

School Libraries: at the Common Core of Education
American Library Association School Library Campaign
ALA 2013 Midwinter Meeting, Seattle
Draft Strategic Plan

Background

2012-2013 ALA President Maureen Sullivan's charge to the 2012-2013 Presidential Task Force on School Libraries is to initiate a campaign to promote awareness and understanding of the impact of the de-professionalization and curtailment of school library instructional programs on students and student achievement. This document outlines the details of the campaign, set to launch in spring of 2013.

Overarching Points:

- At the heart of a nationwide focus on career and college readiness and a statewide focus on Common Core Standards (45 out of 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, are now using Common Core Standards in their curricula) is a focus on the ability of students to do research and read complex text.
- There is no one better able to teach research skills than a school librarian. Among the priorities of school librarians are to instill the ability to:
 - employ critical thinking and evaluation skills;
 - conduct research independently;
 - develop a deep understanding of content;
 - synthesize information -- beyond reporting, to create new knowledge;
 - engage students in the love of reading.
- Although parents indicate that the most important factor in education is having teachers who are experts in their subject areas, it seems that librarians were not factored into this equation, as the majority of the nation has seen a decline in the number of school librarians serving their students.
- A recent study from the Pew Research Center concludes that 47% of teachers surveyed strongly agree, and another 44% somewhat believe, that courses and content focusing on digital literacy should be incorporated into every school curriculum, while a growing body of evidence, including more than 25 state studies, validate that higher test scores are found in schools with school library programs.
- In a few communities, such as Baltimore, Maryland, a recognition of the vital role of school librarians is taking place: schools that had eliminated school librarians from the teaching equation are recognizing adverse effects on their students' research abilities and are bringing librarians back.

- Further, school systems in other countries are recognizing the value of school librarians and increasing their numbers and resources. If our youth is to compete in a global economy, we need to look at how other countries are re-evaluating education.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the school library campaign is to raise awareness about the value of school librarians that will ultimately lead to ongoing, sustained support for school library programs. Three audiences have been determined, each with specific but related goals, key messages and strategies:

- Parents and local communities;
- School administrators and local and state decision-makers;
- National policy makers.

Component 1: Parents and the Local Community

Vision

To develop an awareness, understanding and commitment to a shared vision of how excellence in school libraries provides a foundation for ongoing student success and lifelong learning, which promotes literacy, productivity and citizenship.

Key Messages

Students who benefit from school library programs staffed by credentialed school librarians are better prepared to succeed in college and the workplace.

Strategies and Tactics

- Find editorial placements in publications such as the Huffington Post, women's and men's magazines, as well as education blogs, written by both librarians and those outside the field.
- Utilize ALA members to hold informal focus groups with parents to help inform key messages and next steps with plan.
- Provide key messaging for this audience to reinforce messages at state and national levels.

Create tools and resources for community presentations, including a website, downloadable handouts, PowerPoint presentations and videos.

Component 2: School Administrators and Local and State Decision-makers

Vision

To further an understanding among school/district leaders and funders that strong school library programs are essential to providing a quality education for all children, leading to increased support and funding for all aspects of the school library program.

Key Messages

Quality school libraries staffed by credentialed school librarians have a proven, measurable and significant impact on student achievement, including literacy levels and high-stakes test scores, and are an effective tool in closing the achievement gap for poor and minority students. School libraries and school librarians are critical resources necessary for effective implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

Strategies and Tactics

- Identify administrators who are school library champions around the country and utilize them as spokespeople in peer-to-peer communications.
- Utilize this cadre of administrator's op-eds and media placements in peer publications and other publications within their circles of influence; to speak on behalf of school librarians.
- Develop tools and resources for peer-to-peer presentations, including a website, downloadable handouts, PowerPoint presentations and videos.
- Have a presence at trade shows that target administrators, both as exhibitors and as speakers, such as these (identified by AASL's Learning4Life Task Force as educational associations most important to influence):
 - National Association of Elementary School Principals
 - National Association of Secondary School Principals
 - National Council of Teachers of English
 - National School Boards Association
 - American Association of School Administrators
 - American Federation of Teachers
 - National Association of State Boards of Education
- Identify states already doing exemplary work on behalf of school libraries, such as NJ and NY, and elevate them as models for other states to follow.
- Create a partnership with ALA chapters and AASL affiliates to get local media placement and help move campaign to state and local level, including messaging to library communities.
- Create key messaging for this audience to reinforce messages at local and national levels.

Component 3: National Policy Makers

Vision

To demonstrate the critical role school library programs and school librarians play in education which directly contributes to their goals of educational skills focusing on college and workforce readiness.

Key Messages

Schools with strong library media programs have higher test scores in both reading and writing skills. Direct correlation between having a strong school media program and test scores. School libraries play critical role in supporting student learning and student achievement. Librarians help develop reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. School librarians have the educational training and expertise to support learning at all grade levels through knowledge of both print and digital information which prepare students for college and workforce readiness.

Strategies and Tactics

- Work with ALA leadership to reach out to national educational policy leaders including members of Congress and members of the administration such as the Department of Education and the FCC, as well as leaders in the business community such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.
- Work with ALA leadership to reach out to leaders of major educational associations to conduct information sharing sessions on issues of mutual concern, such as these (identified by AASL's Learning4Life Task Force as educational associations most important to influence):
 - International Society for Technology in Education
 - Parent Teacher Association
 - National Education Association
 - International Reading Association
 - Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

As well as:

- The Council for Higher Education Accreditation
- Partnership for 21st Century Skills
- Campaign for Grade Level Reading
- Find editorial placement in publications of these national associations/
- Find editorial placement in publications such as the Huffington Post, women's and men's magazines, as well as education blogs, written by both librarians and those outside the field.
- Develop tools and resources for presentations, including a website, downloadable handouts, PowerPoint presentations and videos.
- Create key messaging for this audience to reinforce messages at local and state level.