

Nov. 30, 2016

Mr. Carranza,

I work with other library minded individuals to promote library services for children. Our advocacy group is called "Students need Libraries in HISD". We are eager to collaborate and work toward a common goal. Our mission statement is:

Every student deserves a full time certified librarian and a fully stocked library. The mission of Students Need Libraries in HISD is to make this happen by persistently providing information to librarians and their stakeholders: students, parents, community residents as well as campus and district personnel.

We know that libraries can change lives. We know that HISD students need libraries. We are very encouraged about your vision for the school district and are hopeful that you will be able to make a difference on this particular issue. We want to work with you and for the students.

I spoke to you at the Listen and Learn tour on your first stop at Gregory-Lincoln. I am a retired HISD librarian, former library technology supervisor, and currently library volunteer and advocate. Since I retired in 2011, I have seen library services across the district spiraling downward. Less than ten years ago, HISD had as many as 175 librarians and no closed libraries. Here is some of the evidence and background on the status of HISD libraries:

- Five years ago, the library services administrative team included five professionals and five clerks. Today the library services department has three professionals and one clerk. At that time, schools were able to send books to the department for cataloging and some clerical assistance was provided on an as needed basis. These services have had to be curtailed as a result in the reduction in staffing.
- Currently, there are only two professionals tasked with the supervision of over 250 schools.
- Certified librarians are increasingly choosing to opt for jobs in the suburbs where they have more job security.
- HISD teachers are less likely to choose to pursue school library degrees as an option so there are not as many applicants to choose from when jobs are advertised. (To be a school librarian in Texas, one must have a teacher's certificate, two years of teaching, and a master's degree.)
- The turnover rate in staffing of libraries is significant. Clerks and teachers assigned to libraries may change from year to year. Much time is spent every year retraining new people.
- There are quite a few library advocates among the principals, but there are also many principals who do not understand what their students miss when library services are not offered. There have been few opportunities for the Manager of Library Services to provide information and work with HISD principals in the previous administration.
- Resources such as library books and technology are disappearing in schools with closed libraries.

Fulfilling our mission of providing information, we have prepared a report that includes some of the library data that we have collected. This report, which reviews library staffing data over a three-year period, will also be shared with board members along with specific staffing data about their districts. You will be sent a copy of that data relating to specific board districts in a few days. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or need our support.

As I am writing this, a new library manager is being selected for HISD. It is our sincere hope that the district chooses a strong leader who will be included in the conversation about what strategies HISD needs to pursue to provide the best education possible for our students. We look forward to working with the new manager of Library Services.

Debbie Hall

www.studentsneedlibrariesinhisd.org