

House Co-Sponsorship Memoranda

House of Representatives Session of 2017 - 2018 Regular Session MEMORANDUM

Posted: February 14, 2017 04:03 PM
From: [Representative Mark Longietti](#) and [Rep. Thomas P. Murt](#)
To: All House members
Subject: Co-sponsorship Memo: One “Certified Librarian” Per Public School

In the near future, we plan to reintroduce legislation that would require public schools to have at least one “certified librarian” per school. This bill was introduced last session by Rep. Ted Harhai as House Bill 1163 of 2015-16.

Currently, the Commonwealth’s school districts are not required to employ a librarian. Unfortunately, when school investments lagged behind their growing expenses in the wake of the Great Recession, many districts made the choice to cut librarians from their schools. In fact, the Pennsylvania School Libraries Association found an 8-percent reduction in the number of school librarian positions over the past five years. As a result, more than a quarter of Pennsylvania’s districts have no school librarian at all, and 68 percent have librarians serving multiple buildings.

In 2010, the House of Representatives commissioned a study by the State Board of Education and the Department of Education to measure, compare, and evaluate school library programs across the Commonwealth. The study found that, in districts with full-time librarians, students achieved better on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests. The test improvements were more pronounced among students in disadvantaged populations, showing that school librarians are an effective tool in closing the academic achievement gap. Further, while one might expect that having a librarian in a student’s academic life would boost reading scores, the study found an even greater improvement in scores for writing—a vital skill in producing critical thinking, work-ready graduates.

Librarians are privileged to be able to work with teachers across all subject areas and with students of all ages. A librarian’s area of expertise is in information management: he or she assists students and staff in accessing useful information by providing relevant, reliable resources to support the areas they are studying or teaching. Such information literacy is another crucial skill in a society awash in conflicting—sometimes misleading—traditional, online, and social media news and encyclopedic outlets.

In addition to helping students locate information, librarians can help them to evaluate and synthesize what they learn, moving students from copy-and-paste essay writing to advanced note-taking and original composition. Librarians can teach students to be stronger, more independent researchers, creating better students throughout the school building and better graduates entering higher education and the workforce.

This is an area of policy in which we have concrete data showing us a roadmap to an outcome we all desire. Please join us in co-sponsoring this legislation so we can ensure our children receive the best, most well-rounded education possible in our public schools.

Previous co-sponsors: [HARHAI, V.](#)
[BROWN, O'BRIEN](#), [KINSEY](#), [McNEILL](#), [BROWNLIEE](#), [READSHAW](#), [MURT](#), [COHEN](#), [YOUNGBLOOD](#) and [SCHWEYER](#)