

ALA American Library Association

May 22, 2023

Danielle Bellizzi
Board of Education Members
Wallingford Public Schools
100 South Turnpike Road
Wallingford, CT 06492

Dear Superintendent Bellizzi, Chair Raccio, and Board Members:

At a moment when there is an urgency to improve early literacy achievement and the ability to navigate a vast and constantly shifting world of information is a matter of profound consequence, we are alarmed to hear that Wallingford Public Schools proposes to eliminate certified information professionals—school librarians—at the elementary level. We urge the Board to prioritize funding so that Wallingford Public Schools can appropriately staff¹ its elementary libraries with and ensure that every student has access to a full-time certified school librarian at their school.

Building a continuum of literacy and inquiry skills while nurturing the whole child is foundational to school librarianship, and it is central to success for learners in school and beyond. More than 60 studies from across the country conclude that student achievement—from reading scores and digital proficiency to graduation rates and post-secondary success—is higher in schools with professionally staffed libraries.²

These findings are no accident. School librarians are the heart of their schools and central to their district's goals in providing effective service. They are why the Connecticut State Board of Education adopted³ *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*,⁴ the framework upon which those skills and dispositions are built. The framework aligns with content area and technology standards and facilitates students' engagement in authentic learning; curation of resources for personal and academic growth; collaboration towards individual and common goals; examination of diverse perspectives and experiences; reflective practices that foster exploration and innovation; and capable and ethical use of information technologies.

Wallingford's school librarians impact every learner in their schools, fostering a culture of reading and inquiry that reflects the needs and interests of every member of the community. They collaborate on

¹ http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/advocacy/statements/docs/AASL_Appropriate_Staffing.pdf

² <https://kappanonline.org/lance-kachel-school-librarians-matter-years-research/>

³ <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Academic-Office/Information-and-Technology-Literacy>

⁴ <https://standards.aasl.org/>

planning, instruction, and assessment with teachers and embed literacy and inquiry across the curriculum—vital for navigating a world full of misinformation. And they offer supplemental programming that extends learning beyond the classroom.

Wallingford Public Schools is rightly proud of its commitment to excellence, and we share the belief that *innovative and engaging experiences...lead all learners to pursue and discover their personal best*. The proposed cuts undermine that commitment and diminish the district's ability to realize its mission. As presidents of the American Library Association and American Association for School Librarians, we respectfully ask the Board to fulfill its commitment to the families of Wallingford and maintain full-time school librarians in each of your schools.

Sincerely,



Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada, President
American Library Association



Katherine M. Lester, President
American Association of School Librarians

cc: Melissa Thom, President, Connecticut Association of School Librarians
Douglas Lord, President, Connecticut Library Association