"School libraries are an essential part of a complete school program. They provide an equitable, fiscally responsible strategy for sharing resources across grade levels and the curriculum while addressing core reading, information, and technology literacies."

Source: Perez, Lisa. 2011. "Not Your Grandmother's Library!" *Learning & Leading with Technology* 38, No.6 (March/April), 16. <http://www.learningandleading-digital.com/learning_leading/20110304#pg18> (accessed March 29, 2011).

"School libraries often serve as a second classroom… Our children are losing out on qualified professionals trained to collaborate with teachers and engage students meaningfully with information that matters to them both in the classroom and the real world."

—U.S. Congressman Raul Grijalva from Arizona, cosponsor of SKILLS Act

American Library Association. 2007. "Legislation Introduced to Ensure Essential Library Resources, Support for 21st Century Education." <www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=archive&template=/contentmanagement/contentdisplay.cfm&ContentID=160504> (accessed March 29, 2011).

"Just as success in the Industrial Age depended on a school system that taught us how to read and write, add and subtract; our success in the Information Age depends on a school system that teaches us how to manage information, utilize technologies, innovate, and above all—think."

—Matthew Barrett, former chairman of Bank of Montreal

Source: Barrett, Matthew. 1996. *The Globe and Mail* (November 30). Toronto, ON..

"According to the American Association of School Librarians, students who are information literate can:

+ Inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge;
+ Draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations, and create new knowledge;
+ Share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of our democratic society; and
+ Pursue personal and aesthetic growth."

Source: American Association of School Librarians. 2007. "Standards for the 21st-Century Learner." <http://ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/learningstandards/AASL_LearningStandards.pdf> (accessed March 1, 2011).

American Association of School Librarians
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LEARNING 4 LIFE™

An initiative of the American Association of School Librarians

Learning4Life (L4L) is the American Association of School Librarians' (AASL) national implementation plan created to support states, school systems, and individual schools preparing to implement the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner and Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs

For more information and additional Learning4Life tools and resources, visit www.ala.org/aasl/learning4life.

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SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAMS

IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

POLICYMAKERS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

Policymakers are in a position to impact every student in every school by supporting quality school library programs. School libraries, under the guidance and instruction of a certified/licensed school librarian, economically deliver and share essential resources, and provide access to technologies that improve both the quality of student learning and the quality of teacher instruction. Research conducted in twenty-two states and one Canadian province has shown that standardized test scores of students are higher where:

+ A certified/licensed full-time librarian teaches students, collaborates with teachers on instruction, and provides professional development to teachers;
+ Networked computers link library resources to classrooms;
+ The collection contains up-to-date books; and
+ Per-pupil library expenditures are higher.[1]

Quality school library programs play an even greater role in providing academic support and closing the achievement gap for those students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Research results remained significant when accounting for all other school and community variables, including poverty, ethnicity, community education levels, and the quality and pay of teachers.[2]

Vast inequities exist in school library programs, and in access to information and the instructional technologies with which our students learn and our teachers teach.

As an influential leader, you make a difference in student achievement by taking a stand to support quality school library programs with trained staff, and by setting policy to give all students an equal opportunity to learn. This brochure, based on national school library guidelines,[3] presents goals and key questions to think about as you consider options to invest in a proven strategy to improve student learning.

School libraries are cost-efficient and effective. The bottom line—school library programs provide our youth with the skills they need to select, interpret, form, and communicate ideas in compelling ways with emerging technologies, preparing students for the demands of a global, competitive economy, and the workplace of the twenty-first century.

1 "School Library Impact Studies Chart." n.d. *School Library Impact Studies Project*. Library & Information Technologies, Mansfield University of Pennsylvania. <http://libweb.mansfield.edu//upload/kachel/ClassChart.pdf> (accessed 23 February 2011).

2 Achterman, Douglas L. 2008. "Haves, Halves, and Have-Nots: School Libraries and Student Achievement in California." PhD diss. University of North Texas. UNT Digital Library. <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc9800> (accessed December 15, 2010).

3 American Association of School Librarians. 2009. *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs*. Chicago: ALA.

TEACHING FOR LEARNING

GOAL: **The school librarian in collaboration with classroom teachers provides instruction and real-world learning experiences for students to master critical 21st-century skills.**

KEY QUESTIONS:

Does the school librarian instruct students and assist teachers in selecting appropriate resources and in using, evaluating, and producing information and ideas?

Does the school librarian provide training and professional development for teachers in how to use new digital resources, Web tools and sites, and emerging technologies related to instructional resources?

Do the school librarian and teachers design and teach engaging learning activities that allow students to master school curriculum and meet academic standards?

As a policymaker, what is your role in ensuring that all schools have a certified/licensed school librarian to teach students and work with teachers to meet the learning needs of all students?

GOAL: **The school library program educates students in critical-thinking and problem-solving skills that are essential for college and career readiness.**

KEY QUESTIONS:

Are learning activities facilitated with library resources rigorous, thought-provoking, and inquiry-based?

Do learning activities create self-directed, independent learners capable of working in groups and seeking solutions to the problems and demands of a global economy and a 21st-century workplace?

Do students learn to use information ethically, recognize bias and lack of authority in sources, and understand the basics of fair use while using both print and digital content?

Are students prepared with communication and presentation skills that allow them to adapt to changes in technology?

As a policymaker, what is your role in ensuring that all students have access to up-to-date technologies and resources—and instruction in how to use them—to master a skill set required for 21st-century life and work?

GOAL: **The school library program provides opportunities for students to develop and strengthen a lifelong reading habit.**

KEY QUESTIONS:

Do all students have access to a school library with a wide range of print and digital resources to meet the reading and learning needs of all levels of readers?

Does the school librarian support reading instruction, and plan activities to motivate and create enthusiastic readers and learners?

As a policymaker, what is your role in ensuring that all students have equitable access to school library resources that inspire students to learn and practice reading?

BUILDING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

GOAL: **The school library program has strong support from the school board, school administrators and the community.**

KEY QUESTIONS:

Does a transparent and collaborative process for annually preparing and reviewing the school library's budget ensure continuous updating of library resources and technology?

Is at least one full-time certified/licensed librarian with qualified support staff in each school building to meet national, state, and local 21st-century educational goals?

Do you support standards that mandate specified levels of staffing, resources, and technology for school library programs so that all students receive equitable services and instruction?

As a policymaker, have you ever publicly shown support for equitable school library services for all students by visiting a school library, participating in a school budget-planning meeting or school board meeting, expressing an opinion to the media, or participating in other advocacy activities?

GOAL: **The school library program provides open access and equal opportunities for all students to use library resources.**

KEY QUESTIONS:

Do students have continuous access to the library and a full-time certified/licensed school librarian throughout the school day?

Does the school library offer 24–7 remote access to subscription databases and other library resources via a school library website or portal?

Does the school library have enough room for students to use computers and other technologies as well as areas for individuals, small groups, and full classes to engage in leisure reading, research, and group instruction?

Can students borrow electronic devices, such as laptops, e-readers, audio players, etc., needed to use school library resources?

Is the library available for student and parent use beyond normal school hours?

As a policymaker, do you support funding statewide databases, thereby reducing individual schools' costs and ensuring that all students have access to information resources?

GOAL: **The school library program provides student-centered, curriculum-relevant, and continuously updated information resources, reading materials, and information technologies.**

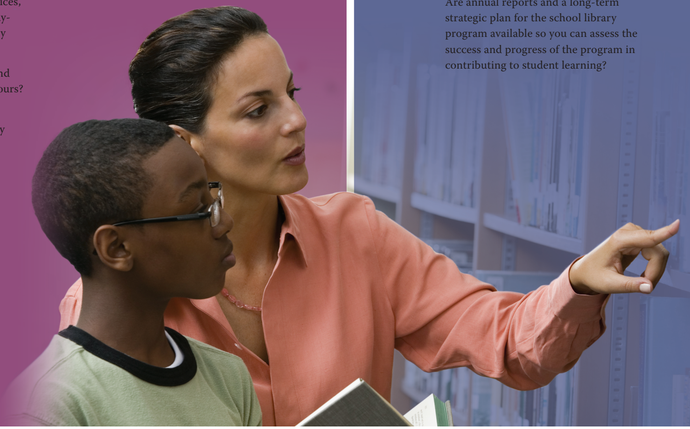
KEY QUESTIONS:

Does the library collection reflect our diverse, global society, and also represent a wide range of reading and interest levels to meet the needs of all students, including those for whom English is not their native language and those with learning and physical disabilities?

As a policymaker, do you support dedicated government funding for school library resources necessary to help all students attain the 21st-century skills required for higher education and success in today's competitive, global workplace?

"Many... think of the library as a cost rather than as an investment. There is no question that quality library media programs, like all quality programs, require substantial funding–but not every quality program pays off for students across the board like libraries can."

Source: Hartzell, Gary. 2002. "What's It Take?" *White House Conference on School Libraries.* <www.imls.gov/news/events/whitehouse_2.shtm#gh> (accessed February 8, 2011).



EMPOWERING LEARNING THROUGH LEADERSHIP

GOAL: **The school library and its staff are integral components of the school's education program to support academic success.**

KEY QUESTIONS:

Does the school librarian ensure that all students learn identified research and information skills that are aligned with academic standards and classroom curriculum?

Is the school library program used to meet the school's mission and goals of preparing students for 21st-century life and careers?

Is the school library program represented on school-improvement, technology-planning, and other decision-making school committees?

Are annual reports and a long-term strategic plan for the school library program available so you can assess the success and progress of the program in contributing to student learning?

GOAL: **The school librarian is a visible and active leader, advocating for the human, physical, and financial resources needed to ensure that students have the materials, tools, and technology they need to learn.**

KEY QUESTIONS:

Does the school librarian collect and share data to justify requests for needed resources and communicate those needs in an open and compelling way to school and community decision makers?

Does the school librarian continually update her or his technology and resource management skills to effectively select and recommend learning resources, technologies, and teaching strategies for the school and its students?

Does the school librarian engage in fundraising and grant-writing activities when needed to supplement the school library budget?

Does the school librarian facilitate the inclusion of local educational resources, such as speakers, authors, and museums, in the school's educational program?

Does the school librarian communicate frequently with state and federal legislators to make them aware of the needs of the school, its students, and the library program?

GOAL: **The school librarian engages in community-outreach activities, creating awareness and building support for the school library program.**

KEY QUESTIONS:

Does the school librarian reach out to the community to develop partnerships and seek volunteers to enhance the school library program?

Does the school librarian maintain a library website to keep parents and the community informed?

Does the school librarian keep parents and the community informed about the school library program and its services by means of district newsletters, local media, the library website, and other forms of communication?

Has the school librarian invited community leaders and elected officials to the library for a tour and visit with students and staff?

Developed and distributed through a grant from the Bound to Stay Bound Books Foundation.