

Pat Massey
33 Library Place
Edison, NJ 08820
April 28, 2012

Reading Disabilities Task Force
Office of Literacy, NJDOE
P.O. Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625-0500.

Dear Task Force Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on strategies to help students in New Jersey's schools who struggle to read. As a School Library Media Specialist currently employed in South Plainfield High School, I believe that the library program plays an integral role in student learning in my school and supports reading and literacy development.

The Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries (CISSL) recently completed a three-year study of school libraries in New Jersey which explored the value of quality school libraries, staffed by a certified School Library Media Specialist to education in New Jersey. The study revealed that New Jersey's school librarians contribute in rich and diverse ways to the intellectual life of a school, and to the development of students who can function in a complex and increasingly digital information environment.

Students are encouraged to read material in a variety of formats that support the curriculum and foster independent reading. At my school, I co-sponsor the Algonquin Square Book Club that promotes not only independent reading, but discussion of social issues such as those found in *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest J. Gaines. Members of the club have opportunities to read and discuss books that are not read in class. Their participation sparks an interest in reading in numerous other students.

In addition, school librarians have supported finding material on appropriate reading levels for years. Lexile levels are often part of online subscription database and catalog searches and help students and content-area teachers to find suitable reading material.

As a past president of New Jersey Association of School Librarians and a School Library Media Specialist for thirty years, I ask that the Task Force recognize and affirm in its report to Governor Christie the essential role of certified School Library Media Specialists and strong library programs in the positive development of students' reading abilities, particularly students who struggle with reading.

Sincerely Yours,
Pat Massey, School Library Media Specialist