

INSPIRING EXCELLENCE
IN LIBRARIANSHIP
IN LEARNING

Testimony on the Proposed State Budget
Lisa Bakanas, President
New Jersey Association of School Librarians
April 9, 2018

Good morning Chairman Pintor Marin and Members of the Assembly Budget Committee. My name is Lisa Bakanas. As President of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL), I represent over 1000 members of the professional organization of school librarians in our state. As a school library media specialist at Cherokee High School in Marlton, I speak on behalf of the 1.37 million students in New Jersey Public Schools who deserve to have access to state-of-the-art school libraries staffed by highly trained, state certified school librarians.

This testimony is to urge you to include sufficient funding for school library programs staffed by state certified school librarians in the state budget. Unfortunately, specific funding for school library programs is noticeably missing from the Governor's proposed budget. For New Jersey students to be prepared as critical thinkers who are able to compete in a global marketplace they need resource-rich school libraries staffed by state certified school librarians. Access to effective school library programs staffed by dedicated and highly trained school librarians provides students with the college and career-readiness skills that will allow them to make contributions to not only their local and national community but an international community.

During times of economic challenges, school libraries and the certified school library staff provide a cost effective, equal opportunity for all students to succeed. Additionally, the lessons that school librarians implement fully integrate with and support the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. A dynamic school library program is vital in preparing students to become reflective learners who are capable of locating, evaluating, and creating knowledge from information found in a variety of formats including both digital and print media.

Studies on the Effectiveness of School Libraries

The New Jersey Study of School Libraries "One Common Goal - Student Learning" concluded that school librarians and thriving school library programs contributed to improvements in test scores, development of inquiry based learning, increased interest in reading, and an increase in discriminating reading. It showed that school libraries functioning as centralized learning centers connected to classroom instruction produce literate and informed learners who can thrive in a digital, knowledge-based world,

provide an understanding of the information and technology students will confront as digital citizens, and set the stage for student-initiated inquiry.

School Libraries Work! For over 20 years, studies in 23 states have determined the positive impact of school library programs staffed by certified school librarians. The studies show that students who have access to a robust school library program perform better in Language Arts and Literacy on standardized tests regardless of socioeconomic background.

Trilling. School librarians have deep expertise in digital literacy skills; have well-developed instructional strategies based on thinking critically, communicating creatively in a variety of media, and solving problems creatively; and are often role models for strong leadership, initiative, and other career and life skills.

Status of School Library Media Specialists and School Libraries in New Jersey

The lack of funding for school libraries and for the students of New Jersey have been disastrous. Since 2008, which coincides with the last year that schools were fully funded, there has been approximately a 20% decrease in the number of school librarians. (School Library Programs in NJ 2016) The number of stories of schools eliminating school library media specialists led to the collaboration between NJASL and the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA) on a survey and census of certified School Library Media Specialists (SLMS) in order to determine the current status of SLMS and funding for School Library programs in New Jersey.

The 2015-2016 School Library Census revealed that support for school library programs from New Jersey school districts has decreased dramatically. Some districts had eliminated all elementary level SLMS, while others had eliminated their high school level SLMS, while others continue to support fully staffed school library programs. One example from one school district showed that the high school and middle school share one librarian serving 5500 students, spending 2 days in the middle school and 3 days in the high school per week. Additionally, survey respondents repeatedly voiced concerns that a result of eliminating certified SLMS would lead to curricula becoming unsupported, test scores decreasing, and students being unprepared for higher education. Schools will “lack a professional guide to credible, relevant, and high-quality resources which is vital to the development of information literacy.”

Key findings from the NJASL and NJLA survey:

- There are approximately 20% fewer School Library Media Specialists(SLMS) in New Jersey than there were in 2007-2008
- Over 20% of High Schools have no certified School Library Media Specialist available to serve students and staff.
- Over 150 School Library Media Specialists cover more than one school. One SLMS covers 7 schools in one district.
- 91 School Districts have no School Library Media Specialists (Not including charter schools)

- 33 districts have no School Library Media Specialists at the Elementary Level
- Over 280 Elementary Level schools are without certified School Library Media Specialists
- In the nearly 100 charter schools, there are fewer than 10 School Library Media Specialists.

Contributions of an adequately funded and up-to-date school library to students' academic success:

- Equitable access to a well-chosen, managed collection of library resources in formats to meet all learning styles and needs, including print, digital, audio, and visual;
- A well chosen, managed collection of library resources that correlates to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards;
- A safe and inviting environment;
- Programs that support many different student goals, such as recreational and academic reading, research support and instruction, and technology tools;
- A place to freely explore the safe and secure integration of technology;
- The means for curious students to further connect with topics they find interesting;
- A means of collaborative and cooperative learning that promotes communications with other students;
- An opportunity to build persistence and resilience when confronted with new or challenging information;
- The ability to confront biased information and gain a broad perspective; and
- The chance to find answers to their questions and explore their world.

Contributions of certified school librarians to students' academic success:

- Serve as a conduit of information literacy skills;
- Teach how to evaluate resources and making informed decisions;
- Teach digital citizenship, such as copyrights and ethical use of information,
- Teach the research process;
- Teach how to formulate and refine questions and how to think critically to solve those questions;
- Teach how to use technology to create new knowledge;
- Teach students to evaluate information gathered from multiple sources and organize knowledge in useful ways;
- Teach how to use technology in socially respectful and responsible ways;
- Teach how to collaborate with others in the exchange of ideas;
- Collaborate with classroom teachers to match quality resources to help achieve New Jersey Student Learning Standards;
- Serve as a teaching partner to help to analyze learning data and develop and monitor action plans to increase student achievement; and
- Serve as an advocate in their community for additional resources - humans and materials - to supplement student educational experiences.

School librarians as listed in their official NJ Department of Education certification description are the leaders in teaching information literacy. They are the essential partners in curriculum delivery and college and career readiness as well as the leaders in the integration of technology, information, and digital literacies, and professional development for school staff. The digital age increases the need for a school librarian due to the intersection of reading, researching and innovating in the modern environment.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the latest authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act and presents an opportunity for New Jersey to receive federal funding for school library programs, library resources including technology, and training for school librarians.

A summary of resources for school librarians and school library media programs:

- Title IV Part A – Student Support and Academic Enrichment authorizes a grant to local school districts to identify and address technology readiness needs including Internet connectivity and access to school libraries. Funds may also be used for professional development to teach the knowledge and skills to use technology effectively to improve instruction and student achievement.
- **Title IV, Part A:** Provide personalized, rigorous learning experiences supported by technology, offering instruction and equitable access to print and digital resources to ensure a well-rounded education for every student.
- Title IV Part B – 21st Century Community Learning Centers – supports community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities for children during non-school hours.
- Definitions – The definition of “specialized instructional support personnel” now includes “school librarians.”
- School libraries are defined as eligible for grants to support the teaching of American History and Civics.

Funding for School Library Programs and Staff

As you consider the Governor’s proposed budget, NJASL urges you to include school library programs staffed by certified school librarians as part of the basic education funding in the FY 2019 Budget. NJASL also, asks that you work with Department of Education Acting Commissioner Lamar Repollet to include school librarians and school library programs as eligible for funding under the many programs listed as appropriate for funding under ESSA. This will ensure that today’s students have access to quality school library programs that will help them become responsible, ethical users of information who are prepared to meet the challenges of higher education and the workplace.

NJASL urges you to recognize the indispensable role that school libraries and certified school librarians perform in student educational and career success. We must make certain that school library programs are fully funded and staffed by certified School

Librarians. Our students' futures depend on it. Please contact me if I can offer additional information or answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Bakanas, President, New Jersey Association of School Librarians
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Resources

American Library Association. "Opportunities for School Librarians". ALA. PDF File. 1/5/16.
http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/esea/ALA-ESSA_Library_Opportunities.pdf.

"FAQ on Title IV Grants." AASL Fact Sheet. March 2018. <http://essa.aasl.org/resources/>.
"Future Ready Librarians Fact Sheet" Future Ready Schools. US Department of Educational Technology & Alliance for Excellence in Education, n.d. Web. 28 June 2016. <http://tinyurl.com/zhxee3d>.

New Jersey Study

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New Jersey Study: Phase 2:

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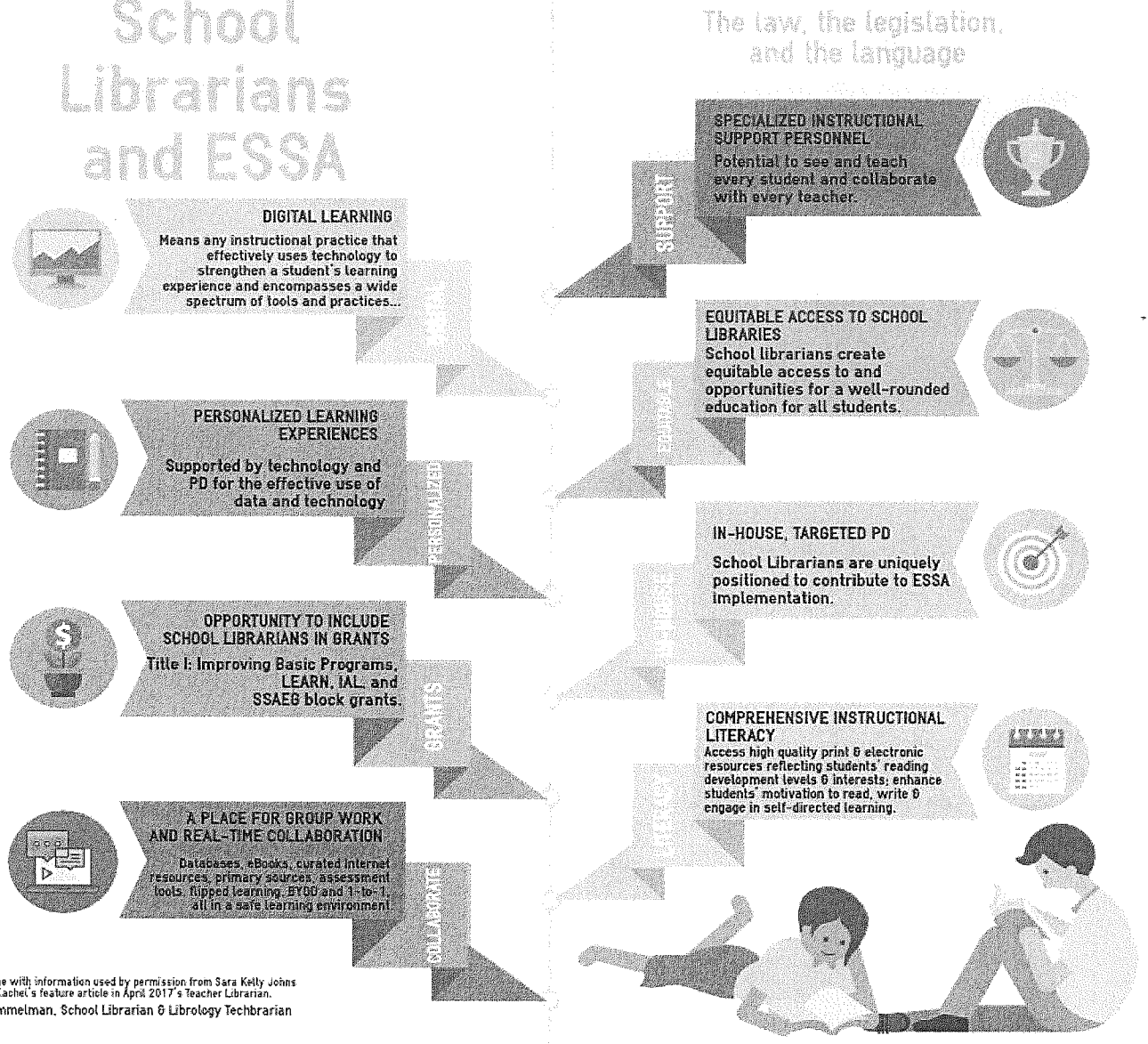
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<https://sheg.stanford.edu/upload/V3LessonPlans/Executive%20Summary%202011.21.16.pdf>.

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School Librarians and ESSA



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