

California Public School Library Act of 1998

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL LIBRARY FUNDING

Background

In 1998, the California Legislature enacted the California Public School Library Act. For the first time in California history, this Act established a separate and distinct line item in the state budget for the purchase of public school library books and electronic resources. During its first four years, 1998-2002, the Library Act was funded at \$158,500,000 or approximately \$28 for every California public school student each year.

Recent History

- ❑ In late fall 2002 the Library Act was reduced to approximately \$33 million or \$5.32 per student, an 80% reduction from previous years.
- ❑ In early December 2002 the Governor proposed a 3.66% across the board reduction in all education programs. This would reduce the Library Act to approximately \$31 million or \$5.12 per student.
- ❑ On December 16 the Legislative Analyst's Office proposed an alternative to the Governor's across-the-board reductions in education costs that includes the suspension of the School Library Act.
- ❑ Currently the Legislature and the Governor are wrestling with how to make mid-year budget adjustments to the current FY 2002-2003 budget. Since we have already taken an 80% cut, we are asking that the Library Act be spared further reductions or suspension.
- ❑ On Friday, January 10, the Governor will announce his proposed budget for FY 2003-2004. Understanding that every program will face reductions, we are asking that some level of Library Act funding be maintained for continuity, so we don't get farther behind.

Prior to Passage of the Library Act

Prior to the Legislature's enactment of the California Public School Library Act of 1998, funding for school libraries competed with other compelling needs at the local level. The consequences were:

- ❑ Reduced Federal categorical funding and reduced state funding due to Proposition 13 resulted in reduced library funding. School library collections became antiquated and California school libraries descended to last in the nation for quality of school libraries. (*The Crisis in California School Libraries, A Special Study*, CDE, 1986)
- ❑ Inequities were exacerbated between students in rich districts and students in poorer districts. While all students suffered in terms of access to current books, research materials and electronic resources, students in poorer districts generally suffered more. (LeMoine, Brandlin, O'Brian and McQuillan, 1997)
- ❑ Reading scores fell in part due to the lack of current stimulating reading materials in school libraries. Credible research published in 2000 in Colorado, Alaska, Texas, Pennsylvania, and Oregon demonstrates a strong correlation between the quality of school libraries and student reading scores.

Benefits of the Library Act

THE SUCCESS OF THE CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARY ACT

The following chart illustrates two areas of progress achieved under the Library Act.

	1998 Act	2001-2002	National Average
Average copyright date of a California school library book	1972	1987	N/A
Average number of books per California student	10.9	13	20

Other benefits from the Library Act

Technologies for Students, K-12	
<i>Library Act funds have allowed California school libraries to provide access to resources through the use of technology. CDE Online Survey 2001-2002</i>	
California K-12 School Libraries	Available Technology
83% 	Automated library catalogs and automated circulation
82% 	Research resources through Internet access in the library
35% 	Online access to full-text periodicals

- ❑ All California students benefit equitably because all districts are funded equitably by state budgetary support of their school libraries.
- ❑ Districts maintain local control to build their school library collections as each district determines its own needs and goals.
- ❑ With the assurance of on-going state funding for school libraries, school districts can implement long-range planning for the restoration of their school library book collections and electronic resources.
- ❑ Growing school library collections are becoming a cost-effective way to share resources across curriculum areas, grades, and even between schools.
- ❑ For the twenty-year period prior to the Library Act, school library assistance was not available from the California Department of Education. Demand for assistance in school library development from schools, districts, and county offices has led to the restoration of professional library leadership from the California Department of Education.

What we are Asking

For the benefit of the education of our students the California Public School Library Act of 1998 must continue. Funding for public school library books and electronic resources must be maintained in the state budget as a separate and distinct line item even if it is necessary to continue at a reduced level for 2002-2003. No matter how bad the budget is children still need library books to read.