

Good evening

I am very excited to be here to celebrate this new campus library in a neighborhood I have called home since about 1980. Hogg is a shining light in the potential recovery of HISD libraries thanks to the vision of this principal and this librarian, as well as the support of other campus leaders. I hope this is the beginning of a trend across the district, a trend to better to support the high potential of all HISD students with library services that honor their abilities and interests as learners and citizens of this world class city.

I am a school librarian tho not in an HISD school, and a parent of two sons who attended HISD schools. In addition to my role in Students Need Libraries in HISD, I have been active in Texas Assn of School Librarians and the American Association of School Librarians for almost 40 years. My library advocacy work keeps me in the thick of developments in the state and nation. I know how important school libraries are to student achievement and, perhaps more importantly, to student enthusiasm for learning and reading. Too many students in this HISD school and beyond have no access to books beyond campus; public libraries can be too far to walk and bookstores, even if nearby, require money that may be short at home. Our handouts tonite offer a URL to a compilation of data explaining the connection between school libraries and student achievement – please take time to look at this strong corroboration in many states over many years. School Libraries Matter.

Libraries are an equalizing force in education. Students with access to strong school libraries that are staffed by certified librarians do better on standardized

tests; this fact is most important in schools and neighborhoods otherwise considered “book deserts.” “Children’s reading lives should not depend on their luck in getting a teacher who knows about books.” [Twitter, 1-17-16] When students have access to a wide variety of books, and can choose which of those books appeal to them, their enthusiasm for education grows, fueling improved academic success which can build on itself.

Librarians also support a campus technology program, another point of equalization for students. Having access to computers and digital resources does not build strong learning without teachers and librarians who teach how to use these tools for best results. Those learners who have begun to select their own books of interest from library shelves have begun to understand how to curate the best digital tools and websites to expand their knowledgebase. These students will continue to grow in achievement and understanding into the well-rounded students HISD wants to send on to the next levels of education. Even car mechanics now need to understand online search methods to find the right parts.

Too many campuses in HISD have no library, or only a room full of books with no librarian. In some neighborhoods, it is possible to go from Kindergarten through high school graduation without access to an open and staffed school library in any zoned school. How can HISD let this happen? Students in these schools are left with only the books available in their classrooms- that’s little choice, much less among appealing options; and little incentive to become stronger readers or high achievers. What a waste. Houston schools are full of students with high potential if given a chance. Every student deserves a trained, certified librarian to build a

school library program that fits the specific school community: a collection suited to the reading levels and interests of those specific students; a collection that takes teacher and curricular needs and translates them into titles and digital resources that will inspire students to WANT to grow skill and understanding. Schools staffed with teachers standing in for librarians have certainly understood part of the message: access to the library matters, and librarians are teachers. It would be relatively easy to encourage these teachers to become certified librarians. This coursework would fill in the gaps in understanding of library services so that the campus would get a more complete program in support of campus needs. Campuses with only clerks on the job understand only that the collection of books needs to be supervised and open to students; these campuses lose out on the teaching aspects a school library should offer.

In November, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The law recognizes that school library programs and the instructional role of the school librarian are essential and integral components of a student's education, and as such, eligible for federal education dollars. It allows states to use funds to support the instructional services provided by effective school library programs. Schools/districts must develop local plans that describe how "effective school library programs" will "provide students an opportunity to develop digital literacy skills and improve academic achievement." While the details of implementation are only in the first stages of discussion, this Hogg library is a strong example of what ESSA supports. Hogg is offering HISD a model on which to base the plan that will be required.

Hogg Middle School has brought us together today to celebrate their success. The website posts their mission: *James Hogg Middle School is committed to providing a high-quality and personalized education for every child.* The Library mission, also from the website, supports the school perfectly: At Hogg we believe that *Libraries matter. They make a difference in the lives of children.* Thank you for allowing me to join this celebration of everything I work for; that this school has accomplished it in my own back yard is a real bonus. Congratulations to all.