



Oregon State Library

## ***QEM and School Libraries***

*2011 Annual Report*

**"The mission of the school library media program is to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information. The school library media specialist empowers students to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information."**

*Empowering Learners by American Association of School Librarians, p. 8*

- Purpose:** To determine how many Oregon school libraries met the guidelines of Oregon's fully funded Quality Education Model (QEM) during the 2009-10 school year.
- QEM:** The Quality Education Model is a tool to help Oregon legislators determine the amount of funding needed to meet the state's education goals.
- Guidelines:** The Quality Education Model has two school library guidelines. One details minimum staffing levels and the other relates to minimum spending on books and periodicals.
- Source:** The Oregon Department of Education extracts library staffing and spending figures from data that is reported annually by school districts.
- Results:** Five schools met the minimum staffing and spending school library guidelines in the 2009-10 school year:  
Greenwood Elementary, La Grande School District  
Eugene Field Elementary, Silver Falls School District  
Robert Frost Elementary, Silver Falls School District  
Heritage Elementary, Woodburn School District  
Washington Elementary, Woodburn School District

## Background

This analysis attempts to determine how many school libraries in Oregon met the fully funded Quality Education Model (QEM) guidelines for a quality school library during the 2009-2010 school year. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) provided the staffing and expenditures data, as reported to them annually by Oregon public school districts.

The Oregon Quality Education Model was first conceived in 1999 by then-Speaker of the House, Representative Lynn Lundquist, who formed the Legislative Council on the Quality Education Model. Lundquist sought to establish an objective and research-based link between student achievement and the resources devoted to Oregon schools, to be used as a guide in future efforts to adequately fund Oregon schools. In 2001, the Legislative Assembly created the Quality Education Commission (QEC) as a permanent body to update and improve the Quality Education Model. The QEC produces a report every two years.

The QEM presents three prototype schools – an elementary, middle, and high school – and their suggested resources in terms of staffing, materials, equipment, and other operating expenses. The resources suggested for each prototype school define, in the judgment of the Commission, what it takes to provide a quality instructional program that will result in high levels of achievement.

As part of these recommendations, the Quality Education Model has guidelines about the resources necessary to have a quality library in each of the prototype schools. These resources include staffing by licensed school librarians, staffing by support personnel, and

“Whatever the current level of development of a school’s library program, these findings indicate that incremental improvements in its staffing, collections, and budget will yield incremental increases in reading scores.”

*Good Schools Have School Librarians: Oregon School Librarians Collaborate to Improve Academic Achievement*

Lance, et. al., p. 83

expenditures for library materials, more specifically books and periodicals in print and electronic formats.

**Minimum Criteria for Quality School Libraries**

The following table summarizes the minimum criteria for quality school libraries as set forth in the Quality Education Commission’s 2008 QEM Report and the 2008 Policy Model and as interpreted by the Oregon State Library.

**Minimum Criteria for Quality School Libraries for the  
2009-2010 School Year**

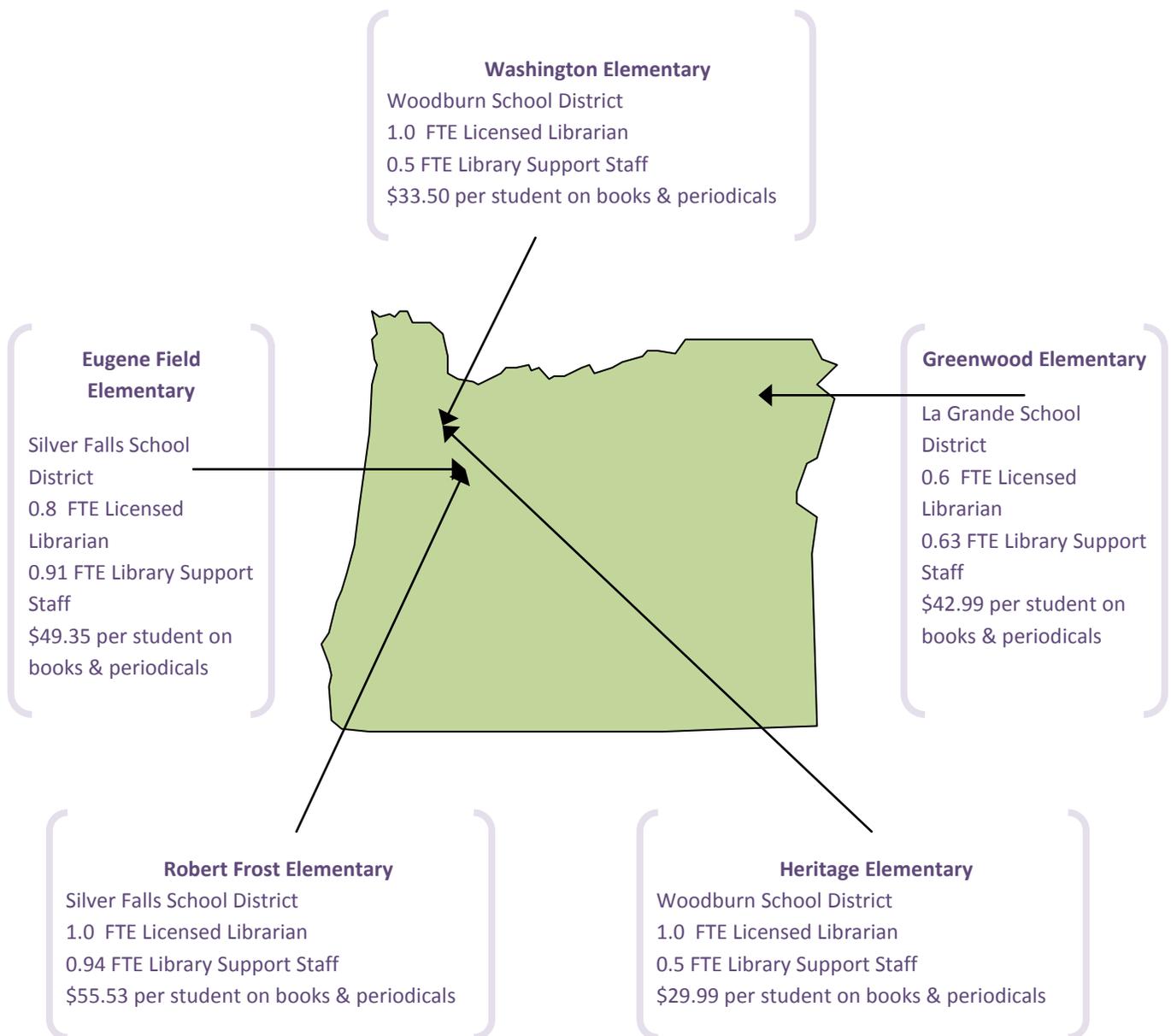
<b>QEM Prototype School</b>	<b>Licensed School Librarians</b>	<b>School Library Support Staff</b>	<b>School Library Materials Expenditures on Books &amp; Periodicals, Print &amp; Electronic</b>
Elementary School	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE	\$26 per student
Middle School	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	\$32 per student
High School	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	\$37 per student

The Quality Education Commission has maintained the same library staffing recommendations for years, but they annually adjust library materials expenditures for inflation. The baseline spending figures can also be adjusted when the QEC updates their report every two years, and observed actual spending on library materials factors into these potential modifications. For the 2008 Policy Model, they increased the minimum library spending criteria per student because of the increase in the use of electronic media and assorted costs (Reeder, Re: Why). See the appendix, Interpretation and Methodology, for further explanation.

## Results and Comparisons

### School Libraries That Met QEM for the 2009-10 School Year

After the analysis described in the appendix, we determined that only five of the 1,303 Oregon school libraries, or 0.38%, met the 2008 fully funded Quality Education Model guidelines for quality school libraries in the 2009-10 school year.



This compares to 10 out of 1,318 schools, or 0.76%, that met the QEM criteria for the 2008-09 school year, and 46 out of 1,263 schools, or 3.64%, for the 2006-07 school year. (There was no report for the 2007-08 school year.)

**School Libraries That Met the Staffing Guidelines of the QEM**

While 0.38% of school libraries in Oregon met both the staffing and materials expenditures guidelines in 2009-10, 11% met the staffing criteria alone. That represents a steady decline from an already low 25% since we began tracking these figures in 2002-03. If one raised the elementary licensed librarian staffing to 1 FTE instead of .5 FTE, as many argue it should be, the adequate staffing figures would decline even more.

**Met Fully Funded QEM Staffing Criteria, Yearly Comparisons**

School Year	Elem.	Middle	Jr. High	High	K-12	Alt/ Other/ Charter	# Met Staffing	% Met Staffing
2002-03	198/686	21/172	6/30	62/202	0/24	0/25	287/1139	25%
2003-04	159/719	16/174	4/30	54/206	0/24	0/65	233/1218	19%
2004-05	123/716	36/170	3/30	59/215	0/24	0/91	249/1246	20%
2005-06	121/710	10/170	4/29	57/ 213	0/24	1/103	193/1249	16%
2006-07	115/711	20/170	0/29	55/214	1/23	0/116	191/1263	15%
2007-08	No report	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2008-09	113/712	17/170	1/22	57/220	0/21	0/173	188/1318	14%
<b>2009-10</b>	<b>85/702</b>	<b>11/170</b>	<b>1/21</b>	<b>47/215</b>	<b>0/22</b>	<b>0/173</b>	<b>144/1303</b>	<b>11%</b>

**Long Term Trend of School Library Staffing**

The short term look at school library staffing should be considered in the context of the long term trend which has seen the number of licensed school librarians in Oregon drop by 61% since 1980 and the number of students per librarian more than triple (*Oregon School Directory*).

### Long Term Trend of School Library Staffing

	1980	2009	Difference
Number of Licensed School Librarians	818	319	-61%
Number of K-12 Students per Licensed School Librarian	547	1,761	+222%

When looking at long term staffing trends, one must recognize that the role of the school librarian has changed significantly over the last few decades. Into the 1990s, school librarians were primarily print-oriented. Today's school librarians have expanded their expertise to incorporate teaching and managing electronic technologies, including subscription databases and e-books, as well as offering direct reading instruction and support. Their role as the ones who develop students' information literacy skills in a critical thinking context is even more vital as students face an overload of information. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) recognizes these diverse and changing duties in some of their position statements: Role of the School Librarian in Reading Development and Role of the School Library Program.

## Concerns and Conclusion

### Concerns about Data Quality

Although this year we still found the quality of the data reported to the Oregon Department of Education to be problematic, the staffing figures seem to be more accurate than they were a few years ago. As a result of consulting – by phone, email, and listserv postings – with staff in various schools and districts about their data sample, the author found errors in some of the library staffing numbers reported to ODE from numerous school districts. The problems with the quality of the library materials expenditures data were not as easily verified or corrected.

In an effort to improve the quality of school library data, we continue to urge school library staff to take an active role in the process of reporting library information to the Oregon Department of Education. Every district assigns staff from different positions to report mandatory data, so we encourage librarians to ask their principals how staffing and expenditures data for the library will be reported to ODE.

School library data as reported to ODE for the 2009-10 school year is available here: [http://www.oregon.gov/osl/LD/Pages/school/index.aspx#QEM\\_School\\_Library\\_Report](http://www.oregon.gov/osl/LD/Pages/school/index.aspx#QEM_School_Library_Report). However, QEM results were determined from a separate spreadsheet which was updated with all verifiable corrections sent by library and district personnel.

We also recognize that this analysis is not a faultless measure for determining a quality school library. Many factors are not accounted for in the results. As an example, a few secondary schools in the state have two or more full-time librarians and one part-time assistant on staff. It is likely that they have a quality program, but because they do not have a full-time assistant, they do not meet QEM requirements. Another example involves high schools that have been organized into small schools, which are then recognized as unique institutions by ODE. They may have a librarian who serves the same number of students either way, but on paper her time is split among several schools so she does not register as a full-time librarian at any of the schools, and therefore the school does not meet QEM. Overall, though, the QEM analysis offers a consistent look at the big picture. It serves as an annual snapshot of the state of school libraries in Oregon.

### **Conclusion**

Oregon school libraries have a long road ahead to meet the guidelines of Oregon's fully funded Quality Education Model. It is obvious from the table, Long Term Trend of School Library Staffing, that there has been a significant disinvestment in Oregon school library services for the last three decades. However, we continue to look for ways to reverse this trend.

One avenue might come from House Bill 2586, or the Strong School Libraries bill, that became law in 2009. It requires school districts to plan for strong school library programs when formulating their district continuous improvement plans. Over time it will be difficult for a district to document improvement in their library program if there is negative or no growth in staffing or expenditures. Library staff could take their school figures to their administrators and school improvement teams, seeking incremental increases in staffing or materials budgets or both. Even small progress is better than none at all.

It is disheartening that only 0.38% of school libraries met the QEM requirements in 2009-10. That is especially true in light of the numerous research studies that show the positive effects librarians have on student learning. In 2001 the Oregon Educational Media Association, now the Oregon Association of School Libraries, commissioned a research study by Dr. Keith Curry Lance which showed that Oregon reading test scores are higher in schools with higher quality school libraries. The relationship between good school libraries and higher test scores was shown even when differences in schools (class size, etc.) and students (poverty, parents' education, etc.) were taken into account (Lance, 69-78, 83). Dr. Lance's research validates the need for adequate staffing and library materials expenditures in every Oregon school.

We are increasingly concerned that the number of licensed school librarians in Oregon continues to decline, doing Oregon students a disservice, and we hope this report will encourage greater support for quality school libraries.

The author would like to thank Brian Reeder of the Oregon Department of Education for providing the library data and giving additional assistance in the course of this research.

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## Appendix: Interpretation and Methodology

### **Determining Staffing Guidelines**

Page 37 of the 2008 QEM Report produced by the QEC lists this as the guideline for licensed school librarian staffing at the prototype elementary school level: “4.5 FTE specialists for areas such as art, music, PE, reading, math, TAG, library/media, second language, or child development.” The same chart calls for 6 FTE in instructional support staff but does not stipulate how to allocate those positions. ODE provided a copy of the 2008 Policy Model, a more detailed breakdown of QEM recommendations. Under the Elementary School Detail tab, 1 of the 6 instructional support staff is designated for special education and another as secretary. The other 4 positions are not defined. For the purpose of this analysis, we chose to make a conservative interpretation of the QEM guidelines and stipulate that the prototype elementary school must have at least a 0.5 FTE licensed school librarian and a 0.5 FTE support staff member.

The chart on page 38 of the QEC’s 2008 QEM Report requires 1 FTE “media/librarian” for the prototype middle school but does not stipulate how to assign the recommended 10 FTE support staff. However, under the Middle School Detail tab of the 2008 Policy Model, 1 FTE “media center assistant” is clearly specified in the instructional support staff category.

The chart on page 39 of that same report requires 1 FTE “media/librarian” for the prototype high school but does not stipulate how to assign the recommended 20.5 FTE support staff. However, under the High School Detail tab of the 2008 Policy Model, 1 FTE “media center assistant” is also clearly specified in the instructional support staff category.

Finally, each of the three QEM prototype schools assumes a specific student population: 340 students in the elementary school, 500 in the middle school, and 1,000 in the high school. We had to decide whether to adjust the QEM staffing requirements up or down for schools that were significantly larger or smaller than the prototype schools. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, we decided not to make adjustments based on schools’ student populations.

### **Determining Expenditures Guidelines**

The 2008 QEM Report by the QEC does not specify a minimum per student spending total for library materials, but the 2008 Policy Model does in each of the three prototype school tabs. The 2008 Policy Model accounts for projected inflation and lists library materials expenditures for multiple school years.

Line 35 of the Elementary School Detail tab lists the baseline minimum “media center materials” expenditures as \$9,004 for 2009-10. Dividing that figure by the prototype school population of 340 students yields a spending minimum of \$26 per elementary student.

Line 46 of the Middle School Detail tab lists the minimum “media center materials” expenditures as \$15,890 for 2009-10. Dividing that figure by the prototype school population of 500 students yields a spending minimum of \$32 per middle school student.

Line 54 of the High School Detail tab lists the minimum “media center materials” expenditures as \$37,076 for 2009-10. Dividing that figure by the prototype school population of 1,000 students yields a spending minimum of \$37 per high school student.

Previously we asked the ODE to clarify what should be reported under “library materials,” and this was the response:

There are two object categories in our accounting system that make up "library materials."

1) Library Books (code 430) described as "Expenditures for regular or incidental purchases of library books available for general use by students, including any reference books, even though such reference books may be used solely in the classroom. Also recorded here are costs of binding or other repair to library books."

2) Periodicals (code 440) described as "Expenditures for periodicals and newspapers. A periodical is any publication appearing at regular intervals of less than a year and continuing for an indefinite period."

For both of these categories, our instructions to school districts are to include books, periodicals, and other materials that are in electronic form as well as paper form (Reeder, Re: Definition).

### **Determining Which QEM Report and Policy Model to Utilize**

The Quality Education Commission updates its annual report and Policy Model every two years. We use the report and Policy Model that was available at the start of the school year we are evaluating. In this case, that dictated using the 2008 Policy Model because the 2010 version was not available until October 2010.

## Sources

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