

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2010

To The Committee

I wish to submit some personal thoughts regarding the role of school libraries and Teacher Librarians.

This specifically addresses the following points from the Terms of Reference:

To inquire into and report on the role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australia's public and private schools. Specifically, the committee should focus on:

- the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;

I am a Teacher Librarian, having trained first as a secondary languages teacher and subsequently pursued a Masters of Applied Science (Teacher Librarianship). I have taught in a regional public high school and a rural K-12 public school in NSW, and I now teach in an independent boys' school in Tasmania.

Since undertaking my first Teacher Librarian position in 2000, and through my studies, I have become convinced that every child should have access to a well-stocked school library managed by a trained Teacher Librarian. Children learn through story - they tell themselves long tales of how their toys performed great deeds, or they tell their parents all about their day. Unless they have access to a range of reading materials and the assistance of someone whose role it is to help them move beyond their personal horizons, most children will not come into contact with stories that give them a personal appreciation of the diversity of our world, of how all children are the same no matter the country, and the opportunity to develop more accepting, welcoming hearts will be lost.

My role is not just telling stories - it is also about finding books that create readers - I believe that there is a book for every child, but that sometimes children need help in finding the book that is right for them. Reading is a skill for life - it shows us alternatives, helps us to learn to express our own feelings, and provides us with the vocabulary to enrich our personal and working lives. I talk with my students, conduct surveys, read children's literature magazines, read book review blogs, connect with fellow professionals via listservs and online fora in order to find the kinds of books that will excite and entice my students.

The following is an email I received from a parent after a typical library lesson:

Dear Mrs Reid

I want to say a big thank you for reading a chapter of "Dog Head" by Jill Marshall to my son, Patrick in 4B today. Patrick had always been an advanced reader but in the last two years has had a huge resistance to reading, only reading non fiction when pushed (Guinness Book of Records, 1001 Gross Facts etc). I was therefore extremely surprised when Patrick requested we go to Book City after school to purchase "Dog Head" (as it was really cool), which we did and he even started reading it in the car! This is, hopefully, a major

breakthrough with Patrick's resistance to reading fiction and I wanted you to know that I am grateful for your efforts with boys and reading. Patrick tends to choose either non-fiction books for home reading or decides a sneaky strategy is to read a book way too easy as a way of easy reading and maximizing the number of pages read! So, again, a massive thank you.

Regards

Dominique B.

This is the kind of enjoyment of reading I aim to develop for all my students. Exploring materials for reading for leisure is not possible in classrooms, nor is it a part of the English curriculum. It cannot be measured or standardised - all we can do is provide the best possible environment and the assistance of trained Teacher Librarians who can guide students towards discovering the pleasure of reading for its own sake.

Another part of my role is to develop students' information literacy skills - to teach them how to be ethical digital citizens, how to search effectively, how to use their own knowledge and skills to make good decisions on the worth of the information they find. With Year 6 this term we have undertaken a series of lessons, and the following picture shows the display we created after a lesson where students discussed the difference between fact and opinion and analysed the various types of articles found in newspapers to determine their accuracy and authority.



I also work with staff on a request basis, to re-emphasise skills that students have previously been taught, and the following is an email I received from a colleague after running some sessions for her classes:

Dear Kate,

I'm getting close to finishing the major research project with my Year 7 SOSE classes and am SO impressed with the way they've gone about it, the skills they've learned and with the quality of their work, thanks to the terrific introductory sessions you gave them about using Mysite and about research strategies generally.

The extra help you gave me so that I was able to provide ongoing support for them was also very much appreciated.

So a huge thank you!

Janet

As you will see from the email, I also provide support to staff on these topics.

The role of the Teacher Librarian is multi-faceted, as shown by my personal experiences, however it can be quite simply summed up: the Teacher Librarian supports and enriches the teaching and learning activities of the entire school community. Teacher Librarians and school libraries add enormous value to our students' lives, our schools, communities and society.

Regards,

Kate Reid

Teacher Librarian  
The Hutchins School