TRANSFORMING LEARNING
American Association of School Librarians
A Division of the American Library Association
www.aasl.org

AASL

The Strategic Leadership Role of School Librarians

POSITION:

The American Association of School Librarians supports the position that full-time certified school librarians provide effective leadership in areas of curriculum development, instructional design, technology integration, professional development, student advocacy, information literacy instruction, and collaboration. This is demonstrated by active involvement in and through school and district-level leadership teams, technology teams, strategic planning, literacy development, curriculum development, and initiatives that impact student achievement.

School librarians provide strategic leadership in instructional design, collaboration, and co-teaching through their global perspective. Because their work impacts all disciplines and grade levels, school librarians are in a unique position to leverage their skills and implement cross-curricular initiatives. School librarians empower the entire learning community to effectively use information and technology for a variety of tasks.

School librarians seek and promote freedom for learners to think, create, share, and grow, and they advocate for learners' interests. School librarians champion the development of multiple literacies, technology skills, civic engagement, and innovation among learners. School librarians advocate for the tenets of intellectual freedom, including the freedom to read, respect for intellectual property, the freedom to access information, and ethical use of information for learners. School librarians are committed to providing equal access to diverse materials for all learners.

School librarians connect beyond the walls of their schools to lead and learn with others in their district, community, state, across the nation, and around the World. Through collaborative activities, school librarians participate with and serve in leadership roles in outside organizations or committees. By participating in these outside leadership roles, school librarians are able to model and share resources to empower colleagues. Networking across the district and in the global community provides greater learning opportunities for our school communities.

With expectations to prepare graduates to excel in a complex, interconnected, changing world, school librarians provide transformational leadership. The role of the school librarian has evolved from responding to the needs of a single building to providing high-impact leadership for the success of the entire school community.

BACKGROUND:

Title II of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) focuses on funding the selection and retention of educators who are highly qualified, and Section IIA focuses on professional development funds for instructional leaders.

School librarians are included in ESSA as instructional leaders. School administrators have differing perspectives and expectations for the role of a full-time certified school librarian based on the school administrator's experience or on the current state of librarian personnel in their district. Discrepancies exist in school administrators' understanding of the unique leadership roles that school librarians can and should fulfill.

It is essential that school librarians become involved as instructional leaders at all levels (school, district, state, and beyond) and within a variety of stakeholder groups (students, parents, administrators, colleagues, district and state leaders, and community organizations). As the infrastructure of education continues to evolve, it is

more important than ever to recognize the ways in which school librarians contribute to that evolution by inspiring confidence and growth mindset in our fellow learners. ESSA calls for effective instructional leaders in our schools. School librarians can answer that call to action as outlined in this position statement by AASL.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Collaborative instruction:** School librarian working in partnership with content area, exceptional education, and special area teachers to co-plan, co-teach, and co-assess a lesson or unit of instruction.

- **Instructional design:** The work of creating a plan for instruction that includes a differentiation of student needs, variety of assessment methods, and curation of support resources.

- **Information literacy:** "The ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information" (ACRL 2000).

- **School librarian leadership:** The ability to influence and inspire a school community in order to move toward identified goals and/or a shared vision.

REFERENCES:

Association of College and Research Libraries. 2000. "Information Literacy Defined." <http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=Home&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=33553#ildef> (accessed June 14, 2018).

RECOMMENDED READING LIST:

American Association of School Librarians. n.d. "School Librarians as Learning Leaders." <http://www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/tools/leaders> (accessed June 14, 2018).

American Association of School Librarians. 2018. *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*. Chicago: ALA.

Coatney, Sharon, and Violet H. Harada, eds. 2017. *The Many Faces of School Library Leadership*, 2nd ed. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.

Hand, Dorcas. 2017. "The ALA/AASL School Librarian Competencies for Leadership." *Teacher Librarian* 45 (2): 8+.

Howard, Jody K. 2017. *The School Librarian as Curriculum Leader*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.

Everhart, Nancy, and Melissa P. Johnston. 2016. "A Proposed Theory of School Librarian Leadership: A Meta-Ethnographic Approach." *School Library Research 19*. <http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/vol19/SLR_Proposed Theory_V19.pdf> (accessed June 14, 2018).

Johnson, Doug. 2013. *The Indispensable Librarian: Surviving and Thriving in School Libraries in the Information Age*, 2nd ed. Denver, CO: Linworth.

Johnston, Melissa. 2012. "School Librarians as Technology Integration Leaders: Enablers and Barriers to Leadership Enactment." *School Library Research 15*. <http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/vol15/SLR_School_Librarians_as_Technology_Integration_Leaders_V15.pdf> (accessed June 14, 2018).

Lewis, Kathryn Roots. 2016. "The School Librarian and Leadership: What Can Be Learned?" *Teacher Librarian* 43 (4): 18+.

National Association of Secondary School Principals. n.d. "School of Thought: ESSA Title II-A." <http://blog.nassp.org/tag/essa-title-ii-a/> (accessed June 14, 2018).

Sinek, Simon. 2009. *Start with Why*. New York: Penguin.

Weisburg, Hilda K. 2017. *Leading for School Librarians: There Is No Other Option*. Chicago: Neal-Schuman Publishers.

Wolf, Mary Ann, Rachel Jones, and Daniel Gilbert. 2014. "Leading In and Beyond the Library." Alliance for Excellent Education. <https://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/BeyondTheLibrary.pdf> (accessed June 14, 2018).

DISCLAIMER:

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) assumes no responsibility for the practices or recommendations of any member or other professional, or for the policies and procedures of any program. School librarians function within the limitations of licensure/certification, state board of education policies, and/or institution, district, or school policy.

APPROVAL/REVISION DATES: June 24, 2018