yet is it considered reasonable that only 20% of a TL's time should be devoted to library administration? (As outlined in: <https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/inprincipal/assets/common_media/20050805/irc0518teacherlibrarians.pdf>.) And 20% is the best a TL can currently hope for. Many principals fail to allow 20%, and have TLs supervising students 100% of the time. No TL can maintain a high quality library in so little time, and they also cannot do it alone.

Another policy which requires urgent development is library support staff allocation. Some school libraries have no support staff and TLs are supposed to "make do" without them. This is completely unacceptable.

Lastly, as a primary school TL, I feel I am at an automatic disadvantage. I only work 3 days a week as a TL, due to the number of students at our school. TLs in primary schools are allocated in relation to student numbers. It is completely unacceptable that school students in NSW do not have access to a full time TL. Clearly the government agrees, but only to a point. High schools have a full time TL automatically, regardless of student numbers. This means that a high school with 300 students has a TL five days a week, yet my primary school, with 300 students, has a TL for only three days a week. This is unfair, unworkable, and demeans the value of primary school libraries and librarians.

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

Many teachers feel there has been increasing pressure by the community to focus on preparing students for NAPLAN-style assessments and, eventually, their HSC. There is more to education than passing an exam! Library lessons focus on developing a love of literature and technology. We wish to create lifelong learners who enjoy reading and use technology effectively and judiciously. It is all too easy to forget that reading is not just a tool for gathering information – it can be a purely pleasurable exercise. Whenever we encourage our students to read purely for enjoyment, we are always delighted by the amount of positive feedback we

receive from them. It appears that it is a great relief to the students to know that they can read, for pleasure, without being threatened by “a test or a question at the end”!!

This is the point of teaching literacy in a school library setting – students need to regard reading (whether in a book, magazine, or online) as a positive experience. Otherwise we risk breeding a generation of adults who have failed to meet even the most basic educational outcomes because they have been “turned off” by reading at an early age.

The library is a welcoming, dynamic, progressive learning centre which supports all areas of the curriculum. It is a vital part of any school and is inextricably linked to the achievement of educational outcomes by all students.

The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians:

It is unlikely that teachers who have completed their university education will decide to commence training in teacher librarianship if they feel the position itself is under threat.

The university course in itself is only offered by distance education (which does not suit all learning styles) at ONE Australian university.

It is expensive, incredibly time consuming and there is no guarantee of a position when you finish. This is partly due to the fact that in some schools, the TL’s role has been split into that of an RFF teacher, a technology teacher or the like. The situation at Loftus Public School has further undermined the value of our position. The government needs to make it very clear that TLs are essential members of a school community; otherwise it’s unlikely that young people will continue to choose this career path. I myself am a young TL, and I am devastated by the thought that this job may not even exist by the time I retire.

I entered this profession because I am passionate about presenting the world of information to children. I was willing to complete two university degrees, and am committed to continue working in school libraries for the rest of my career. Many TLs, including myself, feel constantly pressured to justify our existence in the school community and it is time we were given the recognition and reassurance we deserve.

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

Public libraries and school libraries are not in competition. We are partners in information literacy and have always worked effectively together to serve the needs of our community. If public libraries did not exist, school libraries could not exist. However, it needs to be said that the reverse is also true. School libraries have a more specific, specialised role and focus – which cannot be provided by public libraries. Government support for BOTH is vital.

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

There seems to be a misconception that TLs are primarily interested in books. Digital technology has become just as (if not more) important than print resources in school libraries. TLs are experienced in finding a balance between the two and

designed learning experiences which utilise both in a complementary way. Unfortunately, the shift in focus (away from print and towards online learning) has not been supported in terms of budget or facility provision - at the school level, or by the government. Libraries are by definition dynamic and progressive, but TLs need support in order to maintain this environment. Our students rely on their school library to prepare them for the future. An underfunded, little valued school library can only be detrimental to our society.

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Thankyou for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry.