

Returning to School and Academic Recovery (Wards 7&8 Families)
Wednesday, May 26, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.
Testimony—DCPS Librarians (Ward &)

My name is Sherri Jones. I am a school librarian in Ward 7.

This is my 4th year serving the students, parents and staff at Charles Hamilton Houston ES in Ward 7. I was fortunate enough to be full time at Houston this school year and am slated to be full time next year as well.

Like many of my colleagues in Ward 7 and 8 I served in a half-time capacity during my first three years—both at Houston and at Simon ES in Ward 8. At times it has been challenging serving two communities, but I was able to make it work.

As this school year began 22 schools did not have librarians in their budgets and another 12 – 15 schools only had ½ time positions funded. In Wards 7 and 8, less than half of the schools have a full-time librarian position for their students. For the 2021-2022 school year another 10-12 schools will see cuts to their library programming, continuing the downward trend of underfunding schools and forcing cuts to library programs.

We are seeing librarians being cut and being replaced with paraprofessionals (both library and technology). How is that possible, when the very job description for library paraprofessionals states that they report to the librarian...but I digress.

During this pandemic we have seen before our eyes the wide disparity in access between the students who live in Ward 7 & 8 and those in other wards of the city. We've heard about equity as it relates to student academic recovery, yet here we are another year fighting for what should be a basic right for every student regardless of their zip code. We know that schools in these wards are more likely to lack a certified librarian and to have inadequate library resources.

Librarians do more than shush students and check out books. We make important and lasting changes in the communities that we serve.

A few points as to why effective school library programs are so important:

- School libraries provide equitable access to certified librarians are indicators of school quality. Students with access to libraries are better prepared for college and careers.
- They positively impact literacy for all students. Access to an effective school library program is crucial to developing literacy skills, particularly in early childhood.

- Librarians are teachers with access to extensive literacy materials and experience in connecting diverse students with the resources needed to develop literacy skills.
- Effective school libraries support students of all abilities and learning styles. Expanded access to school libraries improves outcomes for all students.
- Research proves children with access to effective libraries read more and do better on reading tests.
- For children of poverty, libraries are typically the only available source of reading material.
- Teacher librarians are experienced professional development providers. They work with all departments and grade levels and understand how new techniques and technology can be applied to the entire campus.
- Teacher librarians collaborate on high-quality instruction with teachers from all curricular areas, resulting in job-embedded professional development that impacts every student.
- Because school librarians are master teachers, hiring a certified, quality librarian is a strategy to ensure students have access to a high-caliber teacher.
- Librarians, as they teach alongside other educators, empower their colleagues to take risks, use innovative practices, and achieve professional goals.
- School libraries provide equitable access to learning resources. Teacher librarians collaborate with others to provide personalized instruction, learning strategies and practice in using essential skills.
- Teacher librarians are key members of the leadership team who work to address campus needs and leverage partnerships to impact instruction and student achievement.
- Struggling schools need access to a full-time, certified, quality teacher librarian implementing an effective school library program in support of students and faculty.
- Effective school library programs close student performance gaps and increase post-secondary readiness, including increasing graduation rates and providing comprehensive instructional support across all grade levels and content areas with a focus on sustained improvement in student achievement.

- Teacher librarians lead, teach and support district goals through their professional practice, programs and spaces. They are well-positioned at the leading edge of the digital transformation of learning.

Every DCPS student deserves a robust school library program staffed by a full-time certified librarian in every school. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss school libraries, the largest classroom in the school and certified librarians today.

Sincerely,

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#DCPSNeedsLibrarians