



www.fundourfuturewashington.org

Washington Coalition for School Libraries and Information Technology

September 2008

Dear Members of the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance:

As average citizens who had never visited the capitol before, observed state meetings or, in short, had any idea what goes into policy making, we want to *thank you* for the intellectual and time capital we know each of you has been expending on education reform for the State of Washington. As mothers, we are eternally grateful. As Washington citizens, we are humbled by your resolve and stamina. As observers, we want to say we believe you will be successful in providing a roadmap for historic change. Listening all these months, we strongly believe that this group will be the one to be visionary and concrete – in other words, provide actionable recommendations.

Last November our coalition submitted 350 signatures from Washington citizens calling for libraries to be included as part of the Basic Education Act's funding formula. **Last Thursday, the 10,000th Washingtonian signed on in support.** The consensus is that all students deserve the same level of rigor and base-line resources, and unless the state recognizes the teacher-librarian and library program as *basic*, grave inequities will persist.

We know that you have received several comprehensive proposals from broad education entities (OSPI, League of Education Voters, and professional organizations). Although some of the issues we are advocating for have been partially addressed in many of the comprehensive proposals, others have not. We think it is important to take a few minutes (or more if you get interested!) of your time to address why these issues should be fully addressed in the final recommendations of the Joint Task Force. What's more, we've promised these 10,000 Washingtonians we would bring their voices to you.

Chairman Grimm has repeatedly asked stakeholders the following questions:

“What do you want the State to do?”

“What would it look like?”

“What is being done elsewhere?”

We respectfully attempt to answer Chairman Grimm's questions in the following materials. Thank you for your hard work. Please let us know if we can clarify any of the recommendations in any way.

Sincerely,

Lisa Layera Brunkan
Co-Chair, WCS-Lit
lisa@fundourfuturewashington.org

Susan McBurney
Co-Chair, WCS-Lit
susan@fundourfuturewashington.org



www.fundourfuturewashington.org

Washington Coalition for School Libraries and Information Technology

Summary of Recommendations to the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance

- That school library programs be made a part of the Basic Education Act's funding formula.
- That the Joint Task Force recommend a per student allocation to ensure material resources within school libraries are equitable around the state and certified teacher-librarians are made available to *all* WA children. NOTE: OSPI's excellent proposal is a fine benchmark, with the exception of the 1:500 librarian ratio. Under this ratio, only 35% of WA schools would qualify for a teacher-librarian.
- That the JTF recommend an upgrade of the state's educational goals acknowledging the changing landscape of information, technology and literacy skills by making information literacy a new 21st century 'basic.'
- That the JTF recommend OSPI be charged with developing state-wide information literacy standards and assessments to ensure that 'shelving of books' does not constitute a 21st century library program in one WA school while another teaches copyright law, and information, media and technology skills. This is a crucial step for WA to remain competitive amongst our national competitors, many of whom are on their second or third revision of similar standards, first initiated nearly a decade ago.
- That the JTF recommend a *Task Force on 21st Century Skills* to ensure that Washington State remains competitive. Every Global Challenge State is examining this issue in a systemic way, as are our international competitors (the European Union, Canadian Provinces, Singapore, among others).
- That teacher-librarians are not grouped with counselors and are not referenced as 'Support Staff.' Washington code states that certified librarians **shall collaborate as an instructional partner**. The people of Washington see teacher-librarians as teachers, not support staff. Business leaders from around the state know that in order to develop a 21st century workforce, our schools must have 21st century classrooms; to view the library as anything less is relegating reform to 20th century limitations. Teachers, administrators and education leaders have confirmed that teacher-librarians are an essential component of a school's curriculum, integral to professional development and student achievement. The broad consensus is that teacher-librarians (when certified professionals) function as the 21st century schoolhouse's Chief Information Officer.

In 2006, the Washington Legislature passed RCW 28A.320.240, updating the criteria for school library media programs (see below). This law states that when a school runs a “school-library media” program, it will be staffed by a certified teacher-librarian. Yet in recent years, a growing number of schools around the state have resorted to staffing library media centers with paraprofessionals. The inclusion of school library programs as part of the BEA funding formula will enable school districts to adhere to both our state code and high school accreditation rules.

The Picus and Conley reports, as well as numerous proposals already submitted to the Joint Task Force by other education advocates and professionals, have included librarians in staffing models. We respectfully ask you to follow these requests.

During last year’s supplemental budget session, when an emergency stop-gap allocation was made to school libraries, many law-makers noted that the opportunity and task to make school libraries general and uniform, and funded in a manner that meets the current needs of the children of the state, lie squarely with the Joint Task Force.

In 1978 the Washington State Supreme Court determined that it was the duty of the state to provide an adequate education to “equip our children for their role as citizens and as potential competitors in today's market as well as in the marketplace of ideas.” Thirty years later, Washington students are divided into the information-rich and the information-poor. At a time when information and technology affect every person in every possible setting – education, public service, and business – the teaching of information literacy is decisively about equity and adequacy. Successful companies focus on meaningful uses of information and technology and hire employees who are able to apply technology to a range of situations (i.e. critical thinkers).¹ The 21st century skills of information and digital literacy are equally necessary for college-bound or vocationally-bound students – they are simply the new basics of this century.²

Upgrading WA State’s educational goals to reflect the advances of the last century and the promise of this new century, in tandem with convening a taskforce to study, develop and recommend a concrete plan for executing a 21st century vision, is an urgent step that needs to be called for by Washington leadership.

While discussions in Washington remain focused on debating whether or not this is an issue of local management and how librarians should be classified, leaders in other states (including every Global Challenge State) are designing and implementing comprehensive educational programs to ensure every student is fluent in the language of the new century. In order for students in the 21st century to be successful, they will require technological and thinking skills that are new, unique and truly transformational to our educational system. Without these skills, our students will not be able to compete for jobs in a global economy. Currently, Washington students do not have equal access to 21st century learning opportunities or resources.

The State of Massachusetts, when announcing their intent to infuse standards, assessments, accountability, curriculum, professional and teacher development with 21st century learning, had this to say, “We are not currently providing students with the skills they need to be successful in a technologically complex, globally competitive world. In many of our schools, there is insufficient time

and attention given to broader skills development and learning in areas such as oral communication, information processing, the application of technology to complex problems, critical thinking, media literacy, creativity/innovation, global awareness, cultural competency, problem-solving, teamwork/collaboration, self-directed learning and leadership.”

Failure for Washington to integrate 21st century skills into our educational system will ensure a two-tiered system continues. Some districts will have the resources and vision to move forward, providing robust and comprehensive curricular and training changes that reflect a 21st century paradigm. Many other districts will not – students in these districts will be left behind, and will continue to function within an outdated, 20th century paradigm. The prospect of implementing an integrated K-12 program that infuses 21st century skills for the majority of Washington school districts remains, out of reach.

Our public and private sectors have an opportunity to define 21st century education so that Washington’s standards are as cutting edge as our industries.

The Washington code pertaining to school library media programs is organized in relation to the goals set forth in the Basic Education Act, the essential academic learning requirements, and high school graduation requirements – all of which are unequivocally instructional in nature. The professional responsibilities of the teacher-librarian are characterized as such: teacher, instructional leader, information specialist and manager.

- Teacher: All certified teacher-librarians are credentialed teachers.
 - Teacher-librarians teach classes, give grades and develop curriculums.
 - Teacher-librarians see all students, each week, all year long.
- Instructional Leaders: Teacher librarians are required to teach the teachers.
 - They serve as instructional leaders for staff in the areas of social studies, reading and technology curriculums, as well as state-required social studies assessments.
- Information Specialists: Teacher librarians serve every student and every teacher in their school continuously. They collaborate with teachers and students providing research instruction, generating curriculum resources, and integrating technology lessons.
 - Teacher librarians attend formal collaboration meetings with teaching staff in addition to significant informal collaborative work that takes place with classroom teachers.
 - Teacher librarians create and implement reading and literacy programs.
- Managers: Teacher librarians are managers for the curricular aspect of a library program, in addition to the facility, collection, and technology resources.
 - Teacher librarians are charged with developing and managing print and digital collections.

RCW 28A.320.240

School library media programs — Stocking of libraries — Teacher-librarians.

(1) The purpose of this section is to identify quality criteria for school library media programs that support the student learning goals under RCW 28A.150.210, the essential academic learning requirements under RCW 28A.655.070, and high school graduation requirements adopted under RCW 28A.230.090.

(2) Every board of directors shall provide for the operation and stocking of such libraries as the board deems necessary for the proper education of the district's students or as otherwise required by law or rule of the superintendent of public instruction.

(3) "Teacher-librarian" means a certified teacher with a library media endorsement under rules adopted by the professional educator standards board.

(4) "School-library media program" means a school-based program that is staffed by a certificated teacher-librarian and provides a variety of resources that support student mastery of the essential academic learning requirements in all subject areas and the implementation of the district's school improvement plan.

(5) The teacher-librarian, through the school-library media program, shall collaborate as an instructional partner to help all students meet the content goals in all subject areas, and assist high school students completing the culminating project and high school and beyond plans required for graduation.

¹ M. B. Eisenberg, "Information literacy: Essential skills for the information age." *DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology*, vol. 28, no.2, 2008, pp. 39-47. M. B. Eisenberg, C. A. Lowe, & K. L. Spitzer, *Information literacy: Essential skills for the information age*. 2nd Edition. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

² L.A. Karoly & C.W.A. Panis, "The 21st Century at Work: Forces shaping the future workforce and workplace in the United States." The Rand Corporation, 2004. Available at http://rand.org/pubs/monographs/2004/RAND_MG164.pdf and "Results that matter: 21st century skills and high school reform." Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006. Available at <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/RTM2006.pdf>