

LC004665

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE SAVE RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL LIBRARIES ACT

Referred To: House Education

1 SECTION 1. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended by
2 adding thereto the following chapter:

THE SAVE RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL LIBRARIES ACT

6 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "The Save Rhode Island School
7 Libraries Act".

9 (a) The general assembly hereby declares the following to be the policy of this state:

(2) School libraries and school librarians are essential in the instruction of information literacy, digital citizenship, responsible use of artificial intelligence and media literacy in the age of limitless information sources, social media, misinformation and disinformation. School

1 librarians teach students to identify, evaluate and use information in order to become competent
2 researchers and ethical consumers and users of information.

3 (3) In order to be college and career ready in the twenty first century, students shall have
4 access to and be able to use information resources including books, digital media, web resources,
5 databases, artificial intelligence and technology vetted by school librarians. Library programs
6 provide equitable opportunity for all students to be able to read, locate, evaluate and interpret
7 information accurately for academic and professional success.

8 (4) Research consistently demonstrates that in schools with well-equipped and well-
9 stocked school libraries staffed by certified school librarians, students achieve higher scores on
10 standardized reading tests, have higher graduation rates, and enjoy learning more even when taking
11 demographics into consideration.

12 **16-117-3. Definitions.**

13 As used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the following meanings unless a
14 different meaning is clearly indicated by the context:

15 (1) "Commissioner" means the commissioner of elementary and secondary education.

16 (2) "Digital citizenship" means a set of norms, skills, and practices for using technology
17 safety, responsibly, legally and ethically.

18 (3) "Information literacy" means a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when
19 information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed
20 information.

21 (4) "Media literacy" means the ability to critically analyze stories presented in the mass
22 media and to determine their accuracy or credibility.

23 (5) "Public schools" means all public schools of any city or town in the state. This term
24 also includes all charter public schools, including district charter schools, independent charter
25 schools, and mayoral academies, and vocational schools.

26 (6) "School librarian" means a teaching professional who is certified by the department of
27 elementary and secondary education as an all grades library media teacher who is hired to run a
28 school library. This position may also be known as a school library media specialist.

29 (7) "School library" means a permanent facility in a public school that is available to the
30 entire school community and that contains learning and information resources and reading
31 materials in print and non-print media that is maintained and supervised by a certified school
32 librarian. This facility may also be known as a school library media center or library commons.

33 **16-117-4. A school library in each public school.**

34 (a) Pursuant to §16-1-5(7), the commissioner shall ensure that every public school in Rhode

1 Island has a school library in a permanent and dedicated space.

2 (b) A school library shall include the following essential elements, as determined by
3 professional standards:

4 (1) A collection of books and reading materials that is adequate in size for the student
5 population of the school in order that every student is offered a range of choices to meet their
6 reading interests and reading level and that also supports the teaching and learning priorities of the
7 school;

8 (2) Appropriate space for students to read and study comfortably and for instruction to
9 occur;

10 (3) Adequate technology for students to utilize to access information resources, complete
11 school assignments and produce original work;

12 (4) An automated system for the management of the library collection; and

13 (5) An adequate budget for library materials in order that they are kept up to date and in
14 good condition.

15 **16-117-5. A certified school librarian assigned to every public school.**

16 (a) Pursuant to §16-1-5(7), the commissioner shall ensure that every public school in Rhode
17 Island has a certified school librarian to manage and maintain the library, provide information
18 resources to students and staff, promote reading and teach information literacy skills.

19 (b) All public schools in Rhode Island with populations of two hundred fifty (250) students
20 or more shall have at least one full-time certified school librarian who is dedicated to administering
21 and supervising the school library. Public schools with fewer than two hundred fifty (250) students
22 shall have at least a half-time certified school librarian who is dedicated to administering and
23 supervising the school library.

24 (c) The requirements of this section shall be phased in as follows:

25 (1) By the 2026-27 school year: All high schools shall have at least one full-time, certified
26 school librarian;

27 (2) By the 2028-29 school year: All high schools and middle schools shall have at least one
28 full-time, certified school librarian; and

29 (3) By the 2030-2031 school year: All schools kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12),
30 shall have at least one full-time, certified school librarian.

31 **16-117-6. Student access to the school library and its resources.**

32 (a) Pursuant to §16-1-5(7), the commissioner shall ensure that public schools shall provide
33 students with access to the school library on a daily basis in order that students are aware of when
34 and how they are allowed to go to the library for book selection, reading, independent work, and

1 related activities.

2 (b) The provision set forth in subsection (a) of this section shall be required for all levels,
3 kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12), and shall include time other than “library class” time or
4 scheduled research class time.

5 (c) School librarians shall be available during this open library time.

6 (d) Secondary schools shall provide access to students beyond the school day. This access
7 may include before-school, after-school and/or Saturday hours.

8 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE SAVE RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL LIBRARIES ACT

1 This act would direct the commissioner of elementary and secondary education to ensure
2 that every public school has a school library in a permanent and dedicated space. This act would
3 also direct the commissioner to ensure that every public school has a certified school librarian to
4 manage and maintain the library.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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