

Emerson Elementary School Library
May-December 2019
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City of Oakland Funding Impact

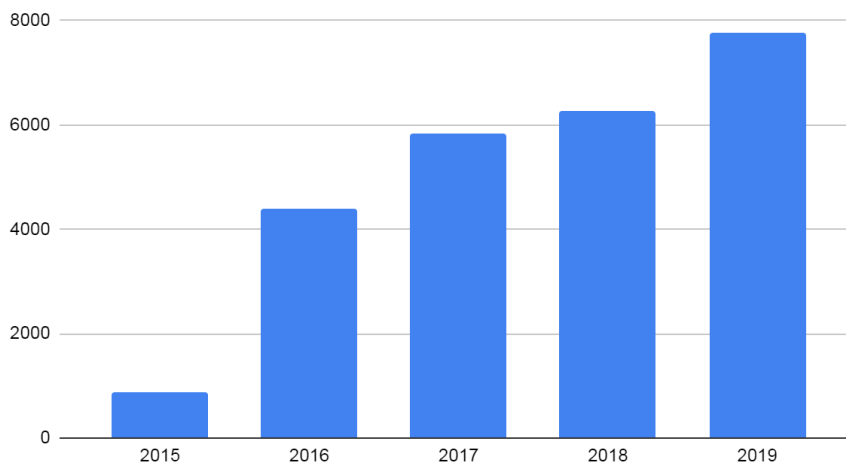
With Measure G funding changes, and without the one-time grant from the City of Oakland, I would no longer be working at Emerson and our library program would have ended, so this is an apt time for a status update for the second half of 2019.

What Professional and Sustained Library Staffing Means

Classes started visiting the library and checking out books on August 26. From that date through the end of December, there have been:

- 255 class visits to the library
- 22 librarian visits to Special Ed classrooms
- 7,770 books circulated

Emerson Fall Circulation Numbers (Aug - Dec) by year



In 2015, the Emerson library was only barely open: a pair of volunteers handled checking books in and out one day per week, and classes visited on a rotating schedule once every two or three weeks.

In September 2016, as I was finishing up my last semester in the MLIS program at the

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Principal Heather Palin hired me to work as a Library Technician half-time at Emerson. Circulation numbers zoomed up from the previous Fall's 873 to 4,405. For the 2017-2018 school year and ever since, my hours were increased to four days a week, and I have worked a Monday-through-Thursday schedule. The circulation numbers have increased each year, as Emerson students have learned to trust in the continuity of their library access and their librarian, who knows them and their reading interests.

Building the Collection

Since May 1, 2019:

- 496 new books
- 1061 books weeded (deselected)
- 7051 total items in the collection, with Average © Age of 2005.

All 13 General Education teachers have requested and checked out books for classroom use and curriculum support in the past few months. Requested topics include:

- starting school, being new, making friends
- kindness; anti-bullying; acceptance of differences
- multiple versions of fairy tales and folktales for comparing and contrasting
- stories about Anansi the Trickster, Br'er Rabbit, and the Monkey King
- nonfiction for animal reports
- Latinx Heritage Month
- Native American Heritage Month and California indigenous people
- winter holidays
- community helpers (firefighters, teachers, librarians, farmers, etc.)

Emerson needs more books about all of these topics, especially after the removal of outdated books, which is an ongoing process that the Collection Development class I took in graduate school trained me how to do.

In the years prior to my arrival at Emerson, the lack of regular library access and supervision meant that the selection of popular fiction was poor and the collection of comic books and graphic novels had been reduced to a single, sad, half-full shelf. (When kids have no confidence that they will ever get a chance to borrow a book, they are more tempted to just take it when no one is looking.) The absence of professional management also meant that the collection was in bad shape, with many outdated and inappropriate books on the shelves, and no books at all on many important topics. During my first year the principal provided a budget for acquiring books, but since then there has been no book budget. Still, through a combination of books provided by the District, mini-grants from FOPSL, targeted fundraising, community book donations, and wish lists at local bookstores, I've now had time to build up the collection by selecting and adding more than 2,000 appealing new books: fiction, early readers, picture books, graphic novels, and updated nonfiction. I also created collections of bilingual Spanish-English and Arabic-English books where Emerson had none before.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

- 8 Oakland Technical High School students work as Community Engagement Interns in the library each day for class credit during one of their regular class periods.
- 4 Emerson parents and 3 community members volunteer in the library each week.

These helpers not only maximize the librarian's time and expedite the check-in check-out process, but they also contribute to a positive library culture and build library-community ties.

With support from the Oakland Literacy Coalition, the Oakland Public Library, Emerson staff, and parent and community volunteers, we had our most popular Family Reading Night yet on

October 10th, with 226 students and family members attending, participating in literacy-themed games and activities, and taking home loads of free books. Professional storyteller Muriel Johnson kept audience members of all ages engaged with her call-and-response style of storytelling.

I worked with the children's librarian at the Temescal branch of the Oakland Public Library to set up a schedule and library card applications so that three Emerson teachers could take their classes on walking field trips to the public library in December. Mr. Wilson's 5th grade class went twice! We're hoping to get all the classes out on walking field trips to the Temescal branch, and all students set up with their own public library cards, by the end of the school year.

Last summer, Emerson received new-to-us high-quality library tables and chairs, when Manzanita's library got a make-over and they generously gave us their old furniture, which is still in very good condition. The District Library Manager made the connection between the library that needed the furniture and the library that needed to get rid of it.

Future in the balance

At this point there is no funding for my position next year, because the City grant was a one-time gift to OUSD. For 3 consecutive years the library was staffed with Measure G library funding until the change of allocation for 2019-20. A professionally staffed and thriving library is a big draw for prospective families, and Emerson's enrollment is growing: we added a 3rd kindergarten class this year, and our current enrollment is 325. The demographics of Emerson, in addition to our large Special Ed program, mean that we have many needs.

2018-2019 Enrollment: 308

76% Socioeconomically Disadvantaged

17.9% English Language Learners

0.3% Foster Youth

A supportive principal, an enthusiastic parent community, and the appreciative faculty and staff made last year's tumult over my job status bearable. In January we learned that the District support for my position was reduced from 100% to less than 32%, and then in March it was reduced to 0%. Emerson's fledgling PTA was founded in June of 2018 and cannot support a professional library staff position the way other bigger PTAs do.

The Transitional-Kindergartners from my first year at Emerson are now in 2nd grade, and it is so rewarding to see all the students grow as readers and learners. My investment of time and effort into building relationships with students and into building Emerson's library collection is incalculable and not transferable, which is one of the reasons I stay at Emerson despite other job opportunities that pay better and provide more job security.