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Washington Coalition for School Libraries and Information Technology (WCSLit)

OUR VISION

The Washington Coalition for School Libraries and Information Technology (WCSLit) envisions a future where every public school or small district in Washington State is served by a full-time, certified teacher-librarian who manages a fully-funded library program and technology resource collection. The coalition looks to a future where all students in Washington have the same access to technology, the same chance for literacy, and the same opportunity to receive a world-class education. It is our hope that Washington State standards for library and information technology education become the benchmark for library and information technology instruction across the nation.

OUR MISSION

The Washington Coalition for School Libraries and Information Technology is a group of concerned citizens, educators, businesses, and community groups working to ensure that school libraries receive adequate and sustained funding for full-time certified staff, resources, technologies and facilities. Coalition members believe that Washington's public schools must graduate students who are information literate, technologically savvy, and impassioned, skillful readers. To achieve this goal, and to fulfill our aspirations of providing a world-class education for our children, schools must have well-funded, professionally-staffed libraries. Our primary mission is to advocate for this.

OUR GOAL

We seek to influence Washington State Legislators, Governor Gregoire, and the members of the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance to ensure that Washington students have full-time access to school libraries and a certified teacher-librarian to teach the literacy and information technology skills students need to be successful in school, work, and life.

for more information, visit: www.fundourfuturewashington.org

petition link: <http://gopetition.com/online/15285.html>

MySpace page coming soon!

There is no such thing as good education without good school libraries.

Here is what citizens around Washington State are saying about school libraries:

'We need to give our children the best opportunity for education if we are to continue to be a world leader. Our libraries bring out the best in our most valuable asset, our children!' **Colville**

'Libraries have been the bedrock of education that insures everyone has an equal chance at learning. That standard must be upheld.' **Spokane**

'A nation of readers requires full-time and equal access to well supplied libraries and a competent certified teacher librarian to guide and inspire the students who go there and entice the ones who don't.' **Seattle**

'Libraries at all levels of education are core indicators of the quality of a school. We cannot afford NOT to have excellent libraries in our schools.' **Ephrata**

'A good library and the wonderful librarian who ran it made all the difference for me when I was growing up. The learning that happens in a library is crucial to the development of empathy and critical thinking skills. Don't take libraries away from our kids!' **Bellevue**

'A teacher/librarian, delivering a rich program of information literacy, is helping prepare students to meet the challenges of the future world in which they will live. These skills will not be optional. They will be critical to creating tomorrow's solutions. We must not be short-sighted in our vision for schools. BASIC education today MUST include abundant technology and the information literacy instruction to use it productively. Make paths to the future, not roadblocks for our kids.' **Seattle**

Businesses around the state are weighing in as well:

I believe keeping an active library and librarian in the public schools is as important as any other primary education role. We must teach our children to do research and explore on their own. What better resource is there than a library and librarian to provide a safe and positive environment for discovery of interests and gifts of knowledge. Our competitive advantage in the United States is clearly our ability to be creative and inventive of new technologies, new business processes, new music, new fashion, new dance, new ways of looking at old things... It is in our culture and we cannot lose this ability. Research and Development is our Thing! Libraries plant and nourish this seed in our children.'

Jon Copeland CEO - Inland Imaging Business Associates

As a product of Bellevue School District, and a parent of Bellevue School District children now, I want to make sure that you support our families by funding academic programs including school libraries and librarians. In other states, librarians have adequate funding to be strong resources for their school sites. I know this because professionally I work in marketing technology in the education market. When you see what states with adequate funding can do to support all levels of learners, struggling and gifted alike, it breaks my heart that my children go to school in Washington state. In other states, with adequate funding, librarians are strong advocates for their school sites, and create, and teach on best practices on how to use technology in the classroom. Unfortunately here in Washington, we don't respect the value of librarians and don't fund library programs well. Please be an advocate for better funding.

Linda R. Bookey CEO, Bookey Consulting, Inc.

Areas of Impact

• School Libraries Support Literacy

The school library has always been the **heart of the school**, the place where students develop a **love of reading and literature**, and where they discover the difference between learning to read and reading to learn.

To become life-long readers, **students must have access** to current, quality, high interest, and extensive collections of books and other print materials in their libraries and classrooms.

Research shows that a well-stocked library and full-time librarian play an important role in developing **good reading habits** in children and lead to **higher reading scores**.

Research shows a **direct link between higher reading scores and collaboration** between school library media specialists and teachers.

School library programs **provide graduating students with the opportunity to succeed** in school, work, and life.

• School Libraries Lead to Academic Achievement

Well-funded, professionally-staffed libraries have a measurable impact on student achievement and test scores.

For example, one study showed that **reading scores increased 10-18%** and **scores on standardized tests rose** up to 35% in elementary schools where students have access to a full-time certified teacher-librarian (Michigan).

There's a **demonstrable link between mathematics achievement and school library programs**; in a recent Indiana study, schools with better-funded libraries scored higher on standardized math tests (5-8% at the elementary level and 6-7% in middle school).

Teacher librarians are **important instructional partners**, collaborating with classroom teachers to integrate information skills into subject area learning as well as supporting and expanding existing curriculum.

Spending for school library media programs is the **single most important variable related to better student achievement**.

• **School Libraries Provide 21st Century Skills**

Teacher-librarians play a critical role in teaching students how to select, use and understand information in all formats.

Fluency in reading, communicating, information processing, computational thinking and using technologies are the **mainstay of the new economy**.

In schools, the **teacher-librarian is the *only* teaching professional who is fully dedicated to seeing that our children acquire these important 21st century skills.**

Future Washington workers and students have to be problem-solvers who are able to turn data into knowledge; **without a fully-funded school library program, they will be sorely disadvantaged.**

To remain competitive as a nation and as a leader in technology, the state of Washington must fund school libraries now. The longer we wait, the harder it will be to catch up.

At the rate we're going, our children will be driving apple carts and logging trucks down the information superhighway!

• **School Libraries Ensure Equity for All**

Research has shown that **in schools with strong library programs, student achievement is higher, regardless of whether the communities are affluent or poor**, whether the adults in the communities are well educated or not.

By providing the technology, materials and training that will decrease the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', between the information rich and the information poor, **school library media centers are a means of providing a more equitable education to all students.**

To deny any student access to the school library and its resources is to deny them a level playing field. Districts with failing school library programs will increasingly turn out students that may be picked last in the academic line-up because they haven't been trained in the very skills needed to succeed in today's world.

Children without access to the public library, or a computer at home, may be so marginalized as to never catch up.

For our businesses trying to build a workforce, we can't let this continue – not even one budget cycle longer.

- **School Libraries: An Investment in Educational Excellence**

An investment in the school library program pays off for every person in a **schoolhouse**; it provides a Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the school, a collaborative partner for the teacher and principal, and a dedicated teacher who reaches every student in the school and provides one-on-one intervention for those children most in need as well as those most gifted.

School libraries are **among the most effective of all school programs, serving every child** in the school and helping all children develop a love of reading.

Washington children are being short-changed. They will be at a major disadvantage when compared to the rest of the country, and the rest of the world, if our leaders do not take action immediately and provide adequate and sustained funding for our school libraries.

Washington leaders have been talking about world-class education, the importance of 21st century skills, literacy and learning. They now have a chance to act.

The citizens of Washington are weighing in on this issue in great numbers, asking the WA State Legislature to **support and pass Senate Bill #6380 and House Bill #2773 in this session.** These bills will provide necessary bridge funding for school library programs across the state.

Coalition members are also asking the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance to address the long-term needs by including school library programs in state basic education funding.

Library funding is a down payment for quality education that our students, our communities, our state and our businesses can not afford to miss.

“Let common sense prevail and let us make literacy and access to information technology important and indispensable components of our children's education.” Spokane