

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**STATEWIDE PETITION LAUNCHED IN SUPPORT OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES
AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

Supporters Travel to Olympia to Hand-Deliver Petition to the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance

SPOKANE, Wa. (November 19, 2007) - A statewide petition to provide Washington citizens a forum to voice their support of school library programs launched on Thursday (Nov. 15). The authors of the petition, who are in the process of forming a statewide coalition to advocate for school libraries and information technology, will submit petition signatures and comments at Monday's meeting of the bipartisan Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance. The task force is charged with reviewing the definition of basic education and the state's education funding formula. Teacher librarians, library programs, and technology training are currently not included in the state's definition of 'basic education.'

"Washington's basic education allocation formula has not been significantly altered since 1977, and is not meeting the education needs of today's information age," says petition author Lisa Layera Brunkan. "This is not just a school issue, but an issue of economics and future viability."

The U.S. Commission on Libraries and Information Science summarizes what decades of research have shown in state after state:

Students in schools with good school libraries learn more, get better grades, and score higher on standardized test scores than their peers in schools without libraries.

School Libraries have an important role in teaching. Certified teacher librarians are working with teachers to change what is possible in the classroom and support learning opportunities with books, computer resources and more.

School libraries are leading the way for technology use in schools.

School libraries inspire literacy.

School libraries need to be staffed by a certified teacher librarian in order to have a positive impact on student academic achievement. (HYPERLINK "http://www.nclis.gov" <http://www.nclis.gov>)

To access an extensive list of research, please see HYPERLINK "http://www.lrs.org/impact.php" www.lrs.org/impact.php.

School districts around the state and around the country have been reducing library services in order to balance their budgets. Districts on the east and west sides of Washington state have faced a variety of library program cuts, including elimination of teacher librarian positions, reductions to part-time, replacement of certified teacher librarians with aides, and in some cases, districts have foregone replacement of retiring teacher librarians.

"Despite the fact that as parents we have experienced our school libraries weakened, and our children's potential for information literacy diminished, we remain optimistic that the state of Washington will seize the opportunity and become a national leader in this regard by ensuring that teacher librarians, library programs, and technology training are no longer at risk," says Layera Brunkan.

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education” if the fruits of the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance produce recommendations that are both visionary and sustainable. Petition signers are specific and concrete about one recommendation -- make sure that our school library and technology programs don't have the doors closed and computers shut down.

In the petition's first day, nearly 100 people signed on, and by Sunday night the numbers had risen to nearly 350. Washington residents signing the petition are leaving comments like the following:

"Libraries have been the bedrock of education that ensures that everyone has an equal chance at learning. That standard must be upheld."

"Librarians are navigators through the maze of the internet, lending instruction, evaluation, and information accuracy to all. Information literacy is required to function in our global community, and librarians point the way.

"The best education trains how to ask questions. Libraries are where questions get asked and answered."

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

"There is substantial research evidence that school libraries can make a positive difference in student achievement. To see libraries as a cost rather than an investment is erroneous and short-sighted."

"The skills in reading and technology fostered by teacher librarians are basic education skills for the 21st century."

To access the petition, please go to HYPERLINK "http://gopetition.com/online/15285.html" <http://gopetition.com/online/15285.html>

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