

Licensed School Library Teachers



What parents want

In a recent resident survey conducted by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC):

- **over 90%** of parents/caregivers want their children to understand how to identify misinformation online
- **over 95%** say that it's important/somewhat important for their children to develop research skills.

Critical skills for an increasingly online world

Licensed school library teachers are uniquely positioned to teach students information and research skills and much more.

Understanding how to support the curriculum, licensed school library teachers instruct children how to access and use state-provided resources like research databases and eBooks. During the pandemic, usage of these resources soared. During the 2020-2021 school year, a record 552 eligible schools participated in the statewide eBook program, and usage of the collection increased over 200% from the previous year, totaling more than 864,000 checkouts.

Licensed school library teachers also

- collaborate with all educators to develop and enhance the curriculum.
- teach both staff and students the latest technology.
- teach kids skills that will serve them throughout their lives like critical thinking and the importance of looking at the context of information.
- develop library curriculum and programming that helps students navigate digital privacy and social media. Critical for all ages since kids are exposed younger and younger to an online world.
- curate a well-rounded collection that represents a variety of viewpoints and perspectives that supports students First Amendment intellectual freedom rights.

A growing educational divide

Yet whether or not a school district has a licensed school library teacher depends largely on the zip code. Many wealthier communities are able to employ licensed school librarians, giving their students an academic advantage that children in other communities do not have, furthering inequities and an educational divide. **Schools with licensed school library teachers have direct access to taxpayer-funded resources. These schools account for over 58% of all database users in the state. Students in schools without a licensed school library teacher do not have access to these rich resources necessary for success.**

The **2018 Massachusetts School Library Study: Equity and Access for Students in the Commonwealth – Report of Findings and Recommendations of the Special Commission on School Library Services in Massachusetts** outlined concerns regarding inequities that surround access to professional staff, digital resources, information technology, library instruction and help, funding, and state-subsidized resources, and even access to a school library in itself.

We can do better

There are currently no Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requirements or standards for school systems to employ licensed school library teachers.

The Massachusetts School Library Association, with the support of senators and representatives from across the Commonwealth, is requesting that DESE collect data through an annual census to determine where future investments are needed in our school libraries.

Every student in every community in Massachusetts deserves to have a licensed school library teacher.

