

LIBRARIES

This report is an excerpt from the 2016 Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools.

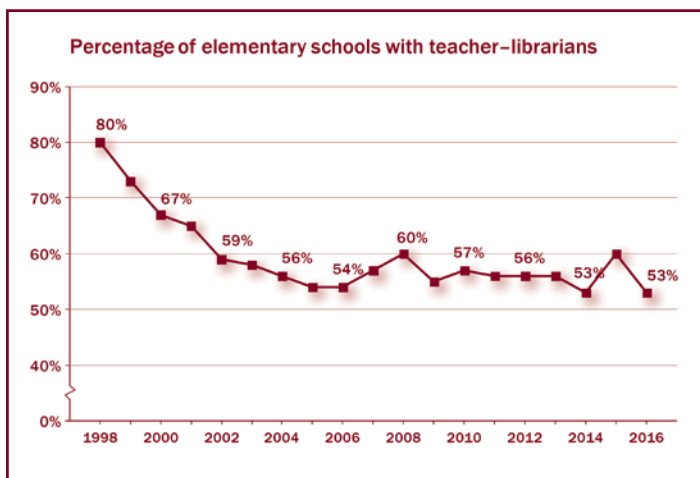
School libraries play an essential role in ensuring that Ontario's students are prepared for today's information- and knowledge-based society. School library programs can provide opportunities for students to develop a love of reading, an understanding of diverse texts, problem solving, digital literacy, and citizenship skills.¹ School libraries also help students access curriculum-support resources, and they teach students to value the role of libraries in school and society.²

In Ontario, many school libraries have recently transitioned to a Learning Commons model, where the library provides both a physical and virtual space for student learning.³ This model requires collaboration between teacher-librarians, classroom teachers, students, principals, and technical staff. It also integrates technology into a space that is dynamic and adaptable based on students' learning needs.⁴

DECLINE IN TEACHER-LIBRARIANS

Teacher-librarians, in collaboration with classroom teachers, can help to foster important skills for student success, including information literacy, problem solving, communication, and critical thinking.⁶ Over the past 15 years, there has been a decline in teacher-librarians in Ontario's publicly funded schools (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



QUICK FACTS

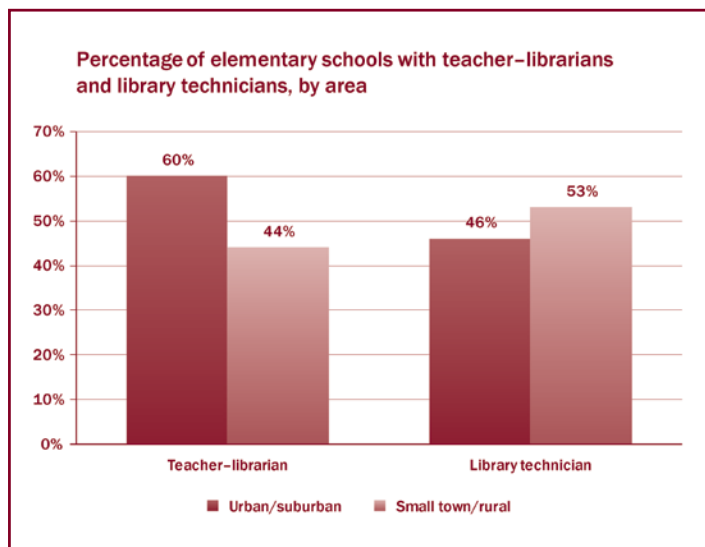
- Only 54% of elementary schools have teacher-librarians, and only 10% have a full-time teacher-librarian.
- Only 55% of secondary schools report a full-time teacher-librarian.
- 60% of elementary schools in urban/suburban communities report having a teacher-librarian, compared to 44% of small town/rural schools.

In 2016:

- In elementary schools, only 54% of schools have teacher-librarians, a decline from 60% last year and 80% in 1998.
- The majority of elementary teacher-librarians are part-time, with only 10% of schools having at least one full-time teacher-librarian.
- The percentage of secondary schools with a full- or part-time teacher-librarian has increased marginally from last year—from 72% to 74%—however, there has been a slight decline in secondary schools reporting full-time teacher-librarians.

Funding constraints have forced a number of boards to cut teacher-librarian positions. For example, in 2015, the Toronto Catholic DSB cut teacher-librarian positions in *all* of its elementary schools to manage the board's \$42.6 million budget shortfall.⁷ Since 2011, the Windsor-Essex Catholic DSB has also made significant cuts to school library services and resources, including the elimination of school library staff.⁸ Cuts of this magnitude may undermine students' opportunities to develop the broad skills that are supported through an effective school library program.⁹

Figure 2



In 2016 (see Figure 2):

- 44% of elementary schools in small town/rural areas report having a teacher-librarian, compared to 60% of urban/suburban schools.
- 53% of elementary schools in small town/rural areas report having a library technician, compared to 46% of urban/suburban schools.

In the past, we have formulated the timetable to allow for a specialist health and physical education teacher to deliver programming to the majority of the classes. Unfortunately, the only way to accomplish this is by assigning the prep coverage to the health and physical education teacher. This would result in a reduction in teacher-librarian time in the library, as part of their allocation is prep coverage.

Elementary school, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB

THE RISE OF LIBRARY TECHNICIANS

While the percentage of elementary schools with teacher-librarians has declined, there has been an increase in schools with library technicians. This could be a direct result of a difference in pay scales. School boards receive funding from the province for one elementary library staff for every 763 students at a rate of \$74,000 (before benefits).¹⁰ The average wage for a library technician is between \$32,000 and \$61,000.⁵ Boards can save considerable funding by staffing their libraries with library technicians instead of teacher-librarians.

While library technicians have an important role in school libraries, it differs from that of teacher-librarians. In Canada, library technicians play a supportive role, operating between a “clerk and a librarian,”¹¹ unlike teacher-librarians, who are Ontario certified teachers with specialist qualifications in librarianship.¹²

In 2016:

- 49% of elementary schools have a library technician, compared to 43% last year.
- 49% of secondary schools have a library technician, compared to 44% last year.

According to the Ontario Library Association, the decline in the percentage of schools with teacher-librarians and the increased reliance on library technicians is having an impact on the quality of school library programs, and on their capacity to achieve goals of reading engagement, information literacy, and co-teaching and co-planning.¹³

URBAN/SUBURBAN VERSUS SMALL TOWN/RURAL

There are wide discrepancies between school library staff in urban/suburban and small town/rural schools. The lack of staff in small town/rural elementary school libraries may limit students’ opportunities to develop the broad skill set that school libraries may foster.

NOTES

- 1 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2013). *The Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies (Grades 1-6) and Geography (Grades 7 & 8)*. Ontario: Queen's Printer. Retrieved from <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/sshg18curr2013.pdf>.
- 2 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2013). *The Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies (Grades 1-6) and Geography (Grades 7 & 8)*. Ontario: Queen's Printer. Retrieved from <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/sshg18curr2013.pdf>; People for Education. (2013). *Libraries: A report from People for Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/libraries.pdf>; James, N., Shamchuk, L., & Koch, K. (2015). Changing Roles of Librarians and Library Technicians. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research*, 10(2).
- 3 Ontario Library Association. (2010). *Together for Learning: School libraries and the emergence of the learning commons*. Retrieved from <https://www.accessola.org/web/Documents/OLA/Divisions/OSLA/TogetherforLearning.pdf>.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2013). *The Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies (Grades 1-6) and Geography (Grades 7 & 8)*. Ontario: Queen's Printer. Retrieved from <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/sshg18curr2013.pdf>.
- 6 Ontario Library Association. (2015). *Ontario library association emphasizes importance of teacher-librarians as school program cuts loom*. Retrieved from <https://www.accessola.org/web/Documents/OLA/issues/2015/OLA-Emphasizes-Importance-Teacher-Librarians.pdf>; Rushowy, K. (2015, March 25). Toronto Catholic Board cuts include teacher-librarians. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from <http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/03/25/toronto-catholic-board-cuts-include-teacher-librarians.html>.
- 7 Ontario Library Association. (n.d.). *Cuts to libraries*. Retrieved from http://www.accessola.org/web/OLA/ADVOCACY/General_Library_Issues/Cuts_to_Libraries/OLA/Issues_Advocacy/issues/Unprecedented_number_of_cuts_to_library_programs_in_Canada.aspx?hkey=850bf28c-4e4f-4f92-b59d-76f4c69ecd3c.
- 8 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2014). *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision in Education in Ontario*. Ontario: Queen's Printer. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/renewedVision.pdf>.
- 9 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2016). *Education Funding: Technical Paper 2016-17*. Ontario: Queen's Printer. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1617/2016_technical_paper_en.pdf.
- 10 Payscale Inc. (2016). *Library Technician*. Retrieved from http://www.payscale.com/research/CA/Job=Library_Technician/Hourly_Rate.
- 11 Canadian Library Association. (2011). *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Library Technicians*. Retrieved from http://cla.ca/wp-content/uploads/CLA_LTIG_guidelines.pdf.
- 12 James, N., Shamchuk, L., & Koch, K. (2015). Changing Roles of Librarians and Library Technicians. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research*, 10(2).
- 13 Ontario Library Association. (2015). *Ontario library association emphasizes importance of teacher-librarians as school program cuts loom*. Retrieved from <https://www.accessola.org/web/Documents/OLA/issues/2015/OLA-Emphasizes-Importance-Teacher-Librarians.pdf>.



People for Education is a registered charity that works to support public education in Ontario's English, French and Catholic schools.

For more information, contact us:

phone: 416-534-0100 email: info@peopleforeducation.ca

web: <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca>