

Impact of the Loss of a State Library Consultant/Coordinator

The impact of the loss of a DOE dedicated school library program position on school library stakeholders raises questions as to how specific library program, recertification, licensure, instructional, and organizational needs will be addressed.

With the elimination of the DOE library consultant position, the above mentioned specific issues are added as responsibilities to someone else in the department who may be less qualified and/or already overwhelmed with prior responsibilities.

The absence of a dedicated position promoting learning in the school libraries and information literacy has a negative impact on the effectiveness of individual school library programs in meeting the vision of 21st century teaching and learning for our students in all schools. The decision to eliminate a state department school library consultant/coordinator is expected to have or already has had a negative impact on the organizational model for school divisions in the state.

Who will ultimately be responsible? These questions fall into three general categories of (1) program administration, (2) teaching and learning, and (3) information access and delivery.

Who will provide these program administration needs:

- Be the voice of school librarians at the Department of Education?
- Furnish assistance to rural school divisions with little administrative knowledge or support of school library programs?
- Provide architectural guidelines for new and renovation of school libraries that reflect 21st century learning initiatives?
- Serve as the liaison to the state library representing school libraries?
- Represent school libraries at a national level?
- Disseminate information proactively to the various library stakeholders?
- Be liaison for state initiatives including state documents related to instruction such as Internet safety, library information literacy standards?
- Provide support and current statistics for print collection development? In some cases print collections need analysis and funding to attain minimum standards. The average collection size of some school libraries is as low as 4 books per child. The average age of some school collections are with copyrights of over 37 years of age.
- Assist the DOE in clarifying the technology skills role of Instructional Technology Resource Teachers v. the information skills role of the school librarian in the school?
- Define the role of the school librarian as it pertains to 21st century learning skills?
- Update the state licensure requirements to align with NCLB's standards for highly qualified instructional staff?
- Monitor staffing data to identify school librarians as an area of critical need?
- Provide input into the local and state funding discussion to address the needs of school library programs?

- Continue DOE initiatives such as a policy and procedures handbook for school librarians?
- Verbalize school library needs with regard to legislative issues?

Who will provide these teaching and learning needs:

- Assume responsibility for ensuring that the school library program is integrated with core curriculum and 21st century skills?
- Take responsibility for library program assessment of student learning?
- Develop state library standards of learning?
- Create state library information literacy standards that are mapped to national library information literacy standards outlined in AASL's learning standards and program guidelines?
- Identify the positive impact information literacy skills have on student achievement to include benchmarks?
- Provide training and staff development as it relates to recertification and endorsement requirements?
- Construct training models on ethical guidelines that are comprehensive and address the teaching and learning needs of adult and student learners?

Who will provide these information access and delivery needs:

- Articulate school needs in discussions regarding the purchase of state-paid databases?
- Accept responsibility for the renewals of state-paid databases?
- Provide training on new technologies and information products?
- Assure equity of learning resources for all students across the state?
- Manage vendor and product issues relative to state funded resources?
- Provide technical assistance in the area of school library information delivery systems?

State Affiliate Advocacy for State Department Consultants/Coordinators

Until representation by a qualified state department school library consultant/coordinator is achieved, each state association is more vital than ever. While the research consistently indicates a serious need for full time state department school library consultants/coordinators, the research also consistently shows funding for these positions has been decreased or eliminated. The lack of funds and the current economic status indicate these positions will not be established or reinstated in the near future. It would appear much of the responsibility for program administration needs, teaching and learning needs and information access and delivery needs will have to come from the professionals in state association affiliates. Using Vermont as an example, especially since in 2006 Vermont's statement of concern initiated the push for AASL's inquiry, the Vermont School Library Association has strongly and continuously lobbied the commissioner of education for three years to reinstate the position of School Library Consultant. While the commissioner agrees with the need for this position to be reinstated, he has been unable to locate the funding. Now, the state education commissioner has announced he is leaving his position in part "because of the uncertainty about his future in the wake of a move in the Legislature aimed at eliminating the state Board of Education and elevating the education commissioner

to a cabinet level secretary.” [Rutland Herald, 5/19/08) VSLA will continue its campaign to see the School Library Consultant position reinstated. Meanwhile, Vermont school librarians will continue to turn to VSLA for support, assistance, professional development, collaboration, etc. and VSLA will do its best to respond.

For the complete report “State Department Inquiry Task Force's Report”, please see:

www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/resources