

Definition for Effective School Library Program

POSITION:

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) supports the position that an effective school library program has a certified school librarian at the helm, provides personalized learning environments, and offers equitable access to resources to ensure a well-rounded education for every student.

As a fundamental component of college, career, and community readiness, the effective school library program:

1. is adequately staffed, including a state-certified school librarian who
 - a. is an instructional leader and teacher,
 - b. supports the development of digital learning, participatory learning, inquiry learning, technology literacies, and information literacy, and
 - c. supports, supplements, and elevates the literacy experience through guidance and motivational reading initiatives;
2. has up-to-date digital and print materials and technology, including curation of openly licensed educational resources; and
3. provides regular professional development and collaboration between classroom teachers and school librarians.

Effective school libraries are dynamic learning environments that bridge the gap between access and opportunity for all K–12 learners. Under the leadership of the school librarian, the school library provides students access to resources and technology, connecting classroom learning to real-world events. By providing access to an array of well-managed resources, school libraries enable academic knowledge to be linked to deeper, personalized learning. The expanded learning environment of the school library ensures the unique interests and needs of individual students are met. In this way, effective school library programs prepare students for college, career, and community.

Under the leadership of a certified school librarian, the effective school library program delivers a well-rounded educational program (AASL 2009). This program focuses on accessing and evaluating information, providing digital learning training and experiences, and developing a culture of reading. The program uses a variety of engaging and relevant resources. Robust school libraries have high-quality, openly licensed digital and print resources, technology tools, and broadband access. This environment is essential to providing equitable learning opportunities for all students. More than 60 studies in two dozen states show that the “levels of library funding, staffing levels, collection size and range, and the instructional role of the librarian all have a direct impact on student achievement” (Gretes 2013).

In an effective school library program, the school librarian serves as an instructional leader, program administrator, teacher, collaborative partner, and information specialist (AASL 2009). Working with classroom teachers, the school librarian develops information literacy and digital literacy instruction for all students. Serving as an instructional leader, the school librarian contributes to curricular decisions and facilitates professional learning. Additionally, as the library program administrator, the school librarian oversees and manages the program and works with school and community partners. These partnerships result in expanded and improved resources and services for all students.

An effective school library program plays a crucial role in bridging digital and socioeconomic divides. School library programs staffed with state-certified professionals provide an approachable, equitable, personalized learning environment necessary for every student’s well-rounded education.

BACKGROUND:

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes language for “effective school library programs” in the provisions of Title I, Part A; Title II, Part A; Title II, Part B, Subpart 2; Title II, Part B, Subpart 2, Section 2226; and Title IV, Part A. The definition of an effective school library program provides guidance to administrators, school boards, and school librarians in implementing ESSA.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Collaboration:** Working with a member of the teaching team to plan, implement, and evaluate a specialized instructional plan.
- **Community Readiness:** The ability to be a productive, active, engaged member of a democratic society.
- **School Librarian Instructional Role:** [Instructional Role of School Librarians Position Statement](#)

REFERENCES:

- American Association of School Librarians. 2012. 2012 School Libraries Count! National Longitudinal Survey of School Library Programs. www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/researchandstatistics/slcsurvey/2012/AASL-SLC-2012-WEB.pdf (accessed May 20, 2016).
- American Association of School Librarians. 2009. Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs. Chicago, IL. <http://www.ala.org/aasl/standards/guidelines> (accessed July 7, 2016).
- Gretes, Frances. 2013. School Library Impact Studies: A Review of Findings and Guide to Sources. Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. www.baltimorelibraryproject.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/09/Library-Impact-Studies.pdf (accessed May 25, 2016).

DISCLAIMER:

The position taken by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) represents the organization and cannot be applied to individual members or groups affiliated with the association without their direct confirmation.

APPROVAL/REVISION DATES: June 25, 2016