Ontario School Libraries - response to COVID-19

Ontario School Library Association, a division of the Ontario Library Association

o s l a

:. ontario school library association

Overview

- Survey Results

- How School Libraries are supporting schools and remote learning

- Critical Actions

Survey: The results are in. School libraries remain very active while their doors are closed

On April 24, OSLA issued a [survey](#) to better understand how school libraries are supporting teachers and students with remote learning. The response was overwhelming.

School libraries are doing a lot.

Survey Respondents

Between April 24th and May 28th, the survey had 155 responses from 26 school boards. This represented

- 119 elementary schools,

- 29 secondary schools,
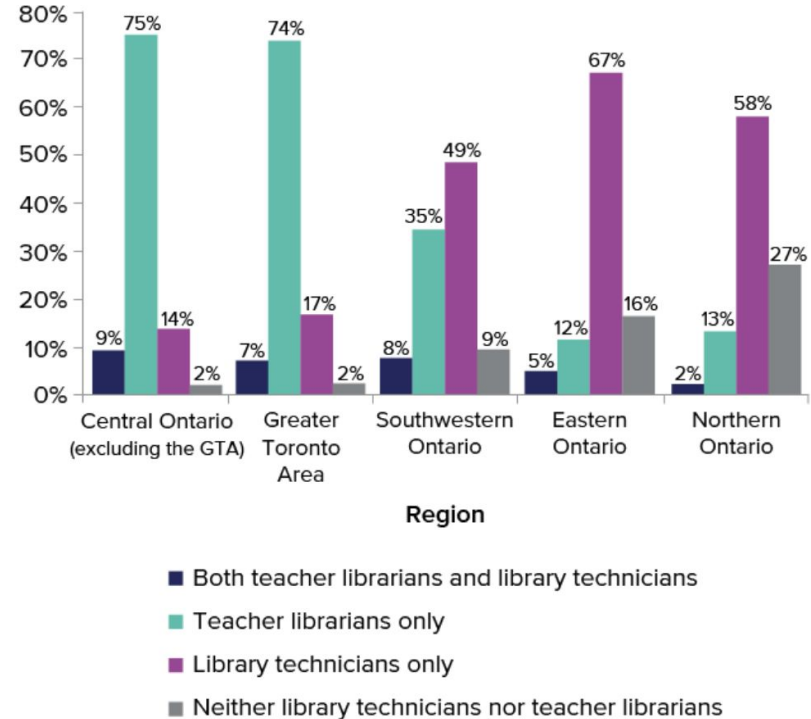
- 5 [K-12] schools, 1 [7-12] school.

	Respondents	Total	Response rate
GTA	2	2	**100%**
Central Ontario	9	16	**56%**
South Western Ontario	6	17	**35%**
Eastern Ontario	7	15	**47%**
Northern Ontario	2	22	**9%**
	26	72	**36%**

Survey: Regional inequalities

The low response representation from Northern Ontario reflects the significant regional disparities in access to a school library.

Source: People for Education, 2019

Library staff in elementary schools across Ontario

Legend:
- Both teacher librarians and library technicians
- Teacher librarians only
- Library technicians only
- Neither library technicians nor teacher librarians

Survey: Methodology

This survey asked open-ended questions about how library staff are supporting students and teachers with the transition to teacher-led learning at home.

- This slide deck highlights the trends noticed in those responses and includes recommendations for the 2020/21 education year.
- At each school, the programming and supports look different to serve the needs of the local school and board community. For more concrete examples, the full responses are also available [here](#).

School Library Staff:

The pandemic revealed that Ontario was not ready for remote learning. Many school library staff are reporting 12 hour work days in order to support students and staff in a remote learning environment.

School Library Staff: Key Functions March - June 2020

- Curating digital resources
- Helping teachers and students connect to distance learning technology
- Sharing virtual programming ideas with students and teachers
- Co-teaching classes
- Moving in-person programming such as read alouds, book clubs and maker activities online
- Helping students and teachers access and navigate online learning platforms.
- Supporting teachers navigate technology (1 in 2 respondents).
- Supporting parents and students navigate technology (1 in 4 respondents).

School library Staff: Digital Resources

School libraries are keeping students connected to safe and reliable educational materials by:

- developing websites for students,
- sending newsletters,
- posting on social media,
- doing one-on-one reference work
- Supporting teaching staff with online learning environment strategies

School library Staff: Digital Resources

School library staff curate educational and engaging programming ideas for students including:

- Read alouds recording, for example, the Forest of Reading children's books
- Educational games and virtual reality
- Online exhibit and museum tours

School library Staff: Digital Resources

School libraries are also transitioning physical programming into an online environment:

- Recording their own story times
- Meeting online for book clubs
- Creating makerspace challenges

School Library Staff: Navigating Technology

- One-on-one tech support to students,
- Coordinating technology training,
- School board led technology lending initiatives

"As the defacto tech support within the school, I have spent many hours helping teachers build and navigate Google Sites, Google Classroom and the Virtual Library. I continue to scour for tips, add-ons, and webinars that will help to make their jobs easier."

School Library Staff: Copyright and Privacy

As learning and programming moved online, school library staff:

- Have received lots of questions about copyright and permissions with sharing and creating online resources such as read-alouds.
- Are receiving many questions around privacy concerns.

School Library Staff: Supporting Student Wellness and Mental Health

Library staff are connecting with students:

- Reaching out to students one-on-one
- Hosting virtual drop-in sessions
- Sharing mental-health and wellness resources for students, like "Wellness Wednesday" resources.

School Library Staff: Co-teaching

While not specifically asked, **⅓ of respondents referenced that they are continuing to work with teachers to to co-teach classes.**
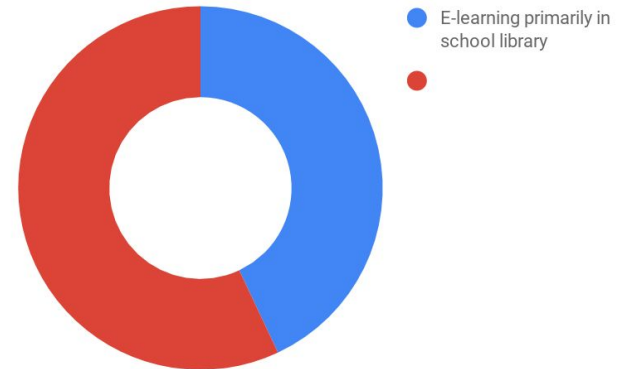
This includes collaborating with teachers to support curriculum engagement, joining for in-class work, and providing activities for students.

Planning for the next school year

The school library teacher-librarians and staff are already leaders in supporting online learning.

According to a [2020 People for Education Report,](#) **43% of schools report that students working on e-learning during the school day work primarily in the school library.**

Of the principals who report informally asking staff to support students with their online learning, **26% say they have asked the teacher-librarian to take up this task.**

E-learning primarily in school library

Critical Actions:

The pandemic has revealed weaknesses and significant gaps in the provincial approach to e-learning and remote education. A significant portion of time at each school board level was spent on creating digital learning resources. A number of school boards surveyed reported having <u>no</u> access to e-resources.

Ontario needs a strategy to <u>develop, curate and fund key research and learning resources</u> for all school boards.

- Alberta and Saskatchewan are examples of provinces that use this strategy.
- Include Teacher Librarians, as curriculum leaders in this strategy. Their role is to support the research and learning needs of students and teachers, and as they have expertise in the evaluation of learning resources, need to participate in this process.

Critical Actions:

In addition, school library staff have reported on these significant gaps:

- Copyright Management: we recommend the Ministry of Education provides leadership and guidance on copyright management for e and remote learning.
- Support for students with disabilities. OSLA Council reported significant gaps and challenges in supporting students with disabilities who require alternative methods of support.