Pennsylvania School Librarians Association

Detailed Talking Points
"One Certified Librarian Per Public School"
Legislative Campaign
Revised August 2020

Select and use the talking points that will resonate with your legislator(s). To prepare, go to your legislator's website, read his/her bio and check what committees he/she serves on. This gives you an idea of the legislator's priorities. Generally, you only need about three good talking points. You don't need to present the "supporting evidence" below but it may help if the legislator wants more info or details.

1 Talking Point about the Status of School Libraries in PA

PA's inequitable provision of school library programs and librarians to its public school students is unfair and unjust.

Supporting Evidence

- There are NO requirements for school libraries or librarians in PA public schools.

- There is NO direct funding for school libraries, unlike public libraries that are funded through a line item in the PA Education Budget referred to as the "Library Subsidy." School library funding is at the discretion of each school district.

- Each school district, and in some cases, each principal, decides whether students will have a school library and an instructional library program with a certified school librarian. This is referred to as site-based management.

- PA mandates libraries in many educational settings, but not in public schools. For example, the state mandates libraries in: (i) private, not public, elementary and secondary schools (22 Pa Code 55.33, 57.21, 59.23); (ii) hospitals (28 Pa Code 101.31 and Chapter 145); (iii) clinical laboratories (28 Pa Code 5.32); (iv) practical nursing programs (49 Pa Code 29.211); (v) barber schools (49 Pa Code 3.73); (vi) cosmetology schools (49 Pa Code 7.130); (vii) the General Assembly (101 Pa Code3.38); (viii) institutions of higher education (22 Pa Code 31.41); and (ix) juvenile facilities and adult prisons (based on court orders). [Source]

- In 2019, PDE adopted an updated library curriculum which aligns with the PA Core Standards and should be taught to all public school students. School librarians teach 43 academic standards as identified in the [PA Model Library Curriculum] that deal with information and digital literacy and can be taught collaboratively with teachers and their subject content. Also see Talking Point #6.

2 Talking Point about Equity and Poverty

A zipcode should not determine the quality of a child's education and access to an [effective school library program] and certified librarian.

- 27% of PA school districts have no school librarian (23), only one part-time librarian (2), or only one full-time librarian (118) for the entire district ([2018-2019 PSLA Staffing Survey](#)).

- School districts with over 25% non-white students and high poverty have fewer school librarians that those with high poverty alone, according to a national [NEA study](#) published in 2016.
  - Examples- School District of Philadelphia has only [7 librarians for more than 200 schools](#) where students are [86% non-white and 69% economically disadvantaged](#).
  - Erie School District has [only 2 librarians for 18 schools and 11,500 students who are 80% economically disadvantaged](#) and 58% non-white.

- [PA has the widest funding gap between wealthy and poor school districts of any state](#) in the nation.

- The ratio of librarians to students in PA's 500 school districts averages from 1:654 in rural schools to 1:2,056 in urban schools ([2018-19 PSLA Staffing Survey](#)), without including School District of Philadelphia which has a 1:22,087 ratio (6 school librarians for [132,520 students in 217 schools](#) in 2019-2020).

- Over 16% of children under 18 in PA come from families that have incomes below the poverty line in 2017 (*[Talk Poverty 2019 Report](#)*). NOTE: You can type in your zipcode at this site to determine your local percentage.

- According to a [2012 study of PSSA reading and writing test scores](#), Black, Hispanic, and students with disabilities or who were economically disadvantaged benefitted proportionally more than students in general with certified librarians in their schools ([2012 PA School Library Study](#)).

- Even without the School District of Philadelphia, PA school districts with over 50% of students who are economically disadvantaged have an average of 1,000 more students per librarian than districts below 50% poverty rates ([2016-2017 PSLA Staffing Survey-Poverty and Ethnicity](#)).

- Research found that students living in poverty had the fewest school library resources to draw on and suggests that to close achievement gaps between high and low socioeconomic groups, we must attend to the access gap in school libraries (*[The Access Gap](#)*).

#3 Talking Point about Graduation Rates and Test Scores

Higher graduation rates and standardized test scores are found in schools staffed with certified teacher librarians.

Supporting Evidence

- 25 states have conducted school library studies that show that students who attend schools with certified librarians score better on reading and writing tests than students in schools

without librarians. And lower-income students benefit the most. ([School Library Impact Studies)](#)

- Consistently, PSSA reading and writing scores were better for students who had a full-time, certified librarian than those who didn't ([2012 PA School Library Study](#)).

- For all students, those with full-time librarians are almost three times as likely to have Advanced writing scores as students without full-time librarians. ([2012 PA School Library Study](#), p. 11).

- Although the 2012 PA study did not examine graduation rates, the Washington state study of 2015 did.
  - "The individualized learning resources, research skills, and access to information and resources that can be provided through a school library with a certified teacher-librarian should be a key priority in helping to ensure struggling high school students are able to obtain a high school diploma" ([2015 Washington State Study,](#) p. 35).
  - Students who attend schools with certified teacher-librarians and quality library facilities perform better on standardized tests and are more likely to graduate, even after controlling for school size and student income level ([2015 Washington State Study](#).)
- The analysis of national school librarian staffing between 2005 and 2009 found that where school librarian positions increased, there were larger increases and no decreases in reading scores. In states that lost librarians, smaller increases or decreases in reading scores were experienced. These findings held—and were often more dramatic—across subgroups including race/ethnicity, poverty, and English language learner status (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 Talking Point about At-Risk Learners

School librarians and library programs can close the achievement gap among struggling learners and significantly impact at-risk learners.

At-risk learners and students in poverty areas are the most adversely impacted when their schools do not have school libraries and certified teacher librarians.

Access to books in a well-stocked school library can "mitigate the effects of poverty on school achievement and literacy development." (Krashen, S. (2011). [Protecting students against the effects of poverty: Libraries](#). *New England Reading Association Journal* 46 (2): 17-21.)

<u>Supporting Evidence</u>

- According to a [2012 study of PSSA reading and writing test scores](#), Black, Hispanic, and students with disabilities or who were economically disadvantaged benefitted proportionally more than students in general with certified librarians in their schools ([2012 PA School Library Study](#)).

- Students who are poor, minority, and have IEPs, but who have full-time librarians, are at least twice as likely to have "Advanced" PSSA writing scores as their counterparts without full-time librarians (Kachel, D. E., & Lance, K. C. (2013. March 7). Latest Study: A full-time school librarian makes a critical difference in boosting student achievement. *School Library Journal, 59*(3), 28-31).

- "Access to books appears to offset the impact of poverty. Many studies have appeared in the last few years indicating that access to books not only has a positive effect on reading achievement, but also that the positive impact of access is as large as the negative impact of poverty. This suggests that a good library can offset the effects of poverty on reading achievement" (*School Library Impact Studies*, p.5)

5 Talking Point about Fake News and Misinformation

Students who cannot evaluate what they read and see to determine truth from fiction are at a great disadvantage in school and life. School librarians teach these skills.

"In many ways the internet is an extension of the school library, but it has useful and useless information. School librarians can help students tell the difference." Quote from Rep. Becky Harris Nevada

Although many think that students are tech savy and can find useful and credible information on the Internet, recent studies prove that is not true for the majority of middle and high school students.

Supporting Evidence

- A 2019 updated Stanford University study found that two-thirds of students couldn't tell the difference between an advertisement and a news story on the Internet (Breakstone, J., Smith, M., Wineburg, S., Rapaport, A., Carle, J., Garland, M., & Saavedra, A. (2019). Students' civic online reasoning: A national portrait. Stanford History Education Group & Gibson Consulting. https://purl.stanford.edu/gf151tb4868.)
    - "Students displayed a troubling tendency to accept websites at face value" (p. 26).
    - "At the same time, our findings suggest that, when it comes to evaluating the quality of digital sources, those most affected are students who have been underserved by our nation's schools. Students' socioeconomic status and their ethnicity/race were significant predictors of performance. Equitable access to civic life depends on providing these students with the support they need to develop the skills of digital evaluation" (p. 27).
- In a previous 2016 Stanford University study, high school students struggled to determine the credibility of what they read online and relied on the first few results of an Internet search without regard to the quality or authority of the sources.

- Being able to distinguish false claims, fraudulent sales pitches, and dubious websites from trustworthy information and sources is a skill set our students need in order to be successful. The information they select to use will determine the many choices they make throughout their lives, including making good financial, social, medical, and career choices. (Kachel op-ed)

6 Talking Point about the Instructional Role of School Librarians

School librarians, unlike public librarians, are teacher librarians who teach critical information skills to all students.

School librarians don't just read stories and check out books, they are teachers who teach skills mandated in the Pennsylvania Academic Core Standards, contributing to higher graduation rates and standardized test scores.

Supporting Evidence

- "Contrary to popular belief, students do not instinctively know how to navigate the abundance of information available to them through traditional and digital resources. 75% have no idea how to locate articles and resources they need for their research. 60% don't verify the accuracy or reliability of the information they find. 44% do not know how to integrate knowledge from different sources" (*School Libraries Work 2016*).

- School librarians teach academic standards as stated from the Model Curriculum for Learners in Pennsylvania School Libraries. In fact, librarians take primary responsibility for teaching 43 of the PA Academic Standards, which include:
  - Recall and gather information
  - Analyze information in primary and secondary sources
  - Determine point of view or perspective
  - Differentiate fact from opinion
  - Interpret, analyze, and integrate information from diverse media sources
  - Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research
  - Conduct research
  - Demonstrate ethical, safe, and social behaviors of digital citizenship

7 Talking Point about the Use of Technology by Students

The effective use of technology encourages individualized learning, improves overall student achievement, and helps prepare students who are college and career ready.

Schools with certified school librarians facilitate the use of digital resources, making better use of our district's technology and ensuring equitable access for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Students who attend schools with certified school librarians have more equitable access to technologically advanced and accessible library facilities (Washington State Study.)

- Students who attend schools with certified school librarians have greater access to online databases and digital resources. (Washington State Study.)

- Students who attend schools with certified school librarians are more likely to be taught information technology skills and technology fluency skills (Washington State Study.)

- PA school librarians provide access to and teach both students and teachers how to use state-provided digital resources, including ebooks, research and newspaper articles, and

[CyberSmarts](#), "a safe, simulated Internet experience with hands-on instruction on how to deal with important online safety issues."

- School librarians can be instrumental in implementing technology initiatives such as 1:1, ebook programs, makerspaces, and STEM programs.

- School librarians teach students technology-related skills, including the following (from the [43 Standards of the PA Academic Standards](#) for which librarians take primary teaching responsibility)
    - Use technology to produce and publish
    - Add multimedia to presentations
    - Explain and apply the rules of digital citizenship
    - Apply and demonstrate proper etiquette when using technology
    - Use electronic communication when collaborating with peers
    - Demonstrate ethical, safe, and social behaviors of digital citizenship
    - Evaluate the accuracy and potential bias of online sources, including websites

8 Talking Point about Effective Use of Taxpayers' Dollars

Centralizing the information and learning resources which are shared throughout the school in a school library managed by a certified librarian makes better financial sense than creating individual classroom libraries in every classroom.

Libraries are the most economical way to deliver resources when there is a professionally trained person in charge to oversee selection and purchases, making sure that needed resources are acquired and that students and teachers know how to use them.

Even a small school library is at least a quarter of a million-dollar investment when you consider the books, the e-resources, the computers and technology, and the furnishings. No company would allow such a significant investment to go unused and unmanaged.

Pennsylvania licenses thousands of dollars of digital resources for schools. Without school librarians to teach students and teachers to access and use them, resources like the [POWER Library databases and ebooks](#) would not be used.

Supporting Evidence

- According to [2016-17 data collected by PSLA](#), 95% of PA school districts have at least a part-time school librarian. Therefore, the costs to at least ensure that every public student has at least some library services and instruction by a school librarian would incur minimal costs to the state educational budget (p. 2).

- According to the [2012 PA School Library Study](#), providing a school librarian in every school building would cost only half of 1% of all expenditures of the state's local education agencies (Chapt. 11, p. 153).

- "Certified teacher-librarians are an investment of pennies on the dollar for yields of nickels, dimes, and quarters. They're fulfilling a function [that] classroom teachers and non-certified library staff aren't able to do…" (Op-Ed: "[Look in School Libraries for Graduation Rates](#)").

- Federal and state education funding is provided to public schools determined by the number of attending students. Public school districts today compete for students with parochial, private, some charter or cyber charter schools, and homeschooling options. For a public school to retain students, and thus education tax dollars, schools need to show the community and parents that it is a top-notch school district with programs that provide the best resources and instruction, including a well-stocked and staffed library.

Ideas for Creating Local Talking Points

- Call your state Representative's office and ask an aide which school districts are included in his/her voting district. Then survey those schools to find out how many schools do not have full-time librarians. Or, create other relevant data like the ratio of school librarians to students.

- Use other relevant data if it "works." Go to http://paschoolperformance.org/ where you can find school rates for: poverty, ethnicity, graduation, tests scores, etc.

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

Pennsylvania State Teachers Association (PSEA)

[PSEA Resolutions, 2019-20](#) (page 21)

D-09 SCHOOL LIBRARIES/MEDIA CENTERS

"The Association believes that a comprehensive library/media program, shall include an integrated instructional curriculum, printed and nonprinted resource materials, and at least one librarian who holds a valid Pennsylvania Library/Media Specialist teaching certificate. This program shall be provided in each elementary and secondary building. Students and classroom teachers must be guaranteed continuous access to library media centers, library media specialists, and information resources. (81,91,17)"

Pennsylvania PTA

[Pennsylvania PTA Resolutions and Position Statements, 2019](#) (p. 38)

Resolution: PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAMS (2011, reviewed 2016)

"Pennsylvania PTA realizes that effective school libraries should include a variety of instructional and educational programs designed to meet the needs of all students. Students and teachers need school library services and related educational resources in order to meet Pennsylvania academic standards for research and learning in all core academic subjects. All Pennsylvania's public schools should have a viable school library, including impoverished, rural and urban communities which service a larger number of at risk children. Pennsylvania Public School Code requires school libraries and staffing for

private schools although there is no requirement for public schools to operate a school library or to have certified staffing.

> *• Therefore, Pennsylvania PTA advocates for policy and regulatory reform that sets standards for public school library programs.*
>
> *• Pennsylvania PTA calls upon its constituent associations to build partnerships with other associations, agencies, policy makers, educators, and school board members to build a statewide network for public school library programs.*
>
> *• The Pennsylvania PTA through on-line articles and PTA in Pennsylvania shall educate parents of school aged students in learning the value of public school library programs and the importance of professional librarians.*
>
> *• Pennsylvania PTA is mindful that public school library programs contribute to student achievement."*

Prepared by D. Kachel, Co-Chair, PSLA Local and Advocacy Committee
dkachel69@comcast.net