

SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER FUNDING CRISIS

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 1988

Reviewed and deemed relevant April 2018

- WHEREAS, School library media centers are key factors in educational excellence, in the development of lifelong positive attitudes toward reading, as well as in utilization of technologies which enhance a student's access to information; and
- WHEREAS, School library media centers should be an integral part of each school's instruction program by providing services and materials which support and enrich the textbook-based classroom curriculum; and
- WHEREAS, A recent survey showed that California school libraries ranked below the national average in size of book collections, periodicals and collections of audiovisual materials, and the collections were severely out-of-date and inadequate for students' reference and reading needs; and
- WHEREAS, Educational decision makers, due to lack of vision concerning the role of an effective library media program, give low priority to funding these centers, relying on volunteers or para-professionals for staffing needs and donations for necessary materials; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA support legislation that would provide funding to answer the acute need for adequate school collections of fiction and nonfiction books, periodicals and other media, including electronic technology, to support the curriculum; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to survey school libraries regarding the quality of materials and services, including personnel, provided to the students at each school site; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA work with its units, councils and districts to make the adequate staffing and the upgrading of school library media centers state and local school district/school site priorities.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The demand for excellence in education has been heard throughout California and has been supported by the California State PTA and its constituent organizations long before it became a popular movement. PTA fully understands that educational excellence will not come about unless all components of the educational system, such as library media centers, are functioning in a manner that supports and enhances the instructional program in the classroom.

School libraries, always important to the learning of students, have a critical role in educational reform. Staffed by certificated professionals and complete with collections of books, other materials and media that can enrich the textbook-based classroom resources, school library media centers should be learning centers at the hub of the instructional program.

Since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, school libraries, along with other discretionary programs, experienced drastic reductions in state and local funding. Added to this was the merging of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title IV funds, the primary source of funds to purchase new library books, resources and equipment, with 28 other programs in what became the Chapter 2 block grant. While districts may continue to use these funds to purchase library materials and equipment, no funding is currently targeted specifically for library media programs.

In a recent California Department of Education study, "The Crisis in California School Libraries," it was evident that the condition of school library media centers in this state indicated a major effort would be needed to restore the centers to their role as a basic resource for California students. The study, coordinated with a concurrent nationwide study conducted by the United States Department of Education Center for Statistics, revealed that of all 50 states, California had the largest number of libraries operating without certificated staff. In addition, California libraries ranked below the national average in the size of the book and periodical collections and audiovisual materials.

At the same time, California should be looking forward to a greater use of technology that would connect local school library media centers with satellite and television services. Such services would enable students to have access to the most current information on the broadest array of topics. It has become apparent that as we move to an information based society, the ability of students to learn how to secure access to information and then apply it in problem-solving situations is a critical factor in the economic success of individual students, of our state and of our country.