



INSPIRING EXCELLENCE
IN LIBRARIANSHIP
IN LEARNING

**Testimony to the New Jersey Assembly Science, Innovation and Technology
Committee**

Bill A4169: Creating an Information Literacy Standard

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Good Afternoon, Chair Tully and other members of the Assembly Science, Innovation and Technology Committee.

My name is Ewa Dziedzic - Elliott, I am a resident of Lawrence Twp and an Education Librarian at the College of NJ, but I spent over a decade working in Pk-12 grade as a school librarian.

I am here today to ask for your support of A4169, which would create an Information Literacy standard for students in Grades K-12.

The internet and social media platforms have changed the landscape of information exchange. Information has become more accessible to the masses. Some would argue that this levels the playing field and creates a more informed citizenry. However, this has also given everyone the ability to share and amplify any message, whether that message is accurate or not.

Disinformation has impacted public health, K-12 education, our government, and the world's foreign affairs. In response, New Jersey has recently unveiled a tool called a "disinformation portal." While providing such a tool is commendable, it is unlikely to stop the spread of disinformation. A person who is willing to forward a link to a clickbait article without actually reading the article in its entirety is probably not going to take the extra step to fact-check it in a disinformation portal. According to Pew Research, 42% of Americans, ages 18-29 say that they get their news from social media (Shearer).

New Jersey can take a proactive approach by ensuring our students graduate having experienced sustained information literacy instruction from kindergarten through grade 12. Information literacy is about teaching students how to define their problem and how to solve it with the digital tools at their disposal. Let's harness the power of the Internet in a positive way.

Let's talk for a minute about what an Information Literacy lesson looks like in a school library led by a certified school library media center specialist. In K-5 we introduce our students to the tools we provide in our libraries such as print and digital materials. We teach them how to distinguish the difference between real information (nonfiction) and made up stories (fiction). We curate high quality level resources that can allow them to learn where and how to check the information appropriate to their grade level and in accordance with the state standards. Upon establishing those basic skills we continue their growth and understand the importance of information, its validity and truthfulness. In the middle school we deepen components that reflect their academic needs, with more complex print and digital resources. High school is a blend of reinforcing skills learned previously as well as college preparation. As a high school librarian I worked very closely with my academic counterparts making sure that my students are well prepared for college level research. Now working as an academic librarian I can tell you that google search and wikipedia will not give my college students good grades. What does is access to a qualified library and information specialist and the resources provided by our institution. I see that students who have had high quality school library programs have an easier time conducting their academic research.

NJ has the most qualified teacher to provide this instruction. School library media specialists' main role according to the NJ Department of Education's certification requirements is in the instruction of information literacy. School library media specialists provide a return on investment - they provide professionally-curated collections of print and digital resources that address a range of ability levels and support the curriculum of the entire school. For many students, the school library is the place where a child's love of reading is ignited and then fostered. It is the place where they are taught how to effectively search for, access, evaluate and use resources, especially resources that are found online. SLMSs work with every student in the school and they teach them to be discerning users and responsible creators of information.

In June, the full Senate unanimously passed S588, the companion bill to A4169. Last month, the Assembly Education committee passed this bill out of their committee. This bill has bipartisan support as well as the support of various education organizations including the NJEA, NJPSA, NJASA, NJ School Boards, Garden State Coalition of Schools, the School Nurses, MediaNowNJ, and the Computer Science group. New Jersey has an opportunity to truly become number one in education by requiring this standard.

Please vote yes on A4169 so students can become the discerning users of information, asking questions and seeking answers leading them to make decisions to become successful learners, effective contributors, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

Sources

Shearer, Elisa. 2021. "More than eight-in-ten Americans get news from digital devices." Pew Research Center.

https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2021/01/PJ_2021.01.12_News-and-Social-Media_FINAL.pdf. Accessed October 12, 2022.

CS4NJ Coalition Statement

The CS4NJ Coalition (CS4NJ) is a statewide network committed to promoting and advancing K-12 CS education in New Jersey.

In today's digital world, our students are overwhelmed with information and need the skills to be able to determine what is valuable and what is not. Adding information literacy skills will help our students make better informed decisions throughout life. The CS4NJ Coalition supports the development of information literacy curriculum guidelines and their implementation as outlined in S588/A4169.