



**State Board of Education Testimony
Topic: Planning for the Future of NJ's School Libraries**

**Presented by Arlen Kimmelman, President
New Jersey Association of School Librarians**

January 7, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Planning for the Future of NJ's School Libraries. I am Arlen Kimmelman, President of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL), the professional organization of school librarians in our state representing over 800 members and an affiliate of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), Association for Educational Computing and Technology (AECT), and International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). I have two Masters degrees, am a former English teacher, have been a certified school librarian since 2006, am a Nationally Board Certified teacher, and this year my school chose me as the Governor's Educational Services Professional of the Year.

We are concerned and wish to make you aware that some districts are downsizing or closing their school libraries and some of it is being done because of the PARCC testing - to make more room for computers. The testing shouldn't be squeezing out school library resources that are needed for students to be college and career ready. The NJ State Board of Education and the NJ Department of Education share in NJASL's need to know "How do school librarians help students learn the curriculum of the day, which now is Common Core; how do they help students succeed?"

We also share your goal to have students college and career ready, so that they have choices when they finish high school and don't have to take remedial classes upon entering college. University librarians can affirm that K-12 school librarians provide essential, basic research skills that help students delve more deeply into fiction, nonfiction, and become better prepared in study and research skills. If universities and colleges get students who haven't first had the resource of a school library program and instruction by a certified school librarian, students will be required to receive remedial

instruction before understanding how to find appropriate, trustworthy resources in a digital environment that are suitable for college-level coursework.

School librarians and teachers know that, in spite of being born into a digital world, our students don't know how to use or apply technology for academic purposes. We know that many of the schools are purchasing and installing numerous new computers because they have to, while encroaching on school library resources to do so. So between the two, we have a lot of technology that students don't know how to use correctly and no opportunity to provide the kind of education to the students because the computers are being used not to create information, but as word processors or as tutorials for PARCC.

A simple Google search for "school library" and "Common Core" produces almost 300,000 results. That's a lot of documentation on how school library programs contribute to and support our students' success in achieving the Standards adopted by New Jersey. However, that amount of substantiation for the integral role of school librarians and school library programs is only the part that can be "Googled." What if that search could also reflect the innumerable stories, anecdotes, letters of thanks, work performance reviews, special commendations, statistical reports, lesson plans, and *most importantly*, student work to which New Jersey's school librarians positively contribute?

Here is what the school library provides to students:

- a well-chosen, managed collection of library resources in formats to meet all learning styles and needs, including print, digital, kits, audio, and visual;
- a well-chosen, managed collection of library resources that match the Common Core standards;
- a safe and inviting environment;
- programs that support many different student goals, such as reading, content, and student interests;
- a place to freely explore the the safe and secure integration of technology;
- the means for curious students to further connect with topics they find interesting in school;
- a means of collaborative and cooperative learning;
- 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 develop independence to select appropriate resources.

and if the librarian isn't there, then here is what the students miss:

- a conduit of information literacy skills:
 - evaluating good resources and making informed decisions,
 - respecting digital citizenship, such as copyrights and ethical use of information,
 - following a research process,
 - formulating and refining questions and then thinking critically how to solve them,
 - using technology to create new knowledge,
 - making sense of information gathered from multiple sources and organizing knowledge in useful ways,
 - practicing using technology in socially respectful and responsible ways,
 - collaborating with others in the exchange of ideas, and
 - displaying knowledge and understanding in ways that others can use.
- the benefits of teachers who are able to collaborate with school librarians to match quality resources to help achieve Common Core standards;
- a teaching partner to help to analyze learning data and develop and monitor action plans to increase student achievement; and
- an advocate in their community for additional resources - humans and materials - to supplement their educational experiences.

Though students might be able to get pieces of these resources and skills dispersed throughout their classes, a school library program run by a certified school librarian provides a cumulative, consistent, and cross-curricular approach to the delivery of essential reading, inquiry, and technology skills students need to succeed in an information-rich, global environment.

On behalf of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians, I appreciate the opportunity to present information to you on the importance of resource-rich and properly staffed school libraries to all students and staff in New Jersey public schools. I encourage you to contact me for more information about school libraries and school librarians and the critical role they play in preparing New Jersey's students for future success.

Arlen Kimmelman, President
New Jersey Association of School Librarians
17 Filly Way
Sewell, NJ 08080
pseudandry@gmail.com

Attachments

- The AASL's information for policy maker brochure, *School Library Programs Improve Student Learning*:
http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/brochures/policymakers_panels-color.pdf
- The data from the NJASL School Librarian Census conducted December 1-19, 2014:
<http://www.flipsnack.com/AB9A7558B7A/njasl-school-librarian-census-dec-1-19-2014.html>
- The AASL Infographic "School Librarians Transform Learning":
http://njasl.info/wp-content/2014/AASL_Infographic_FINAL.pdf
- The CISSL (Rutgers) NJ study summary:
http://www.njasl.info/wp-content/NJ_study/2012_StudyOverview.pdf
- The quarterly report from my school library, September 1 - November 30, 2014
<http://www.flipsnack.com/AB9A7558B7A/crhs-library-report-sept-1-nov-30-2014.html>

Bibliography

Boudrye, Jennifer. "What's In A Name?." *Teacher Librarian* 42.1 (2014): 56-57. *Academic Search Premier (EBSCO)*. Web. 24 Oct. 2014.
<http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/98973048/whats-name>

Head, Alison J., Learning the Ropes: How Freshmen Conduct Course Research Once They Enter College (December 5, 2013). Available at SSRN:
<http://ssrn.com/abstract=2364080> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2364080>

Jaeger, Laura, and Andrea Venezia. "Transitions from High School to College." *ERIC*. Institute of Educational Sciences, Spring 2013. Web. 05 Jan. 2015.
<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1015237>.

"Standards for the 21st-Century Learner." *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*. American Association of School Librarians, 2007. Web. 05 Jan. 2015.
<http://www.ala.org/aasl/standards-guidelines/learning-standards>.