

# House Education Committee Informational Meeting

H.R. 987 of 2010

*Pennsylvania School Library Study:  
Analysis & Recommendations*

Remarks of Mary K. Biagini

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# Mary K. Biagini

## Academic & Professional Experience

- University of Pittsburgh, Tenured Associate Professor & Director, School Library Certification Program
- Kent State University, Tenured Assistant Professor & Director, School Library Program
- Akron (OH) Public Schools, Librarian and English teacher
- Education:
  - PhD, University of Pittsburgh
  - MLS, Kent State University
  - BS, California University of Pennsylvania

# *PA School Library Study: My Responsibilities*

Contracted by the PA State Board of Education to:

- Analyze survey data and draft findings;
- Draft potential recommendations;
- Gather opinions at 3 public roundtable meetings; and
- Present final *Study* and recommendations to State Board for approval.

# House Resolution 987 of 2010

Urges the **State Board of Education** to conduct a study of the Commonwealth's public school library services for students in kindergarten through grade 12:

- **measuring and comparing access** to print and electronic resources, professional support and instruction in the use of information and research . . . and
- **evaluating how funding and resources** are allocated for school library services in relation to student and community circumstances.

# Overview of Study to Comply with Resolution 987

- o Pennsylvania School Librarians Association (**PSLA**) and PA Department of Education (**PDE**) worked together on **electronic survey** conducted in April/May 2011.
- o PDE sent request to complete survey via **PENN\*LINK** to chief school administrators in 500 school districts, 141 charter schools and 14 Career and Technical Centers.

# A Benchmarking Study

Represents **first comprehensive study of school libraries** in Pennsylvania public schools:

- **Baseline data** represent **2010-11** school year;
- Study results are useful for **benchmarking** and comparison with future years.

# Types of Schools in Study

- o School District Schools
- o Comprehensive Career and Technical Centers (CTSSs)
- o Charter Schools

Administrative Unit Number (AUN) for each school district and charter school and four-digit code for each school were verified to determine which schools participated in the Study.

# Responses

## Demographics

- o 500 School Districts
- o 2,970 Schools
- o 14 Comprehensive
- o 141 Charter Schools

## No. & % Responses

- o 389 Districts (78%)
- o 2,180 Schools (73%)
- o 2 CTCs\* (14%)
- o 22 Charters (16%)

(\*Resurveyed later with 100% participation)



# How representative were participating school districts?

The **389 of 500 school districts (78%)** represented:

- **Every geographic area** of PA (Determined by which districts in each of 29 Intermediate Units participated)
- **Mix of rural, urban and suburban** communities
- **Range of academic progress** from Making AYP to Warning and Corrective Action.

# What about districts that didn't participate?

The **111 of 500 school districts (22%)** that didn't participate represented:

- o **Almost every geographic area of PA**
- o Range of **rural, urban and suburban** communities.
- o **Range of academic progress** from Making AYP to Warning and Corrective Action.

# How representative were grade levels of schools participating?

- o **Elementary** School Grade Range: 1,336 **(66%)**  
(Includes K-8)
- o **Middle** School Grade Range, 6-8: 320 **(15%)**
- o **High School Grade** Range, 9-12: 330 **(16%)**

Percentages accurately represent the numbers of PA schools in these grade ranges.

## Key Finding: Most Schools Offer Students a Library

- o 94% of schools (2,068) offer students a library.
- o 103 of 128 schools with no library are in the School District of Philadelphia.

# Key Finding: Libraries Need These Building Blocks

**Building-blocks** or components of a library program:

- o Staffing
- o Information Literacy Curriculum
- o Funding for Library Resources
- o Resources: Print & Electronic
- o Information Technology Infrastructure
- o Student Access

# Why are these key components important?

- In multiple **empirical studies** conducted in **22 states including PA**, researchers have demonstrated that students in schools with **libraries that are adequately staffed, resourced and funded achieve higher academic success** regardless of socio-economic or educational levels of community.

*(School Libraries Work! 2008)*

# Key Finding: Students & Teachers Need Full-time Librarians

- **95%** of libraries had school librarians (1,972).
- Of these 1,972 librarians, **only 44% (711) worked full time** in the school library.
  - 23% worked between 30-35 hours per week.
  - 25% worked between 11 and 29 hours per week.
  - 8% worked 10 or fewer hours per week.

# Why do students & teachers need school librarians?

- Librarians are **certified teachers** whose content area in Pennsylvania is Library Science, K-12, and who actively **teach information literacy skills** to both students and teachers.
- Librarians serve as **technology leaders** in their schools and teach teachers how to integrate information technology.
- Librarians lead the school to **encourage students to become independent readers.**



# What do librarians contribute to teaching & learning?

- Librarians collaborate with teachers to help student learn by **integrating the teaching of related information literacy skills** into the curriculum, academic content and **PA Common Core Standards**.
- To accomplish this, **librarians must work closely each day with teachers** in planning instruction, teaching students and assessing how well students are learning.

# What Research Shows

- Having certified school librarians and aides emerged as the **most critical component** of the library program at all levels to **increase student academic performance.**

(Lance, 2012)

# Key Finding: Librarians Need Support Staff

- o 69% of librarians have **some** staff support.
- o 31% of librarians have **no** staff support.
- o 55% of support staff work between 20-39 hours per week.
- o 23% of support staff work between 10-19 hours per week.

# Why do librarians need support staff?

- o In busy school libraries, **aides perform many routine tasks**—circulating and re-shelving books, scheduling classes, taking attendance, and even pushing chairs under tables at the end of each period.
- o With aides, **librarians can concentrate on collaborative planning and learning activities with teachers** that lead to student academic success, teach teachers and students how to use information technology, and encourage independent reading.

# Key Finding: Librarians & Teachers Don't Have Time to Collaborate

- **2/3** of librarians do not have a **designated time to plan** with teachers.
- Almost **2/3** of librarians are able to **plan one hour or less** with teachers each week.

# Key Finding: Librarians Teach Information Literacy Skills

- o A librarian is a **certified teacher of information literacy** and an **instructional partner** with other teachers.
- o 58% of librarians spend between 6-21 hours per week teaching students information literacy skills.

# What Research Shows

## Information Literacy Instruction:

- The more often students receive **instruction in information literacy** from their librarians, the higher their test scores in reading and writing.  
*(School Libraries Work! 2008)*
- Librarians play a leading role in **encouraging students to read independently** for information and pleasure and to develop a habit of reading. Both administrators and teachers value this role highly.  
*(Lance, 2012)*

## Key Finding: Libraries Lack Current Information Literacy Curriculum

- o Only **half** of school libraries have a Board-approved, K-12 information literacy curriculum that is less than five years old.
- o Need to integrate **PA Common Core Standards** into information literacy curriculum.



## Key Finding: Elementary Libraries Need Flexible Scheduling

- o  $\frac{3}{4}$  of elementary libraries used **fixed scheduling** (i.e., assigned, fixed period for each class to receive weekly instruction).
- o Need for **flexible scheduling** for classes to use library when most appropriate for learning, integrated with curriculum and standards.

# What Research Shows

## Integrating Information Literacy Teaching:

In schools where students have access to a **full-time certified librarian** who collaborates with teachers and **integrates the teaching of information literacy into the curriculum and the PA Common Core Standards**, students score higher on PSSA Reading and Writing Tests.

(Lance, 2012)

# Key Finding: Funding for Library Resources Is Inadequate

- o 39% of districts provided funding of \$1-\$10 per student for library resources.
- o 21% of districts provided funding of \$11-\$15 per student for library resources.

2011 *Guidelines for PA School Library Programs* recommend:

\$41 per elementary student;

\$45 per middle school student;

\$50 per high school student.

# What Research Shows

## Funding:

- Students in schools where libraries receive **higher funding** for resources score higher on PSSA Reading and Writing Tests.

(Lance, 2012)

## Key Finding: Adequate & Current Print Resources Are Necessary

- The size of almost **66%** of library collections is between **5,000 and 15,000** volumes.
- Almost **40%** of libraries have collections that are between **16 and 25 print books** per student. (1,000 students = 25,000 books; 500 students = 12,500 books)
- **75%** of libraries report average **copyright** of book collections within the **past 25** years, i.e., as old as 1987.

# What Research Shows

## Resources:

**Students perform better** on the PSSA Reading and Writing Tests in schools where the library **collection is larger and includes more current resources.**

(Lance. 2012.)

## Key Finding: Current Electronic Resources Are Scarce

In addition to electronic resources offered through POWER Library:

- 47% had 5 or fewer **licensed databases** for students.
- 28% had **no** additional licensed databases.
- 76% had **no** additional **eBooks**.
- 17% had **no** **video** resources.
- 33% had **no** **audio** resources.

## Key Finding: Basic Information Technology Infrastructure Is Available

### Automated online catalog:

- o 91% of libraries had an automated catalog **accessible within the school building**.
- o 69% of libraries had an automated catalog **accessible remotely** from home or other locations.



## Key Finding: Outdated Computing Equipment Is Common

- o **58%** had between 1-39 computers **less than 5 years old.**
- o More than **50%** of libraries had computers that are **more than 5 years old.**
- o **15%** of libraries had purchased/leased **no computers in past 5 years.**
- o Only **3%** of schools had **one-to-one laptop** programs.

# What Research Shows

## Information Technology Infrastructure:

- o At every grade level, students in schools with **more and newer library computers** average higher test scores in reading and writing on the American College Test. (*School Libraries Work!* 2008)
- o Where **networked computers** link school libraries with classrooms, labs and other instructional sites, students earn higher PSSA Reading Test scores. (Lance. 2012)

## Key Finding: Student Access to Library & Librarian Is Limited

In **half** of the school libraries, students **didn't have access** to the:

- **Librarian throughout the school day** because the librarian was serving another school.
- **Library before or after the school** day because it was not open.

# Recommendations Based on Study Results

- o After data was analyzed, recommendations were **drafted and then discussed** at three roundtable meetings.
- o Findings and recommendations were **presented** to the State Board of Education.
- o State Board **approved** Study and recommendations on September 21, 2011.

# Context of Recommendations

**Not all students** in publicly funded PA schools have access to a quality library program that is:

- **Staffed** by a full-time, certified librarian to collaborate with teachers and an aide;
- **Open** throughout the school day;
- **Supported** by an adequate collection of current and useful print and electronic resources; and
- **Provisioned** with needed information technology infrastructure.

# Recommendations

- Recommendations were **based on academic benefits** that would accrue to students and teachers in PA publicly funded schools.
- 6 recommendations were approved **for consideration by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.**

# Recommendation 1

- **Restore Division of School Library Media Services** in the Office of Commonwealth Libraries and **appoint a director** with appropriate credentials.
- **Status:** Division and position restoration approved by PDE, awaiting Maintenance of Effort documentation before filling position.

# Recommendation 2

- o Spearhead a working committee of PDE staff, school librarians and officers of state professional associations to **develop a model information literacy curriculum** based on **PA Common Core Standards**.
- o **Status:** Committee formed and developing model curriculum for inclusion on SAS Portal by Oct. 2012 and training for librarians in 2012-13.



# Recommendation 3

- o **Encourage school districts to assess** their school library program annually.
- o **Status:** PSLA submitted 4 questions for PIMS survey that were approved by PDE but because of Act 25 of 2011 moratorium no questions can be added at this time.

# Recommendation 4

- Distribute *Guidelines for Pennsylvania School Library Programs* to all chief administrative officers.
- **Status:** PDF of *Guidelines* mounted on PDE website and link distributed.

# Recommendation 5

- o Provide specialized guidance and assistance to school districts in **identifying, evaluating and using adaptive technologies for students with visual disabilities** to access library materials.
- o **Status:** Sessions held for librarians at 2012 PSLA Conference.

# Recommendation 6

- o Provide specialized guidance and assistance in **identifying and evaluating resources in languages other than English** for students who are English language learners.
- o **Status:** Sessions held for librarians at 2012 PSLA Conference.

## Recommendations for School Entities

- o Assess **adequacy of support** for library.
- o Implement an **information literacy curriculum**.
- o Consider moving to a **flexible schedule** for elementary school libraries.
- o Assess the **currency, usefulness** and scope of resources.
- o Make **open-source eBooks** available.

# Recommendations for School Entities

- Investigate sources of **grant funding**.
- Plan **fund-raising** activities.
- Plan district- & school-wide activities for **reading motivation**.
- Consider using **volunteers** to assist librarians.

# A Goal for All Constituencies

All PA students in public schools have **equal access** to an **adequate school library program** regardless of whether they live in an advantaged or a disadvantaged community.

# Thank you

- o I appreciate this opportunity to review the *PA School Library Study* findings and recommendations with you.
- o I hope that all constituencies can work together to assure that all PA students have access to an adequate school library.
- o I welcome your questions and comments about the *Study*. Please contact me if you need further information.