



January 8, 2015

Bonnie Cain, Chairwoman of SBEC, and SBEC Members
SBEC Board
1701 N. Congress Ave.
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Chairwoman Cain and Committee Members,

On behalf of members of the community of Texas school librarians, thank you and all the members of SBEC for your work ensuring Texas children have access to qualified, professional educators. As you consider the elements of certification for school librarians, we share here information about the function of school librarians in Texas schools. The Texas Association of School Librarians, a division of the Texas Library Association, has a formal position in support of the current requirements; we respond particularly in support of the requirement of two years of teaching experience.

The mission of Texas school librarians is to advance student learning and achievement. Expert school librarians strengthen their schools' goal of building and supporting learner-centered instruction precisely because they have experience in teaching. By collaborating with faculty, actively participating in curriculum and other school committees, and providing relevant, tailored professional development and support, school librarians positively impact student progress. School librarians consistently build programs with the depth to cover all subject areas and interests and the breadth to address differing learning styles, grade levels and skills. To succeed in this undertaking, school librarians' practice must be strongly grounded in the principles of teaching. Classroom experience strengthens their understanding of student development, academic needs, and the pressure placed on school faculty and leadership to impact student achievement demonstrated by test scores. Further, school librarians are unique in their school because they offer a powerful combination of teaching experience and specialized training in information literacy, which includes access and evaluation. This one, two punch provides Texas students with solid opportunities for strong academic and personal growth in and beyond the classroom.

Some districts report difficulty in locating qualified job candidates for school library openings. Given the number of strong school library certification programs in Texas (several with successful online components) plenty of qualified candidates exist and could increase especially if candidates see a solid job future. In addition, districts have recruited current teachers to pursue school library certification through arrangements with graduate school library certification programs while maintaining employment and this effort has added strong school library practitioners to the ranks statewide.

An abundance of research speaks to the importance of school librarians and libraries to student learning. Please refer to the attached documentation for more detail and specific data illustrating the impact of school librarians and libraries on student achievement. Thank you for your kind attention. We are confident you will make the best decision for Texas students as you consider school librarian certification requirements and the role school librarians play in Texas learning communities.

Yours respectfully,
Texas Association of School Librarians Executive Board
Julie Briggs, 2014-2015 Chair

School Librarians -- Teachers First!

- School libraries are classrooms.
 - Teaching may be individual, small group or full class.
 - Topics taught may be classroom assigned or of personal interest.
 - Teacher librarians need to know from their classroom experience a myriad of teaching skills to reach varied individual needs.
 - TEKS list many specific skills taught in, or supported by school libraries.
 - School libraries expand the academic classrooms in so many ways, both traditional and forward-looking.
 - Technology for learning is embedded in the librarian's lessons, including
 - Equitable access to computers and other forms of technology.
 - Instruction in how to use state-funded TexQuest digital resources.
 - A library website that offers access 24–7 to an online catalog, selected electronic resources, databases, and curriculum-related websites.
- School librarians' teaching experience inspires literacy by
 - Providing a broad, carefully selected collection of resources to support every student at any level and in many interests to encourage reading for pleasure and lifelong learning.
 - Understanding specific literacy skills when recommending useful resources to support classroom teaching assignments.
- School librarians are critical for student achievement
 - Standards, assessments, and accountability have all increased in rigor over recent years. Librarians bring many strengths to the team that meets this challenge largely because of their understanding of classroom demands, understanding which derives directly from their teaching experience. (See Resources below for links to research data reflecting the impact of school librarians and libraries.)

Resources

The library impact studies continue to inform educators the influence school libraries have on student achievement.

- From 1993 through 2007, Lance and his associates conducted other studies similar to the Colorado study in several other US states. A compilation of these school library impact studies, known as "the Lance studies," is available on the Colorado Department of Education Library Research Service web site (<http://www.lrs.org/impact.php>).
- As of January 2009, twenty states, and one Canadian province, have either completed or are in the process of completing state studies on the effects of school libraries on student achievement. Scholastic Publishing began summarizing these impact studies in 2004 under the title School Libraries Work. The 2008 third edition is available online (http://www2.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/s/sl3_2008.pdf)
- Texas Study 2001: Texas School Libraries: Standards, Resources, Services, and Students' Performance by Ester G. Smith, Ph.D. of EGS Research & Consulting prepared for the Texas State Library and Archives Commission <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/sites/default/files/public/tslac/ld/pubs/schlibsurvey/survey.pdf>
- AASL Essential Links on Student Achievement (comprehensive overview of studies related to "The Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement") http://aasl.ala.org/essentiallinks/index.php?title=Student_Achievement