



## SB 478 – School Library Lead Act

*Increasing student literacy rates by creating a School Library Lead.*

### SUMMARY

SB 478 requires the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence and the Superintendent of Public Instruction to designate a county office of education (COE) to serve as a Statewide School Library Lead, with the goal of increasing statewide literacy rates.

### BACKGROUND

Reading is the most fundamental academic skill children must learn in order to succeed in both school and in life. Early reading proficiency is a key indicator for long term academic and career success. Lower literacy levels are linked to increased health risks, poorer employment opportunities, and higher rates of poverty.<sup>1</sup> For those who do not achieve grade-level reading by third grade, these disadvantages compound.

School libraries and librarians play a crucial role in developing students' early literacy skills. Schools with a full-time credentialed teacher librarian achieve higher reading and writing scores overall, with even greater benefits for vulnerable student populations.<sup>2</sup> In schools with a librarian, higher proportions of Black, Latino, and students with disabilities tested at or above grade level.<sup>3</sup>

Teacher librarians curate diverse resources that are integral to educational equity. Access to materials for multilingual and multimodal learners, such as books in various languages and formats like large print, digital and audio, enhance learning. They also play a key role in empowering students to develop digital literacy skills and be discerning users and creators of information, better preparing our students to navigate a world of information and misinformation.<sup>4</sup>

### THE PROBLEM

California ranks 35<sup>th</sup> in the country for literacy rates.<sup>5</sup> In 2022, half of our third graders, including over 75% of our low-income students of color, read below

grade level.<sup>6</sup> Students unable to meet third-grade reading levels are four times less likely to graduate from high school, and low-income students who don't read at grade level are six times less likely to graduate high school.<sup>7</sup>

California has several statewide lead positions, such as the Expert Lead in Literacy and a Statewide Geographic Lead, to support COEs and local education agencies (LEAs) in reaching their literacy goals. However, California lacks statewide resources that specifically support school libraries and teacher librarians.<sup>8</sup> Strengthening school library programs allows the state to support students with a diverse set of needs in achieving early literacy.

California's school libraries have significant staffing shortages, lack the resources to run comprehensive library programs, and experience gaps in literacy collections.<sup>9</sup> California has one of the poorest student to librarian ratios in the U.S., with just one librarian for every 9,667 students.<sup>10</sup> There is a strong correlation between library programs and student achievement levels – schools across the country with librarians have experienced up to 35% higher fourth grader reading levels than schools without librarians.<sup>11</sup>

### THE SOLUTION

SB 478 creates a Statewide School Library Lead. This position will support educators and schools in developing essential school library services to accelerate literacy and learning.

Specifically, the Statewide School Library Lead will:

- Develop resources to help schools build out their capacity in library services.
- Collaborate with other statewide leads to implement reading strategies for elementary age children.

<sup>1</sup> [The Policy Circle](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Every Library](#)

<sup>3</sup> [American Progress](#)

<sup>4</sup> [American Consortium for Equity in Education](#)

<sup>5</sup> [World Population Review](#)

<sup>6</sup> [CA Reading Coalition](#)

<sup>7</sup> [The Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)

<sup>8</sup> [EdSource](#)

<sup>9</sup> [California Department of Education](#)

<sup>10</sup> [EdSource](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Ibid](#)

- Push to achieve that 35% increase in reading scores demonstrated by schools with such library coordination.

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#### **SUPPORT**

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- California School Library Association (Sponsor)
- California Teachers Association (Sponsor)
- Los Angeles County Office of Education (Sponsor)
- Ventura County Office of Education
- Los Angeles County Office of Education
- California Charter Schools Association
- American Association of School Libraries

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#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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Cynthia Weber, *Senate Fellow*

Email: [Cynthia.Weber@sen.ca.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Weber@sen.ca.gov)

Phone: (916) 651-4008

Amaya Childes, *Legislative Aide*

Email: [Amaya.Childes@sen.ca.gov](mailto:Amaya.Childes@sen.ca.gov)

Phone: (916) 651-4008