How Many Oregon School Libraries Meet the Requirements of Oregon's Fully Funded Quality Education Model?
2010 QEM School Libraries Report

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Background

This analysis attempts to determine how many school libraries in Oregon met the Fully Funded Quality Education Model (QEM) requirements for a quality school library during the 2008-09 school year. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) provided the staffing and expenditures data, as reported by every Oregon public school.

The Oregon Quality Education Model was first conceived in 1999 by then-Speaker of the House, Rep. 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, and these can be found on the ODE website at http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=1950.

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 student achievement.

As part of those recommendations, the QEM has guidelines about the resources necessary to have a quality library in each of the prototype schools. These resources include staffing by certified school library/media specialists, staffing by support personnel, and expenditures for library materials, more specifically books and periodicals in print or 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, as interpreted by the State Library. See the appendix, Interpretation and Methodology, for further explanation.

Minimum Criteria for Quality School Libraries

QEM Prototype School (2008-09 School Year)	Certified Library/Media Specialist	Library/Media Support Staff	Library/Media Center Materials (Books & Periodicals, Print & Electronic)
Elementary School	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE	$26 per student
Middle School	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	$31 per student
High School	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	$36 per student

The staffing criteria have remained the same for years, but library materials expenditures are adjusted annually for inflation. The baseline spending figures can also be adjusted by the Quality Education Commission when they update their report every two years. 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 the associated costs.[i]

Results and Comparisons
School Libraries That Met QEM for the 2008-09 School Year
After the analysis as described in the appendix, we determined that only 10 of the 1,318 Oregon school libraries, or 0.76%, met the 2008 Fully Funded QEM requirements for quality school libraries in the 2008-09 school year. This compares to 46 out of 1,263, or 3.64%, of schools that met the QEM criteria for the 2006-07 school year, which represents the most recent previous analysis.

Schools That Met QEM School Library Staffing and Expenditures Requirements

2008-09 School Year	
Elementary Schools	
District Name	*School Name*
Beaverton SD 48J	Fir Grove Elementary School
Hermiston SD 8	Desert View Elementary School
Hermiston SD 8	Rocky Heights Elementary School
La Grande SD 1	Greenwood Elementary School
Neah-Kah-Nie SD 56	Garibaldi Elementary School
Neah-Kah-Nie SD 56	Nehalem Elementary School
Silver Falls SD 4J	Eugene Field Elementary School
Silver Falls SD 4J	Robert Frost Elementary School
Woodburn SD 103	Nellie Muir Elementary School
Middle/Jr. High Schools	
District Name	*School Name*
Woodburn SD 103	Valor Middle School
High Schools	
District Name	*School Name*
(none)	(none)

Met 2008 Fully Funded QEM (=Met Staffing and Expenditures Minimums)

Elementary	Middle	Jr. High	High School	K-12	Alt./Other/Charter (All levels)	Total
9/712	**1/170**	**0/22**	**0/220**	**0/21**	**0/173**	**10/1318 = 0.76%**

Neah-Kah-Nie School District is to be commended for the proportion of its school libraries that met the Fully Funded QEM criteria for the 2008-09 school year: both elementary schools, or 2 of 4 schools total, met the QEM criteria.

School Libraries That Met the Staffing Requirements of the QEM
While 0.76% of school libraries in Oregon met both the staffing and the materials expenditure guidelines in 2008-09, the table below shows the number and percentage of schools that met the staffing requirements alone.

Met Fully Funded QEM Staffing Criteria, Yearly Comparisons

School Year	Elementary Staffing	Middle School Staffing	Jr. High Staffing	High School Staffing	K-12 Staffing	Alt/ Other/ Charter Staffing	# 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%**

When we began tracking these figures in 2002-03, the number of schools that met QEM staffing guidelines was already low at 25%. Unfortunately, there has been a steady decline since then, until now only 14% of school libraries are adequately staffed. If one raised the elementary certified librarian staffing to 1 FTE instead of .5 FTE, as many argue it should be, the adequate staffing figures would decline even more.

Long Term Trend of School Library Staffing
The short term look at school library staffing should be seen in the context of the long term trend which has seen the number of Oregon school librarians drop by 54% since 1980 and the number of students per librarian nearly triple.[ii]

	1980	2008	Difference
Number of Library/Media Specialists	818	376	**-54.0%**
Number of K-12 students per Library/Media Specialist	547	1500	**+174.2%**

When looking at long term staffing trends, one must recognize that the role of the school librarian has changed significantly. Into the 1990's, school librarians were primarily print-oriented. Today's school librarians have expanded their expertise to include 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.

Concerns about Data Quality
Again this year we found the quality of the data reported to the Oregon Department of Education to be suspect. 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 the library staffing numbers reported to ODE from numerous school districts. The problems with the quality of the library materials expenditure data were equally as numerous but not as easily verified or corrected.

In an effort to improve the quality of school library data, we continue to urge school librarians 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 principal how staffing and expenditures data for the library will be reported to ODE.

School library data as reported to ODE for the 2008-09 school year is available here: http://www.oregon.gov/OSL/LD/school/index.shtml#QEM_School_Library_Report. However, QEM results were determined from a separate spreadsheet which we 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. For 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 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, and one avenue might come from House Bill 2586, or the Strong School Libraries bill, that passed 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 no growth in staffing or expenditures.

It is disheartening that only 0.76% of school libraries met the QEM requirements in 2008-09. 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.[iii] 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. 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 school librarians in Oregon continues to decline which does 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.

The appendix, Interpretation and Methodology, begins on the next page.

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[i] Reeder, Brian "RE: Why the Big Increase?" E-mail to the author. 6 Jan. 2009.

[ii] Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. *Oregon School Directory*. Salem, OR: Supt. Of Instruction, 1980-2009.

[iii] Lance, Keith Curry, et. al. *Good Schools Have School Librarians*. Redmond: Oregon Educational Media Association, 2001.

[iv] Reeder, Brian "RE: definition." E-mail to the author. 8 Aug. 2007.

Appendix

Interpretation and Methodology
Determining Staffing Requirements
Page 37 of the 2008 QEM Report produced by the QEC lists this as the requirement for certified library/media specialist staffing at the prototype elementary school level: "4.5 FTE for specialists in 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 requirements. 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 requirements and stipulate that the prototype elementary school must have at least a 0.5 FTE certified library/media specialist 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 Expenditure Requirements
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 minimum "media center materials" expenditure as $8,841 for 2008-09. 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" expenditure as $15,602 for 2008-09. Dividing that figure by the prototype school population of 500 students yields a spending minimum of $31 per middle school student.

Line 54 of the High School Detail tab lists the minimum "media center materials" expenditure as $36,404 for 2008-09. Dividing that figure by the prototype school population of 1,000 students yields a spending minimum of $36 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.[iv]

Determining Which QEM Report and Policy Model to Utilize
The Quality Education Commission updates its Policy Model every two years. We use the 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 instead of the one issued in 2010.