



Pennsylvania School Librarians Association

Why Certified School Librarians are Essential

Effective school libraries are led by certified school librarians, provide personalized learning environments, and offer equitable access to resources. They are centers of dynamic and flexible learning in their schools. Effective school library programs ensure a well-rounded educational experience for every learner. The best school libraries embrace a philosophy of collaboration and are permeated by a culture of literacy.

As a fundamental component of college, career, and community readiness, effective school library programs positively impact learning when they are led by a certified school librarian and appropriate support staff.

A certified school librarian is essential to providing learners at every level with the instruction and library services that contribute to increased levels of academic achievement. Certified school librarians have the education and training to serve as educators, leaders, instructional partners, informational specialists, and program administrators.

Librarians prepare students for success in college, career, and life by teaching the following:

- ✓ **Inquiry** – A process whereby the learner explores deeply and beyond the obvious information about a specific topic. The learner constructs new meaning based on the investigation.
 - ✓ **Digital literacy** - the ability, requiring both cognitive and technical skills, to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information.
 - ✓ **Information literacy** – the skill set needed to find, retrieve, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and utilize data, facts, or knowledge from a variety of resources.
 - ✓ **Media literacy** - the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages in a variety of formats, from print to video to the Internet
 - ✓ **Communication skills** – the ability to listen effectively to decipher meaning and to articulate thoughts and ideas effectively
- The presence of certified teacher librarians correlates with higher reading and writing scores.¹
 - Students who are living in poverty, Black and Hispanic students, and students with disabilities proportionally gain more on reading and writing test scores than all students combined when their schools have school librarians.²
 - When school librarian positions are eliminated, reading scores drop, according to 4th grade NAEP data.³
 - Librarians are a key resource for leveling the playing field for students living in poverty.⁴
 - The presence of school librarians is associated with higher graduation rates.⁵
 - Librarians manage the selection and efficient use of an average of \$500,000 of library resources to achieve student-focused learning goals.
 - Librarians improve student literacy by providing “the right book at the right time” and foster in students a lifetime habit of reading for both enjoyment and learning.
 - Librarians provide a “safe haven,” “third place” for disengaged students for making, creating, and learning.

¹ Gretes, F. (2013, August 12). *School library impact studies: A review of findings and guide to sources*. Prepared for the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation.

² Lance, K.C. & Schwarz, B. (2012, October). *How Pennsylvania school libraries pay off: Investments in student achievement and academic standards*. PA School Library Project.

³ Lance, K.C. & Hofschire, L. (2011). Something to shout about: New research shows that more librarians means higher reading scores. *School Library Journal*, 57 (9), 28-33.

⁴ Pribesh, S., Gavigan, K., & Dickinson, G. (2011). The access gap: Poverty and characteristics of school library media centers. *Library Quarterly*, 81 (2), 143-160.

⁵ Coker, E. (2015, April). *The Washington state school library study: Certified teacher-librarians, library quality and student achievement in Washington state public schools*. Seattle, WA: Washington Library Media Association.