

## Issue Brief:

# School Library Programs

### (SHB 2773/SSB 6380)

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School library media center programs, staffed by certified teacher-librarians, provide more than just a collection of books for students to borrow. They support teachers with publications, computer resources, and other curriculum related information. They teach students the research skills necessary to be information literate and skilled information consumers. They inspire literacy by helping to make reading fun. They've led the way in technology use in schools. And research has shown that they make a significant difference in student educational attainment.

Yet, K-12 school library media programs are not considered part of Washington's basic education funding mandate. Local school districts receive no state money for their support and they compete with many other programs and services for limited local levy money. The result is a deterioration of these programs in school districts of all sizes throughout the state, with staff layoffs and reduced funding for books, periodicals, and online resources. And the impact can be felt in academic and public libraries as students move through the education system and into adulthood.

The Washington Coalition for School Libraries and Information Technology, a grass roots organization that grew from the concern of three moms about the elimination of teacher-librarian positions from Spokane Public Schools, wants to change that. The Coalition, with the support of thousands of Washington residents, respected education experts, and several statewide and national organizations, is working on the long-term goal of including school library media programs in state basic education funding.

But the Coalition also feels that more immediate action is necessary to stop further cuts in these programs to ensure that students from across the state, urban and rural, have the same access to technology, the same chance for literacy, and the same opportunity to receive a world-class education. It's convinced that school library media programs are fundamental to 21st century K-12 education.

To that end, the Coalition requested a supplemental budget appropriation of \$32.4 million to meet the current critical need for adequate staffing (\$21.8 million) and materials (\$10.6 million) in all Washington school libraries for the 2008-2009 school year. SHB 2773 and SB 6380 are first steps toward assuring the full funding to carry meet these needs. Detailed information, including budget request documentation, is available on the Coalition's web site, [www.fundourfuturewashington.org](http://www.fundourfuturewashington.org).

The Washington Library Association strongly supports the efforts of the Washington Coalition for School Libraries and Information Technology to include school library media programs as integral elements of the state's basic education responsibilities and more immediately, encourages Legislative approval of proposed legislation that would include school library funding in the 2008 supplemental budget.