



TO: Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee

FROM: Jo Budler, State Librarian *gms*

RE: Senate Bill 153

DATE: February 18, 2015

I am providing an informational piece on public libraries and their role as institutions of education as a follow-up to the hearing on SB153 which took place on February 17, 2015. Thank you for this opportunity.

Public Libraries as Institutions of Education

Andrew Carnegie who funded the establishment of more than 2,500 public libraries around the globe, called the public library, "the people's university." He understood the vast amount of knowledge housed in the public library and the importance that this knowledge be open to all, regardless of social or economic status. Today, our public libraries continue to be places where all members of society may engage in lifelong learning. Public libraries in Kansas offer a multitude of learning opportunities.

Early Literacy: For many children, their first exposure to books and to reading is at their public library. Daycare providers often bring the children in their care to the public library for programs. Here children are introduced to the six skills that they need to be ready to read when they begin kindergarten. In this way, they begin their education at the public library and are ready to continue their learning as they begin their formal education. All public libraries in Kansas offer ready to read programming.

Maintaining grade level reading: Children who do not read during the summer can go back to school in fall, up to THREE grade levels behind where they were when they left for summer break. Children need to read to maintain their grade level reading and public libraries fill this educational need during the summer months. In 2014, 102,000 children and teens participated statewide in Summer Reading Programs in Kansas, thus maintaining or increasing their grade level reading acuity.

Educational programming: Each summer, libraries collaborate and choose a common theme for their summer reading program. In 2014 this theme was science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). In 2014, Kansas public libraries presented a total of 9,728 programs on STEM (8,431 programs for children and teens and 1,397 for adults). Nearly 113,000 attended these programs.

Public libraries offer learning and educational opportunities to adults as well as children. In 2014, more than 11,000 adults participated statewide in summer reading programs at their public libraries.

Homeschoolers: Libraries serve the educational needs of homeschooling families by providing reading material, programs, public access computers and practice tests online, at no charge.

Over a 12 month period, a total of 6,672 students took ACT Practice Tests **at no charge, through the statewide subscription to LearningExpress Library made available through the State Library.** In addition, there are Advance Placement Practice Tests, 4th Grade Math Diagnostic tools, ASVAB Preparation tools, GED Practice Exams and Test Skill Builders as well as Microsoft software courses available through LearningExpress Library. Anyone in Kansas may access these resources at the public access computers at the public library.

Digital literacy: In order to be successful in the 21st century, Kansas residents must have basic computer skills so they may:

- Apply for jobs online
- Access government forms, application and information online
- Access, use and search online databases
- Connect and communicate via the Internet

78% of public libraries in Kansas offer digital literacy to their community members through online or on-demand methods, one-on-one, in a classroom or group or by promoting self-paced tutorials offered through a statewide subscription.

Gathering places for civic discourse: Libraries are places where people gather as families and as community members. Here they are able to participate in programs where they might, for example, learn a skill or listen to a lecture, often entering into discussion with one another. This free exchange of ideas allows individuals to better understand one another and appreciate differences. This is a role which no other public institution fills.

People have an expectation that institutions of education -- especially those with young children in attendance -- will be gun-free. Because public libraries are institutions of education for people of all ages, it is logical for this expectation to extend to public libraries.