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Position Paper on SKILLs Act and Library Staffing

Outline

Thesis: SKILLs Act legislation is good for our nation’s students because it is good for our nation’s school libraries.

1. History of SKILLs Act Legislation
2. SKILLs Act stands for Strengthening Kids’ Interest in Learning and Libraries Act.
3. First introduced in 2007 as part of No Child Left Behind.
4. Never made it out of committee
5. Re-introduced in 2009 to the U.S. House of Representatives as a stand-alone bill
6. Rep. Raul Grijalva
7. Rep. Vernon Ehlers
8. Bill looks to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 where it pertains to library media specialists and information literacy for our nation’s students.
9. Bill intends to ensure all students will have support and resources they need for a quality education.
10. One provision of the bill tries to get at least one “state-certified school library media specialist in each public school” by the 2010-2011 school year. (Lovett) Bill mandates every public school district in the nation “to the extent feasible [to have] not less than one highly qualified school library media specialist in each public school.” (American Libraries)
11. Obstacles
12. In 2007, the bill had some support in both the House and the Senate, but failed to get out of committee.
13. New introduction of the SKILLs Act in the House has no counterpart in the Senate.
14. With the SKILLs Act being separate from the ESEA Act, which Congress is looking at re-authorizing, the American Library Association is concerned that congress won’t have time to look at both acts; there’re, the SKILLs Act may fall by the wayside like it did in 2007.
15. Aspects of the SKILLs Act that Support School Libraries
16. With more and more students having access to the Internet than ever before, some administrators, school boards, and parents may question he need/role of the Library Media Specialist. In an effort to cut costs, some school are eliminating the Library Media Specialist position from the staff and leaving the library an “unstaffed room full of books and media.”
17. By requiring all schools to have a highly qualified Library Media Speci8alosit on staff, it allows the LMS to support other legislation and mandates – including state test scores and No Child Left Behind.
18. Supportive Evidence for Positive Impact of Having Highly Qualified Library Media Specialist in Every School in the Nation
19. According to Information Power, the role of Library Media Specialist is threefold.
20. Learning and teaching role: advances instructional goals of school.
21. Provider of information access and delivery: Library Media Specialist develops strong collections and services and facilitates their use
22. Program administrator: Library Media Specialist serves as a manager of the library and a trainer for information technology.
23. Research suggests simply having a certified Library Media Specialist on staff improves test scores; however, further studie4s look at what Library Media Specialist was doing. As a whole, these studies showed students performed better academically where the LMS:
24. Is part of a planning and teaching team with classroom teachers
25. Teaches information and literacy skills AND
26. Provides one-on-one tutoring for students in need
27. Supports No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
28. A poll conducted by Big6.com in August of 2003 found that 86% of school districts’ educational focus for the 2003-2004 school years was NCLB and standardized testing.
29. “Good library programs bolster the efforts of the classroom teacher and reading teacher whose responsibility is to teach students *how* to read by helping students *want* to read.” (Barack)
30. Library Media Specialist designs units tied to classroom curriculum.
31. Library Media Specialist helps students use information in meaningful ways.
32. Library Media Specialists teach children ways to use information technology skills to solve problems – a requirement of No Child Left Behind.
33. Several recent studies support claims that “strong school librarians and libraries can help ensure that America’s schools ‘leave no child behind.’”
34. In short, having a qualified Library Media Specialist in all schools helps to ensure that all students are learning. Without legislation – some administrators and school boards may see the Library media Specialist position as “expendable” because on paper, these teachers do not have a “classroom” full of students. One only need look at the issues Art and Music Programs are facing to see what lack of mandates will do to library programs. Luckily, a multitude of studies spanning over 50 years support that Library Media Specialists and their programs increase academic success.
35. Library media Specialist’s work is founded on one fundamental conviction – “the more skilled that students are in gathering, processing, evaluating, and applying information, the more they will be able to achieve on any task.” (Eisenberg) In other words, the Library Media Specialist teaches students how to learn – how to gather information, how to evaluate the information gathered, and how to come to their own conclusions based on the relevant information.

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