



Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: Australian School Library Association
Submitting as a: Peak body
State: Qld

Summary

Reading, literacy and purposeful ethical use of information are skills taught by teacher-librarians for the benefit of staff and students. ASLA would like to see the mandating of school libraries with qualified teacher-librarians in all schools.

Main submission

Educational success for the future looks like all students with equal access to the community resources, skills and knowledge to participate in a worthwhile future. As President of the Australian School Library Association (ASLA) I am seeing this future eroded by the destruction of school libraries and trained teacher librarians. As NAPLAN results show literacy is not moving ahead no matter how many digital devices are attached to students. The digital native is a myth. This influences how we do or do not teach kids today, our expectations of their technical abilities and capabilities when the influence should be on problem solving and using information on the Web. Using tech as a tool for learning, finding good information and re-purposing it is something entirely different. In school we are trying to educate students so they can tell the difference and apply the skills associated with tech as tool – Information Literacy skills. We don't do this because the emphasis has been on the tech and not what we actually do with it as a teaching learning tool. Less than 10% of the information on the Web is in the Public Domain ie. can be accessed using a search engine like Google. Ninety-nine percent of stuff on the Internet is rubbish. A year 9 student is using tech as a toy. Using Facebook; Instagram; Twitter, Snapchat; gaming; rude pictures; downloading music and movies (illegally). This has implications for education. This "confident use of personal mobile devices" does not naturally transfer to educational demands - all the requirements of information literacy in fact.

Principals demanding "devices used every lesson, every day" has damaged, rather than furthered, the successful use of ICTs in classrooms in meaningful ways. The

pendulum has swung too far and now that education thinks it is catching up, we are in the wrong race.

Each one of us is unique. One of the main things which still make us different from ICT applications (or perhaps robots) is the fact that we are able to think by ourselves, without the intervention of a machine. And we have emotions ... we care about things. These emotional, thinking factors are 21st century skills. Students have told me that they do not want to join the ICT rat race. They want a calm, quiet, clean place to live. They need some time to think – time to relax. They are talking about the quality of life.

For teacher-librarians it is about thinking - something in the push to get tech in schools that we seem to have forgotten about. Tech changes all the time anyway. Problem-solving and deep thinking is what education is about - something the library and Information Literacy is all about.

The teacher-librarian is the only educational profession that includes Information Literacy in its university course. Teachers working together to learn how to research correctly, ethically for learning purposes. Teacher-librarians providing a wisdom hub and meeting place in the school for leisure reading, social and emotional development and guidance for staff and students. Why are some Australian states turning their libraries into classrooms? Why are teacher-librarians told they are obsolete when their skills and expertise are needed more than ever before? It is time to mandate that all students have access to a school library and qualified teacher-librarians with a budget to re-claim the learning of staff and students.