



February 29, 2024

Statement from the Oregon Library Association and the Oregon Association of School Libraries RE: Proposed cuts to Portland Public Schools' library programs

The Oregon Library Association, a professional organization for library staff members in Oregon, and the Oregon Association of School Libraries, a professional organization for school library staff, recently learned about the proposed drastic cuts to Portland Public Schools' library programs for the 2024-25 school year.

While we understand the seriousness of Portland Public Schools' budget issues, we urge PPS to keep school library services at their current level. A strong school library program, with a licensed teacher-librarian and a classified library assistant, is one of the most high-yield educational resources in a school. Decades of research have proven that a strong school library program has a **positive, measurable impact** on:

- 3rd grade literacy rates;
- K-12 writing and math scores;
- Attendance and graduation rates, particularly for students who are historically underserved.

These benefits exist even when controlling for student poverty level and parental educational achievement level. Strong school library programs are **one of the most important resources we have to address inequity and learning loss for our students**. Unfortunately, the proposed cuts for Portland Public Schools will amplify the equity and access gaps we already see between students.

The current significant efforts and focus on students' literacy skills by the legislature and the governor's office support the importance of the role of literacy in students' lives and learning. With literacy rates already critically low, now is not the time to cut programs which have a **direct positive impact on literacy**.

In addition to the impact on student literacy, school library programs also provide crucial instruction in important future-ready concepts and skills. Teacher-librarians teach **digital and information literacy**, including how to be a positive, safe, and productive **digital citizen**, and how to **evaluate information** found online for accuracy and bias. They **build, curate, promote, and provide access to library collections** that align to student interests and curriculum. They provide expertise and training in **instructional technology**. They develop a school-wide **culture of reading** through programming, collaboration, competitions, and readers' advisory. Strong library programs can only achieve these goals with the support of a team of both licensed teacher-librarian and classified assistant.

Simply put, a strong school library program is a crucial part of a thriving school, and provides the resources and skills necessary for students to bridge equity and achievement gaps in school and beyond. We urge Portland Public Schools to reconsider the decision to cut K-12 school library positions in the upcoming school year.

Oregon Library Association
Oregon Association of School Libraries