



:. ontario school library association

February 9, 2023

David Green, Chair
Peel District School Board
5650 Hurontario Street
Mississauga, ON L5R 1C6

Sent by email: david.green@peelsb.com

Re: Peel District School Board's decision to cut the Library Coordinator position

Dear Mr. Green,

On behalf of the Ontario Library Association (OLA) and the Ontario School Library Association (OSLA), we are writing in response to Peel District School Board (PDSB)'s recent decision to eliminate the board-level Library Coordinator position. We hope that in undertaking a restructuring of the coordinating department, PDSB will remain strongly committed to its ongoing support of school libraries and Teacher Librarians.

The Library Coordinator position is essential to PDSB meeting Ministry Directive 18, which states that the PDSB shall "evaluate books, media, and all other resources currently in use for teaching and learning English, History and Social Sciences for the purpose of utilizing resources that are inclusive and culturally responsive, relevant and reflective of students and the Board's broader school communities." Thus, the Library Coordinator does not only support Teacher Librarians, but also the Board's ability to fulfill the Ministry of Education's directives.

In OSLA's response to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's consultation for [Right to Read](#), its report on student literacy in Ontario, we highlighted research that:

- Confirms that Teacher Librarians are literacy leaders and provide support and expertise to the entire school; the board-level Library Coordinator supports this work through monthly newsletters connected to the faith and heritage months, community events (e.g., Festival of Literary Diversity) and engaging in author visits from a wide range of Canadian-based creators;
- Teacher Librarians gauge reading abilities, interests and capabilities of the student population and can work in tandem with other staff with expertise in literacy and reading ability; the Library Coordinator is directly responsible for liaising with vendors and book publishers who are able to provide culturally relevant and responsive materials that fit the needs of individual school communities;

- School libraries, especially at the elementary level, foster students' love of reading, which has a positive impact on literacy scores, success in science and students' social and civic engagement, and with the board-level Library Coordinator's guidance in developing professional networks, are able to support modern learning initiatives, including learning connected to technological tools, cybersecurity and digital citizenship.
- In addition, research shows that schools with trained library staff have better outcomes on the Grade 3 and 6 EQAO assessments.

Tried, tested and proven over generations, school libraries and Teacher Librarians are core to student success. However, this success does not occur without an expert educator facilitating the learning for all.

We know that students continue to experience trauma and mental health issues, particularly those exacerbated by the recent public health emergency and its fallout, as well as face academic gaps. Educators are challenged daily to meet the needs of the learners we serve. The role of the Library Coordinator as counselor, inspirer, innovator and system leader cannot be underrated. When we fail to prioritize mental health literacy and support, we will not yield the desired academic outcomes when it comes to closing the gaps.

Furthermore, school libraries are a recognized priority of Ontario's Ministry of Education, described as a key element of "a classroom education that [is] required by, and generally common to, all students" ([Ministry of Education Funding Technical Paper, 2018-19](#)). As you are aware, the Ministry of Education allocates funding for the staffing of elementary school libraries through the Grants for Student Needs (GSN), according to a per student funding formula. In the 2021-22 iteration, the Ministry recognized the vital role that school libraries will play in helping our students succeed as they transition back to an in-person learning environment, and committed to introduce new, enhanced reporting requirements for library staff funding:

- These reporting requirements are intended to provide the ministry with greater insight into how school boards are funding school libraries;
- They will apply to both the funding provided for library staffing through the Pupil Foundation Grant, as well as the enveloping provision of the Library Staff Allocation in the School Foundation Grant, which also remains in place; and
- School boards that are not fully utilizing the funding provided for library staffing through both grants will be asked by the Ministry of Education to prepare and submit a multi-year plan highlighting their vision and next steps to address any underspending.

It is our understanding that PDSB, along with all school boards in Ontario, are currently completing these new reporting requirements. It is our firm belief that the Library Coordinator position fulfills a critical function in ensuring that all students benefit from the tremendous programming and investments made by PDSB in its school libraries program. PDSB has long



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been viewed as a leader within the school library sector due to its commitment to a centralized coordinator position for libraries that supports the work of school library professionals in individual school communities.

While we recognize that there are always difficult decisions to be made in the roles that you are in, we can assure you that this decision will have long-term consequences for our learners and educators. We hope that the current restructuring of roles within PDSB leads to the retention of a school Library Coordinator position which will align with and support the ongoing work of Teacher Librarians and the Board at large.

Sincerely,

Johanna Gibson-Lawler
President 2023
Ontario School Library Association

cc: Rashmi Swarup; Bernadette Smith

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About our organization:

Founded in 1900, the **Ontario Library Association** (OLA) is the oldest continually operating non-profit library association in Canada. With more than 5,000 members, the OLA is the largest library association in the country. We offer opportunities for learning, networking, and providing input into public policy. The **Ontario School Library Association** (OSLA) is a division of OLA consisting of 1,000 members who work in Ontario's school libraries.

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