Pennsylvania School Librarians Association

Talking Points
"One Certified Librarian Per Public School"
Legislative Campaign

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.

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.

- 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.

- 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). State Requirements for School Library Programs

- PDE has adopted a library curriculum which is supposed to be taught to all public school students. School librarians teach academic standards as stated in the PA Model Library Curriculum.

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.

Supporting Evidence

- 25% of PA school districts have no school librarian or just one for the entire district ([2016-2017 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 8 librarians for 134,000 students](#) who are [86% non-white and 75% 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. State and local per-pupil spending in our poorest districts is 33% less than in our wealthiest districts ([Campaign for Fair Education Funding](#)).

- The ratio of librarians to students in PA's 500 school districts ranges from 1:535 and 1:22,496 ([2016-17 PSLA Staffing Survey](#)).

- 19% of children under 18 in PA come from families that have incomes below the poverty line in 2015 (*[Talk Poverty 2016 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 (which has a 1:22,496 ratio), 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](#)*).

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 library services. 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](#)).

- On average, almost 8% more students score "Advanced" in PSSA reading tests where students have a full-time, certified librarian than where they do not ("[Latest Study](#)").

- 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 and Hofschire](#)).

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.

Supporting Evidence

- 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 ("[Latest Study](#)").

- "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)

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.

"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

Supporting Evidence

- A recent Stanford University study found that most middle school students couldn't distinguish between an advertisement and a news story on the Internet. In the same 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)

- School librarians teach academic standards as stated from the PA Model Library Curriculum:
  - o Evaluating diverse media
  - o Drawing evidence from sources
  - o Determining point of view or perspective
  - o Differentiating fact from opinion

Talking Point about the Instructional Role of School Librarians

School librarians, unlike public and other types of 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 students how to:

  o find and use different types of resources and information, efficiently, effectively, and ethically
  o evaluate the quality of websites and select reliable information
  o use technology responsibly and be safe on the Internet

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.

Talking Point about Effective Use of Taxpayers' Dollars

Centralizing the school's learning resources in a school library managed by a certified librarian makes better financial sense than creating 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 students and teachers know how to use them.

Supporting Evidence

- Pennsylvania licenses digital resources for schools. Without school librarians to teach to students and teachers to access and use them, resources like the POWER Library databases and ebooks would not be used.

- 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](#)").

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, 2016-17
https://www.psea.org/uploadedFiles/AboutPSEA/PSEAResolutions.pdf (page 20)

"*D-25 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 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*)"

Pennsylvania PTA

http://www.papta.org/cms/lib6/PA07000425/Centricity/Domain/55/2014PTAResolutionBook.pdf (p. 54)

Resolution: PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAMS (January 2011)

"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."

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