

Good afternoon. Thank you for letting me speak on behalf of the 1300 members of the Washington Library Media Association, the professional organization for K-12 school librarians. My name is Sarah Applegate, and I am a National Board Certified Teacher-Librarian at River Ridge High School in Lacey. I am also the past president of WLMA. I am speaking in support of including Teacher Librarians as part of Basic Education and in support of funding resources for school libraries to ensure that *all* students in Washington state have opportunities to become effective users of ideas and information. I am also speaking as someone who loves her job and knows the difference that quality school library programs can make in student lives.

I have worked as a teacher librarian for nearly 10 years, and during this time I have been lucky to work in a building and district that has supported my work with students and teachers. In addition to my daily work with students, I am involved in the School Improvement Team, I attend Program Leaders' meetings, I am often in charge of professional development, and I work collaboratively with teachers to design lessons for their students to strengthen their reading, evaluation, searching and thinking skills. I have amazing students and teachers and a very supportive principal, and I have fought hard to ensure that River Ridge High School students have access to a wide range of resources, print, electronic and human. I have also watched the library budget shrink each year. This year, the budget is 1/2 of what it was 10 years ago. I have not been able to do basic purchasing, such as replacing reference materials, updating the science collection and providing adequate databases for students to use for research, resources students desperately need to meet the increasing expectations of teachers, districts and the state. At this moment in our history when students must be adept at managing massive amounts of information, having inadequate and out-of-date resources only makes them doubt the value of the work and truly leaves them ill equipped to become competent active citizens in their communities. Students expect (and deserve) to have up to date materials to learn from and when they don't get it, they notice.

The biggest challenge for the students however, is that even in my district, which is relatively supportive of school libraries, students have a wide variety of library related experiences before they even get to high school. Some of our elementary schools have a .5 teacher librarian, some have a 1.0, some have a teacher-librarian, some of the teacher-librarians also teach classes or act as their building's technology leader. And one school in particular has a paraprofessional who, according to a 5<sup>th</sup>-grader I talked with recently "is also the secretary in the office" so "the library isn't even open." Without a full time professional, these students are not getting the instruction they need to go to the next level. We are not able to create an information skills curriculum because we cannot ensure that all students have equal access to instruction or resources the year before. The reality is that students are coming in with a wide range of information literacy skills, and teachers have expectations about what students should know about searching, research and evaluation skills for projects in the classroom and beyond. Many students are finding themselves behind yet again without having had the necessary library experiences they need to be successful in school and beyond.

I urge you to work to include School Libraries and teacher librarians as part of Basic Education in Washington State. Libraries are valuable tools for our democracy and all students have a right to quality instruction and resources.