

**School Libraries Matter – Tips for Decision Makers**  
**Essential Information for HISD School Board Candidates in 2017**

Offered by [StudentsNeedLibrariesinHISD.org](http://www.studentsneedlibrariesinhisd.org) - Debbie Hall and Dorcas Hand

Staffing and closed libraries are our foremost concerns when looking at HISD school Libraries. You are invited to view the data regarding these concerns at the website below:

- [Board District by District Analysis of 2016 School Library Staffing – \(http://www.studentsneedlibrariesinhisd.org/hisd-board-representatives.html\)](http://www.studentsneedlibrariesinhisd.org/hisd-board-representatives.html)

We work to support all libraries and the Department of Library Services who is tasked with overseeing all libraries in the district. The contact for HISD libraries is Janice Newsum, Library Services Manager. 713 696-0697 (office) [jnewsum@houstonisd.org](mailto:jnewsum@houstonisd.org)  
 Departmental website:

<http://www.houstonisd.org/Domain/8051>

Library Staffing 2014-2015		Library Staffing 2015-2016		Library Staffing 2016-2017	
Librarians	92	Librarians	82	Librarians	77
Teachers	54	Teachers	61	Teachers	61
Clerks	65	Clerks	61	Clerks	65
Hourly Lecturers	4	Hourly Lecturers	2	Hourly Lecturers	2
Other	2	Other	4	Other	4
Teacher Assistants	5	Teaching Assistants	3	Teaching Assistants	3
Vacancies	28	Vacancies	37	<b>Closed libraries</b>	43

**Reasons School Libraries and Librarians Matter**

- **Literacy:**
  - Research indicates that students with access to a professionally staffed school library offering a broad collection from which to select their personal reading are most likely to develop as successful readers and students. ([Baltimore Study, 2017](#), see next page)
  - Certified school librarians support literacy growth for all students on a campus, support the instructional literacy needs of classroom teachers, and collaborate to design the strongest educational opportunities.
  - Librarians are included as essential personnel in Pillar I of the Achieve 180 program announced in Spring 2017.

**Technology and Research Skills**

- Librarians’ technical training allow them to provide instruction on effectively locating valid information, evaluating online sources for credibility and usefulness, and properly crediting those sources in student original work.
- Librarians team with teachers to integrate technology tools, create engaged learning tasks, model emerging technologies, promote the use of electronic resources through strong library programs, and teaches the ethical use of information.

**Current issues Affecting the Services Students receive in HISD School Libraries**

- **Closed libraries:**
  - The district has invested a considerable amount of money over the years in its libraries. Libraries that sit unused as they deteriorate and become irrelevant. Collections disappear with no one to maintain them.
  - Many of the schools who have closed their libraries are in areas of the highest need. This is an equity issue.

- **Replacing Certified Librarians with Paraprofessionals or Teachers**
  - A school with a paraprofessional instead of a certified librarian limits its students to only the most basic library service, materials checkout.
  - Clerks slotted into library positions do not provide readers' advisory services, teach literacy skills how to use databases and other digital resources.
  - Teachers have only some the skills of certified librarians. Teachers and librarians are on the same pay scale so there is no benefit to hiring a teacher who does not have specialized training and skills over a librarian who can fully perform all the tasks required by professional standards (AASL).
- **High rate of turnover in library positions:**
  - In any organization, high turnover signals trouble. The HISD librarian turnover rate was 27% in 2014-2015.
  - The turnover is higher among teachers and clerks who may be placed in the library position by a principal, seeking to fill a spot without consideration of interest or aptitude for managing a library.
  - Librarians leave HISD schools for more secure positions. All of the surrounding school districts staff their libraries more consistently with certified librarians.
- **Challenges for the recruitment of certified librarians**
  - Currently, teachers who are drawn to the library profession are discouraged by recent HISD staffing trends, especially in the face of a rigorous and expensive certification program to become a librarian.
  - In the past, Houston ISD has been able replace librarians by growing our own through an in-house ACP program. This program was terminated in a few years ago despite its success.
  - Poor job security in HISD libraries has discouraged potential certified librarians from applying and lessened the number of teachers seeking library certification.
  - And now in 2017, more qualified candidates are needed to fill open positions. Due to the Achieve 180 program and retirement, there are as many as 18 librarian positions currently being advertised

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#### More fuel for the fire

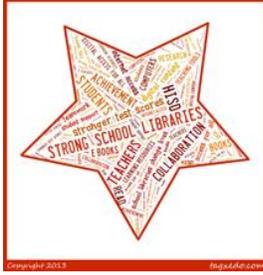
- [School Libraries and Student Achievement](#) (2013) A 1-page infographic that presents highlights from all of LRS's school library impact studies. <https://www.lrs.org/data-tools/school-libraries/impact-studies/>
- [Report on the Baltimore Library Project: Years 1-3](#) (2017) [http://hjweinbergfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm\\_uploads/2017/01/Library-Report-Web-Jan26.pdf](http://hjweinbergfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2017/01/Library-Report-Web-Jan26.pdf)
  - Reading fluency scores among third grade students in two of the first three library schools showed dramatic improvement with scores in reading fluency (DIBELS) increasing from 33 percent of students at benchmark to 64 percent at benchmark. (p.5)
  - Library Project students in the third grade were almost three times as likely to meet reading fluency proficiency standards as students in comparison schools. (p.5)

#### Professional Standards – American Association of School Librarians

- [Appropriate Staffing for School Libraries](#) (AASL, 2016)
- [Instructional role of the School Librarian](#) (AASL, 2016)
- [Position Statement on the School Librarian's Role in Reading](#) (AASL, 2010)
- [Definition for an Effective School Library Program](#) (AASL, 2016)
- [Role of the School Library Program](#) (AASL, 2016)

#### Bottom line:

**Every child K-12 should have access to Library Services at their school.**



Dear HISD District 4 School Board Member,

Students Need Libraries in HISD is a small grass-roots group for the purpose of raising awareness among HISD leadership of the importance of strong school libraries staffed by certified school librarians as an essential tool in HISD’s effort to raise literacy rates and standardized test scores in every school.

Our [SNL web](#) site is power packed with information for you as Board candidates and members, as well as for all advocates for school libraries. The resources linked in this tip sheet are all found there, but we pulled out the best ones for your introduction to the topic.

SNL is led by Debbie Hall, a retired HISD librarian, and Dorcas Hand, another retired school librarian from Houston but not HISD. We represent a grass roots organization of HISD school library supporters from across the district. Our membership includes active duty librarians, parents, community activists, retired librarians, and others who support school libraries. We have seen the impact that strong resources and programs organized by trained professionals can have on students hungry to learn, both in and beyond the classroom.

We offer today a Tip Sheet for you as you gear up your campaign towards the November election. We look forward to meeting you, to answering any further questions you may have, and to building a relationship that will serve the students of HISD well after the new Board is seated in January. We welcome you to advocate with us whether you are elected or not.

Here is a snapshot of the staffing of libraries in your district based on data from last year (2016-2017):

Board District IV - Jones		
Staffing Type	Number	Percentage
Librarians	7	20%
Teachers	6	18%
Paraprofessionals	5	15%
Closed	9	26%
No Library	7	21%
	34	100%

If you would like to see how your board district compares with others, just visit the SNL website (<http://www.studentsneedlibrariesinhisd.org/>) and click on HISD Data. The first two links contain staffing reports for each district as well as comparative data.

Respectfully,  
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