

Comparison of Library Staffing in HISD from 2014-2016

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	Closed libraries	43

What these numbers reveal about HISD libraries in 2016–

- Staffing by certified librarians has been on the decline for the past three years. Currently only 30% of libraries are staffed by library professionals.
- The existence of libraries without any staffing is on the rise. This year 17% of HISD’s school libraries are not staffed. Previously I have labeled libraries without staffing were as vacancies in this report. These vacancies are actually closed libraries. These 43 unstaffed libraries are currently not looking for someone to provide library services for their students. Only one library position, Garcia ES, is listed presently listed on the HISD jobline. Garcia has chosen to keep their library open for the time being by using an administrator to fill-in. Many of the closed libraries have been shuttered for three or more years.
- Placing teachers in library positions is on the rise, moving from 54 teachers in 2014 to 61 teachers reported in 2015 and 2016. Teachers lack the specialized library training that librarians have and cost about the same as far as salary.
- The total number of paraprofessionals is showing a slight decline during this three- year period. There were 76 paraprofessionals in 2014 and only 74 reported in 2015 and 2016.

What are the implications of these staffing choices for HISD students and teachers?

Students attending schools staffed by librarians are more likely to:

- be introduced to 21st century skills to ensure that they are college and career ready upon graduation
- receive one-on-one instruction and guidance on homework, projects, and presentation skills
- have access to information in print and digital formats that are organized, vetted, curated, and aligned with the curriculum
- receive guidance and encouragement in developing into lifelong readers
- view the library as a safe haven where they can meet friends, explore new ideas, and use their imagination.

Teachers who work and collaborate with a librarian on staff are more likely to:

- plan and co-teach engaging lessons and try new ideas
- use databases to fuel research, teaching, and learning
- identify new technologies to integrate into the classroom

The Promise of Electronic Resources

It is expected that 21st century learners use 21st century tools like databases and e-books. HISD has provided databases and e-book products for its students for many years and was an early leader in providing electronic resources to support learning. There are high expectations that HISD students are avid and experienced users of this type of resource. However, the usage statistics on these resources has not been routinely made available or tracked within HISD. It is assumed that a laptop is providing access to the content that students need and that they are making good choices. Just because high quality electronic resources are available does not automatically guarantee their use. Students must be introduced and given practice in using these resources effectively. The promise of electronic resources is dependent on students' knowing that databases exist and how to locate them. Are HISD students just googling and guessing or are they performing skillful searches using well-honed search strategies in vetted academic resources both digital and print? Can HISD students determine whether a source of information is real or fake, biased or accurate? Recently our nation has become more aware of the need for checking facts with the influx of fake news. *The Wall Street Journal* recently posted

an interesting article, "Most Students Don't Know When News is Fake, Stanford Study Finds," in which they state: "However, fewer schools now have librarians, who traditionally taught research skills. And media literacy has slipped to the margins in many classrooms, to make room for increased instruction in basic reading and math skills."

Looking at usage statistics from one resource, the statewide database TexQuest, one can compare HISD to other school districts across the state. TexQuest is a K-12 group of databases which can be utilized by learners from elementary to AP classes for research. TexQuest statistics show that last year HISD students registered much less usage than other school districts. In fact, just looking at this one comprehensive electronic resource, HISD's usage is very close to the bottom. Many schools in HISD have not even logged in to try TexQuest. Schools with librarians on staff routinely introduce and advise students on how and when to use these electronic resources and this piece is missing in 70% of the schools.

The Evidence for the Need for Strong Library Programs

HISD has a reading problem and an equity problem. Too many students in HISD lack access to a strong library program. Proportionally the school libraries that are staffed by paraprofessionals or have closed their library are in higher poverty areas. Research studies have demonstrated the link between student achievement (as measured by stronger test scores) and libraries. HISD needs to develop a plan for using school libraries to help make students future ready and it needs to begin now.

We can choose to have a strong library program across all of Houston ISD like other school districts in our area. It is a choice that will make a difference in the lives of students.