

## **NYLA/SSL Position Statement Elementary School Librarians in Every School, 2014**

The New York Library Association's Section of School Librarians (NYLA/SSL) strongly recommends that certified school librarians (school library media specialists) be required in all schools, including elementary schools.

A certified school librarian is critical to the success of all students in a school, giving them a pathway to success in college and career by providing:

- open, non-restricted access for students, staff and families to a varied high quality collection of reading materials in multiple formats that are aligned to curriculum and student interests;
- instruction in information literacy, inquiry, technology, and critical thinking skills;
- reading guidance and motivation, collaboratively with classroom teachers;
- literacy across the curriculum;
- literacy projects and events that engage learners and motivate them to become lifelong readers.

School librarians use professional collection development criteria to provide an array of important, centralized resources in multiple formats, perspectives and at all reading levels to reflect the curriculum and the diverse learning needs of the school community. School librarians understand that self-motivated reading provides academic success in all content areas.

Not only do librarians carefully select appropriate resources, but they also organize print and digital resources for effective access by all students and staff for integration into the curriculum and instruction. School librarians are specifically trained in materials selection and skilled in information literacy, making them integral in finding suitable texts for staff and students necessary for the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for close reading.

While many students may know how to search, it is critical that they be taught to research. Often lost in a sea of misinformation found freely on the Internet, students, especially elementary school students, need to be taught how to choose the best, most authoritative and appropriate sources for their purpose. Librarians teach students to evaluate information and encourage them to synthesize it for meaning and to create new knowledge.

School librarians teach the life skills of Internet safety, critical thinking and problem solving, the inquiry process, and the dispositions of perseverance and motivation - all of which are crucial in preparing students to thrive independently and become college and career ready. In order for these life skills to mature, learning must start in elementary school with foundational skills in order to be effective throughout their years of schooling.

All students deserve equitable opportunities to develop strong digital literacy, critical thinking, and information literacy skills, regardless of economic status or school. School librarians provide access to technology and resources, along with technical instruction. We now understand that there is a second-level digital divide, wherein some students have the opportunity to develop digital literacy skills via certified librarians in their schools and others do not.

Former Federal Communications Commission (FCC) communications and technology policy consultant John B. Horrigan found that even though more Americans have broadband access at home, the real emerging issue is digital readiness, which he defined as the capacity for all users

to engage with online resources with knowledge about service attributes and personal and household data in the various applications we use. His recent national study shows that 29% of American's have low digital readiness, 42% have moderate levels of digital readiness, and only 29% have high levels of digital readiness (Taylor).

There are a number of changing instructional paradigms that call for school librarians in every elementary school:

- The Common Core Learning Standards have an "Anchor Standard" which expects students to research in order to build and present knowledge;
- the new Social Studies Frameworks, aligned with the CCLS, call for Inquiry Based Learning as one of four dimensions of learning; and
- the new Social Studies Frameworks call for students to investigate via "Inquiries" and view history through lenses which often include investigations, research, and evidence.

The skills targeted by the Common Core Learning Standards are the very skills that form the elementary school librarian's curriculum. The *Empire State Information Fluency Continuum (IFC)* provides the framework for the instructional aspects of a library program, forming the basis for the skills and strategies essential for students to become independent readers, critical thinkers, and learners. Taught by school librarians in collaboration with teachers, the *IFC* is designed to integrate with subject content areas. The *IFC* is endorsed by the School Library Systems Association of New York State and aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards.

The impact of certified school librarians on teaching and learning has been well documented:

- The elementary school library is often the only library experience that underprivileged students may have to become lifelong readers and learners. Many students in underprivileged homes do not have Internet access or computers and often the school library is their only access to gain a foundation for digital literacy skills. These same students often are without print materials. The school library and the reading guidance of certified school librarians encourage them to read more for their own pleasure and learning. Research shows that these students approach technology differently than more privileged students and need school librarians to close the gap (Paul).
- The New York State Board of Regents has twice supported the importance of having a certified school librarian in every school. The report of the Regents Commission on Library Services was unanimously accepted on July 14, 2000 and included Recommendation 2: Ensure that all New York's students are information literate by providing strong school library media programs that include appropriately certified professional staff, adequate resources, and technology (New York State Library, Final Report). In April 2012, the report of the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries, *Creating the Future: A 2020 Vision Plan for Library Service in New York State*, was unanimously accepted by the Board of Regents. It included the recommendation to: "Expand the existing Commissioner's Regulations (91.2) to require an elementary school librarian in every school to strengthen instructional leadership in meeting the P-12 Common Core Learning Standards, and enforce library staffing regulations in all public schools." (New York State Library, *Creating the Future*).
- According to a study using data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to document the impact of librarian layoffs on fourth-grade reading scores, the lack of a librarian translated to lower performance on standardized tests. The research

also indicates that these lower reading scores can't be blamed on cuts to other school staff. (Lance, *School Library Journal*).

- In a Syracuse University iSchool study of school libraries in New York State published by the Center for Digital Literacy it was found that in elementary schools with a certified (vs. non-certified) library media specialist, students have significantly higher achievement scores on the 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA test.(Small).
- An information brief by the New York Comprehensive Center found that students who demonstrate on-grade literacy levels by the third grade perform better on standardized assessments and in classrooms throughout elementary and secondary school years, tending to save schools and districts money through reductions in remedial and special education placements (New York Comprehensive Center).
- According to Library Research Services (LRS) analysis, students at schools that gained or maintained positions of endorsed, certified school librarians had higher Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) scores and higher increases in those scores than students in schools with libraries run by either non-endorsed, uncertified librarians or library assistants. Library assistants working without the supervision of a trained, certified school librarian had no impact on reading scores (Lance, LRS).
- According to *School Libraries Work!* published by Scholastic in 2008, studies in more than 19 states and one Canadian province have shown clear evidence of the connection between student achievement and the presence of school libraries with qualified school librarians (Scholastic). Universal findings from over 60 studies in impact studies conducted in 22 states conclude that schools with a well-equipped library, staffed by a full-time certified school librarian and appropriate support staff contribute significantly to gains in student learning (Baltimore).
- Teachers were three times more likely to rate their literacy teaching as excellent when they collaborated with librarians (American Association of School Librarians).

Given this comprehensive, convincing research about the positive impact of school librarians, New York State must take a strong stand to enable every child in the state to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that lead to success in college and careers and life-long, independent learning by ensuring that every school--elementary through high school--is staffed by a certified school librarian.

#### WORKS CITED

American Association of School Librarians. *Position Statement on the School Librarian's Role in Reading*. ALA, 2013. Web. 22 Sept. 2014.  
<<http://www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/resources/statements/reading-role>>.

American Association of School Librarians. *Strong School Libraries Build Strong Students*. ALA, 2013. Web. 16 Sept. 2014.  
<[http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/advocacy/AASL\\_infographic.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/advocacy/AASL_infographic.pdf)>.

- Baltimore Library Project. *School Library Impact Studies: A Review of Findings and Guide to Sources*. Gretes Research Services for the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. August 2013. PDF. <<http://www.baltimorelibraryproject.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/09/Library-Impact-Studies.pdf>>.
- Lance, Keith Curry, and Linda Hofschire. *Change in School Librarian Staffing Linked with Change in CSAP Reading Performance, 2005 to 2011*. Library Research Service, 2012. *Library Research Service*. Web. 16 Sept. 2014. <[http://www.lrs.org/documents/closer\\_look/CO4\\_2012\\_Closer\\_Look\\_Report.pdf](http://www.lrs.org/documents/closer_look/CO4_2012_Closer_Look_Report.pdf)>.
- Lance, Keith Curry, and Linda Hofschire. "Something to Shout About: New Research shows that More Librarians means Higher Reading Scores." *School Library Journal* 1 Sept. 2011. Web. 16 Sept. 2014. <<http://www.slj.com/2011/09/industry-news/something-to-shout-about-new-research-shows-that-more-librarians-means-higher-reading-scores/>>.
- New York Comprehensive Center. *Informational Brief: Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement*. New York Comprehensive Center, 2011. *New York State Department of Education*. Web. 16 Sept. 2014. <[http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/nyla/nycc\\_school\\_library\\_brief.pdf](http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/nyla/nycc_school_library_brief.pdf)>.
- New York State Library. *Creating the Future: A 2020 Vision of Library Service in New York State*. Regents Advisory Council on Libraries, 2012. *New York State Department of Education*. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/advscns/rac/2020final/index.html#schoolibraries>>.
- New York State Library. *Final Report of the Regents Commission on Library Service*. Regents Advisory Council on Libraries, 14 July 2000. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/rcols/finalrpt.htm>>.
- Paul, Annie Murphy. "Educational Technology isn't Leveling the Playing Field." *The Hetchinger Report*. 25 Jun. 2014. Web. 23 Sept. 2014. [http://hetchingerreport.org/content/educational-technology-isnt-leveling-playing-field\\_16499/](http://hetchingerreport.org/content/educational-technology-isnt-leveling-playing-field_16499/)
- School Libraries Work! 3rd. ed.* Scholastic Research Foundation. New York: Scholastic, 2008. Web. 16 Sept. 2014. <[http://www.scholastic.com/content/collateral\\_resources/pdf/s/slw3\\_2008.pdf](http://www.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/s/slw3_2008.pdf)>.
- Small, Ruth V., Jaime Snyder, and Katie Parker. *New York State's School Libraries and Library Media Specialists: An Impact Study*. Syracuse: Center for Digital Literacy, n.d. Web. 16 Sept. 2014. <[http://www.nycomprehensivecenter.org/docs/Small\\_ImpactStudy.pdf](http://www.nycomprehensivecenter.org/docs/Small_ImpactStudy.pdf)>
- Taylor, Corey. "Responding to the Second Wave of the Digital Divide." *American Libraries*. American Library Association, 7 May 2014. Web. 16 Sept. 2014. <<http://www.americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blog/responding-second-wave-digital-divide>>.