

Ever wonder where our school librarians have gone?

By JENNIFER COSTLEY

Once upon a time, not so long ago, school libraries were staffed by school librarians. These magical people did more than help your child check out books. They were there to help your child navigate the world of information — a world that gets bigger and bigger every year. If you're like me, your first introduction to the Internet didn't happen on a smartphone; it happened in your school library or media center. I distinctly remember my school librarian teaching our American History class how to evaluate a website. She taught us to trust the .govs and .orgs and to look for authority when taking a chance on anything .com. Back then, I knew to stay away from sites with an angelfire or blogspot

in their address. This information helped me get started in college, where I again learned from our university librarian how to ferret out the bad info from the good.

Today's Internet is bigger and bolder than ever. Your kid very likely gets their "news" from their social media of choice. That's all well and good when your news is celebrity gossip, but it gets tricky when it's time to write a school paper or, heck, just be informed about the world at large. Parents, can you tell the difference between fake news and the real deal? A recent poll by the Pew Research Center determined that 64 percent of adults were confused by fake news. These are adults who, like my generation, probably received librarian-led

information literacy courses throughout their education. If we are confused, how do we expect our kids to navigate the tremendous amount of misinformation coming at them daily in a constant stream?

Professionals are currently developing new methods for teaching information literacy. One such strategy is the CARS method, which teaches kids to evaluate information based on Credibility, Accuracy, Reasonableness and Support. But while new tools for evaluation are being developed, the staff to teach them continues to dwindle. School librarian jobs have been on the decline for a number of years now. Where are our certified school librarians and media assistants? Quite frankly, unemployed. Budget cuts have resulted in certified librarians being replaced with administrative assistants. These assistants are working hard to help your kids but they don't have all the tools or education needed to do it.

Bottom line, our kids have access to more information than they know what to do with. There are professionals out there trained to teach information literacy and those professionals belong in our schools. It's time that we demand their presence.

How to lend your support:

- Oregon House Bill 2586 requires school districts to account for strong school library programs and those programs must include information literacy instruction, as well as profes-



sionally managed school libraries. Call your school district and ask them what they are doing to meet this goal. Every school district must report their progress every three years; make sure your district knows that you are aware of this bill and you're tracking its progress. For more information about how you can help, visit the Oregon Library Association's website at www.olaweb.org.

- Do more than pick up the phone, heed the Oregon Association of School Libraries' call to action and attend a "Show up! Speak up!" event in a location near you. To learn how to get involved, visit their website at www.olaweb.org/oasl-home.

Jennifer Costley is Assistant Director and Youth Services Librarian at the Pendleton Public Library.

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