



## Stronger Media Standards and More Teacher Librarians in K-12 Schools

**Problem:** In today's Oregon K-12 schools, vast differences exist in the instructional staffing of school libraries statewide, some of which are overseen solely by volunteers or library assistants with no teaching credentials, no library credentials, and no formal information science and research training. Between 1980 and 2021, the total number of licensed school librarians in Oregon has plummeted from 818 to 147.

With the severe decline in the number of licensed librarians, Oregon students are missing out on foundational information literacy instruction that provides students with the knowledge and skills to evaluate information for success in their personal, professional, and civic lives. The lack of those skills follows students into their post-secondary education and adulthood, to their detriment.

### Licensed Librarians in Schools Make a Difference:

In its position statement on "[Appropriate Staffing Levels for School Libraries](#)" the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) states, "A full-time certified school librarian, supported by dedicated technical and clerical staff, is crucial to an effective school library for a school's learning environment." Oregon's own [Quality Education Model](#) (QEM) also lists one licensed librarian and one support staff as best practice for all levels of K-12 school libraries.

Research explicitly links a strong school library program with increased student achievement and graduation rates: In a 2015 Washington (state) study, high schools with licensed librarians saw graduation rates of 85% compared to 76% for high schools without licensed librarians. The impact is further heightened among students in high-poverty schools where the graduation rate is 79% in schools with Certified Teacher Librarians (CTLs) versus 43% at those without.

### Requests:

Following part of Recommendation 2 from the [Budget Note for Media Program Standards Study Report](#) commissioned by the legislature and completed in December 2021, OLA is asking for funding for a full-time FTE School Library Specialist at ODE. This position will work to strengthen the media program standards, update terminology, provide professional learning and technical assistance, develop academic content standards through a process of statewide engagement, and provide technical assistance to districts to implement the standards. OLA believes this is an important first step towards rectifying the current crisis facing school libraries, that is why we introduced [SB 1075](#) to require ODE to do specific work that will require they hire a new dedicated full-time staff position.

Students in Oregon are being underserved compared to their counterparts nationally, and there is an equity issue facing students in the state, with 75% of school districts in Oregon without professionally licensed librarians. Investment is critical to manage this disparity and put Oregon on the right track for its young learners, please pass SB 1075.

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*"The takeaway for legislators is this," says Keith Curry Lance, research consultant involved with impact studies in 15 states, "If you're looking for something to fund in public education for which there is consistent evidence of a positive association with student success—one that can't be explained away by social and economic inequality—school library programs are just such an investment opportunity."*

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