

**School Libraries: at the Common Core of Education**  
American Library Association School Library Campaign  
ALA 2013 Midwinter Meeting, Seattle  
Talking Points and Fact Sheet

## Background

- ALA's 2012-2013 School Library Task Force has been working on the development of a national public awareness and advocacy campaign for school libraries to address the impact of the de-professionalization and curtailment of school library instructional programs on students and student achievement.
- The School Library Campaign, entitled "School Libraries: at the Common Core of Education," is scheduled to launch in the spring.
- The task force was conceived under 2011-2012 President Molly Raphael and continued under 2012-2013 ALA President Maureen Sullivan.
- Past highlights of the task force have included the mobilization of member support for 2011-2012 AASL President Carl Harvey's White House Petition on School Libraries at the ALA 2012 Midwinter Meeting and a new resolution on school libraries at the ALA 2012 Annual Conference.
- The construction of the task force is somewhat unique, with members representing all types of libraries, as well as Friends and Trustees. It's based on the premise that what happens in school libraries has implications for the entire profession.
  - In a given community, when a school librarian is removed or a school library's doors are closed, the public library sees the overflow of students and is often ill-equipped to provide a collection that meets the school curriculum.
  - Conversely, academic librarians are spending more time and resources on remedial training, as students are arriving to college without basic information literacy and research skills.

## Current Landscape

- There is now a nationwide focus on career and college readiness and a statewide focus on Common Core Standards (45 out of 50 states are now using Common Core Standards in their curricula). At the heart of this focus is the ability for students to perform research and read complex texts.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.

### **About the Campaign**

- 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, with strategies and tactics tailored to each:
  - Parents and local communities;
  - School administrators and local and state decision-makers;
  - National policy makers.
- The task force will be looking at best practices from around the country as possible tactics for the campaign, including NYLA's recently announced School Librarian Evaluation Rubric, WLMA's new teacher-librarian video and DC Public Schools' recent Recommendations for School Library Media Programs.
- The operational budget for the campaign will be determined by the ALA executive director.

### **At the ALA 2013 Midwinter Meeting**

- The School Library Task Force has created a strategic plan draft for dissemination at the ALA 2013 Midwinter Meeting.
- The task force recognizes that the plan is a work in progress. It's seeking feedback from the membership onsite.
- Members of the task force will be presenting the strategic plan draft to member groups throughout the conference.
- Task force members will be asking three questions of their groups:
  - Can you identify the effect(s) of not having a school library in your community on your public or academic libraries? What difference is it making? If you are in a school library, what feedback are you hearing from other types of librarians in your community?
  - If you were orchestrating this campaign, what's the single most important thing the task force needs to focus on?
  - How can the task force "sell" the campaign to decision-makers and audiences your groups are in contact with (e.g., deans, mayors, legislators, trustees, Friends, etc.)? What buzzwords, such as *college readiness*, *workforce readiness*, or *Common Core*, will resonate with them?
- Task Force Co-Chairs, Susan D. Ballard and Pat Tumulty will be presenting the plan to the ALA Executive Board on Friday of Midwinter.