

Statement on Classroom Libraries

All students must be able to access, use, and evaluate information in order to meet the needs and challenges of the twenty-first century. These abilities are a necessary precursor to a sound education and healthy democracy. Reading in all its dimensions—informational, purposeful, and recreational—promotes students' overall academic success and well-being. Furthermore, when students possess the skills necessary to access, select, use, and effectively evaluate their reading materials, their ability to become engaged members of their communities and productive citizens is enhanced. A large body of research demonstrates that equitable access to books promotes reading achievement and motivation (Allington, 2002, 2009; Krashen, 2011; Nystrand, 2006; Wu & Samuels, 2004).

Classroom libraries—physical or virtual—play a key role in providing access to books and promoting literacy; they have the potential to increase student motivation, engagement, and achievement and help students become critical thinkers, analytical readers, and informed citizens. As English language arts educators, we know that no book is right for every student, and classroom libraries offer ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with students as individuals to find books that will ignite their love for learning, calm their fears, answer their questions, and improve their lives in any of the multiple ways that only literature can.

For these reasons, we support student access to classroom libraries that 1) offer a wide range of materials to appeal to and support the needs of students with different interests and abilities; 2) provide access to multiple resources that reflect diverse perspectives and social identities; and 3) open up opportunities for students, teachers, and school librarians to collaborate on the selections available for student choice and reading.

Administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community leaders are all essential in promoting, building, and maintaining classroom libraries, but teachers play an especially critical role. They are uniquely qualified to select books that supplement and complement curricula and address the needs, interests, and concerns of their students. The National Council of Teachers of English supports efforts to provide teachers with the ability to exercise their professional judgment in developing and maintaining classroom libraries and to support them with financial resources to do so. The National Council of Teachers of English further strongly recommends that stakeholders do everything in their power to financially support teachers in their efforts to build classroom libraries.

Thus, as members of the National Council of Teachers of English, we recognize the specific educational benefits of classroom libraries to students because they

- motivate students by encouraging voluntary and recreational reading
- help young people develop an extensive array of literacy strategies and skills
- provide access to a wide range of reading materials that reflect abilities and interests
- enhance opportunities for both assigned and casual reading
- provide choice in self-selecting reading materials for self-engagement
- strengthen and encourage authentic literate exchanges among young people and adolescents
- provide access to digitized reading materials that may help to foster the development of technological literacy skills
- facilitate opportunities to validate and promote the acceptance and inclusion of diverse students' identities and experiences
- create opportunities to cultivate an informed citizenry

Furthermore, because classroom libraries serve the overall goals of education, the National Council of Teachers of English encourages teachers and other education professionals to

- recognize the importance of rich and diverse classroom libraries that offer students access to a wide and extensive repertoire of accessible reading materials
- promote students' right to read while recognizing teachers as curriculum decision makers in promoting their students' repertoire of literacy skills and strategies
- recognize that classroom libraries improve reading abilities for all students
- increase literacy resources for teachers through access to diverse mentor texts and opportunities to differentiate literacy instruction
- enlist other interested parties—administrators, support personnel, parents, and community leaders—to assist in the effort to financially support, build, and maintain diverse classroom libraries at all levels

Thus, the National Council Teachers of English supports, encourages, and defends the significance and preservation of classroom libraries in all disciplines in our nation's public schools and urges their continuation and implementation by classroom teachers, school administrators, and community leaders.

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