



New Jersey Association of School Librarians

**For Immediate Release : New Jersey Association of School Librarians
Meets with US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan**

July 1, 2009 Trenton, New Jersey – On June 22, 2009, NJASL Board Members, attended US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's visit to Fanwood Public Library in Fanwood, NJ. NJEA Liaison and Past President Mary Moyer, President-Elect Pat Massey, AASL Affiliate Liaison Hilda Weisburg, and Advocacy Chair and Past President Mary K. Lewis engaged in an open dialogue about public and school libraries and how they are addressing problems related to the current economic crisis and family literacy. In attendance was US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, NJ Governor Jon Corzine, NJ Commissioner of Education Lucille Davy, NJ Assemblyman Linda Stender (LD 22) NJ Congressman Leonard Lance (D7), NJ State Librarian Norma Blake, ALA President Jim Rettig, and public and private school librarians.

The session opened with Norma Blake discussing how public libraries are meeting people's needs during this economic crisis. She mentioned broadband access and thanking Congress for adding money for access in the Stimulus package. Mary Moyer was able to make points about the importance of school libraries as well as the problem with a lack of a mandate creating situations where schools are eliminating school librarians. Mary Moyer was able to add that schools are one of the recipients of broadband access and also addressed how school libraries provide open access where students can utilize the Internet to complete school projects, homework, etc.

The Secretary was very interested in what NJASL had to say and was very responsive to NJASL's statements. Hilda Weisburg, who also serves on the Department of Education Taskforce for Partnership for 21st Century Skills, spoke about school librarians in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and their importance in teaching students the skills necessary to locate, evaluate and synthesize information. Weisburg asserted that is not enough to just have a physical facility called a library and without a school librarian to assist and instruct students, the room is just a warehouse. Also, NJASL was able to speak about the need for certified school librarians in all NJ schools. Secretary Duncan asked how the economic crisis is affecting NJ and this gave NJASL the opportunity to speak about the elimination of school librarian positions. Commissioner Davy added that this regulation is in the school funding formula regulations but the regulation is so loosely worded that school library positions are being eliminated. In addition, Mary Moyer was able to give Secretary Duncan a laminated poster with pictures of students utilizing their school libraries as well as statements from students about how they use their school libraries.

After this meeting inside the library, the Secretary and the Governor went outside to kick off Fanwood Public Library's summer reading program. They each read a book and then stayed for photos with the children. After this, Governor Corzine, Congressman Lance and Secretary Duncan held a press conference on back lawn of library announcing Obama's summer of service program.

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