

Three questions to ask about your child's school library

Did you know that over the past two decades, **hundreds of thousands of students across Ontario have lost access to school libraries** and the critical resources they provide?

Recently, the situation has become more dire.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on school libraries, staff and programming. Across Ontario, **school library professionals have been re-assigned, library staff laid-off, and access to library spaces, books and resources cut off to students.**

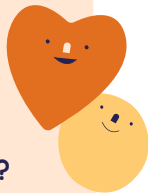
While we understand and respect the reasons for this dramatic action, we also understand the **short- and long-term consequences** for students:

- The closing of school libraries **perpetuates inequality**. Children who are racialized, impoverished or with little access to books are the most affected.
- **School libraries help reduce barriers to access**. Families with lesser resources rely on school libraries to help their children succeed as students.
- Studies have demonstrated the **relationship between academic achievement and access to a school library**. Indeed, improving literacy and reading skills boosts test scores in all subjects.
- School library professionals are instrumental for **building research and information literacy skills** to prepare students for college and university.
- **Books and library spaces are a source of reassurance and comfort**, and contribute to children's better mental health and participation in school.

Parents: Ask your school principal or school board trustee about your child's school library

1

Does my child still have access to school library resources and to a qualified school library professional?
How?

**2**

Is a qualified school library professional responsible for selecting the books in my child's school library?

**3**

What is your plan for the school library next year?



F.A.Q. About School Libraries

What does a school library program look like if students can't access the physical library?

The school library program extends beyond the physical library space. School library staff:

- Deliver programming such as read-alouds, book clubs and maker activities,
- Co-teach with classroom teachers, and
- Select quality age- and curriculum- appropriate books and learning resources.



When schools moved to a virtual format in March 2020, school library staff quickly adapted their in-person programming to be delivered virtually. They also took on a leadership role in supporting teachers and students connect to distance learning technology.

Who are school library professionals?

School library professionals include teacher-librarians, library technicians, and librarians with a Masters of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree. School library professionals complete qualifications in librarianship and have specialized skills in selecting quality, age- and curriculum- appropriate books and resources and developing programming for students.

What kind of teaching do school library professionals do?

School library professionals support classroom teachers in developing interactive programming and resources to complement the curriculum. School library professionals are essential in students developing:

- literacy skills and a love of reading;
- critical information skills and research proficiency;
- technology skills, digital literacy and digital citizenship;
- and much more.



Why should a school library professional select the materials for my child's school library?



School library professionals have **specialized skills in selecting library materials** for the students of all ages and reading abilities. School library professionals work with classroom teachers to ensure that classes have the learning resources needed to support the curriculum. They also help to foster a life-long love of reading, getting to know the interests of individual students and tailoring their collection to reflect what the students want to read.

F.A.Q. About School Libraries

When in-person learning returns, can materials circulate safely in schools during COVID-19?

Yes, physical library materials such as books and DVDs can be circulated to students in adherence with public health and safety protocols. When a school library space is closed, school library professionals can coordinate book delivery to classrooms.

Recommendations from the Public Services Health and Safety Association are that materials are left “untouched in a dedicated quarantine area for a period prior to handling and recirculating.”*

How does the school library differ from the public library?

While public libraries are mandated to serve all Ontarians, school libraries are mandated to serve the school community. This means that the school library programming and collections are specifically designed to support the curriculum and learning goals of the school.

Ontario students can benefit from accessing their local public library’s collections and from participating in the children’s and teen’s programming available at their local branch. However, students do not all have equal access to the public library. Geographic barriers, access to transportation, and availability of parents to visit the library all impact students’ ability to access resources at the public library.

Having a staffed, well-resourced library in each school ensures that all students, regardless of barriers, have equitable access to the books and resources they need to support their learning and growth.