



Portsmouth Middle School

125 Jepson Lane
Portsmouth, RI 02871

Subject: Closing the Opportunity Gap: Why Certified Librarians are Vital to RI's Success

Dear Governor McKee and Members of the General Assembly,

As a principal in the Portsmouth School Department, I am writing to share a perspective on educational equity that is often overlooked in budget discussions: the transformative impact of a full-time, certified school librarian.

I have been principal at schools on both sides of this divide. I previously worked at a middle school where no librarian was present. Today, I teach in a school with a full-time, certified library media specialist. The difference isn't just a matter of convenience; it is a fundamental shift in student achievement and school culture.

In my previous school, the library was a static room. Without a professional to curate the collection or guide instruction, students lacked the support needed to navigate our increasingly complex digital world. In contrast, my current students are receiving a "value-added" education that directly supports the state's Learn365RI goals:

- **Boosting Literacy & RICAS Readiness:** Our librarian doesn't just check out books; they build a culture of reading that directly supports literacy scores. They bridge the gap between "learning to read" and "loving to read."
- **Critical Information Literacy:** In an era of AI and "fake news," our librarian teaches students how to evaluate sources—a skill that is essential for the modern workforce and for protecting the integrity of our civic future.
- **Equity in Action:** For many of our students, the school library is their primary point of access to high-quality research tools and diverse literature. Removing the librarian effectively removes that bridge to equity.

We cannot expect Rhode Island students to compete globally if we deny them the very professionals trained to help them navigate an information-dense world. A library without a librarian is just a room; with one, it is a launchpad for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize funding and legislation that ensures **every** Rhode Island student has access to a full-time, certified school librarian. Let's provide our students with the specialized educators they need to thrive.

Sincerely,


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Principal

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