

Definition of an Effective School Library

POSITION:

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) supports the position that an effective school library 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:

1. is adequately staffed, including a state-certified school librarian who
 - is an instructional leader and teacher,
 - supports the development of digital learning, participatory learning, inquiry learning, technology literacies, and information literacy, and
 - 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 learners. Under the leadership of the school librarian, the school library provides 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 the individual are met. In this way, effective school libraries prepare learners for college, career, and life.

Under the leadership of a certified school librarian, the effective school library delivers a well-rounded educational program (AASL 2009). The school library focuses on accessing and evaluating information, providing training and experiences for digital learning; and developing a culture of reading. The school library 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 learners. 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, the school librarian serves as a leader, instructional partner, information specialist, teacher, and program administrator (AASL 2018). Working with classroom teachers, the

school librarian develops information literacy and digital literacy instruction for all learners. 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 library and works with school and community partners. These partnerships result in expanded and improved resources and services for all learners.

An effective school library plays a crucial role in bridging digital and socioeconomic divides. School libraries staffed with state-certified professionals provide an approachable, equitable, personalized learning environment necessary for every learner'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. *However, an effective school library program is not defined within the legislation.* This position statement provides guidance to administrators, school boards, and school librarians in implementing ESSA. The American Association of School Librarians establishes the standards for school libraries.

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 the School Librarian](#)

REFERENCES:

American Association of School Librarians. 2012. 2012 School Libraries Count! National Longitudinal Survey of School Library Programs. <http://bit.ly/2ULNRzr> (accessed May 20, 2016).

American Association of School Librarians. 2018. *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*. ALA: Chicago

Gretes, Frances. 2013. School Library Impact Studies: A Review of Findings and Guide to Sources. Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. <http://bit.ly/2USKkQ9> (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: 25 Jun 2016, 11 Nov 2018