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ALA American Library Association

July 19, 2023

Mr. Peter Kudlak
Board of Education Members
Van Buren Public Schools
555 W. Columbia Ave.
Belleville, MI 48111

Dear Superintendent Kudlak, President Pearce, and Board Members:

Today, more than ever, students must learn to navigate an increasingly complex information landscape to succeed in school, in the workplace, and in the community. And so, we urge the Van Buren Public School District to prioritize funding to reinstate a certified school librarian at Belleville High School and ensure every student has access to a school librarian and appropriately resourced library program.

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. The research indicates that every school should be staffed with a certified school librarian.¹ 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. School librarians align their work with content area and technology standards and facilitate 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 nurture exploration and innovation; and capable and ethical use of information technologies.

A school librarian impacts every learner, fostering a culture of reading and inquiry that reflects the needs and interests of every member of the community. They collaborate on planning, instruction, and assessment with teachers and embed literacy and inquiry across the curriculum—vital for navigating a world full of misinformation and disinformation. And they offer supplemental programming that extends learning beyond the classroom.

¹ http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/positionstatements/AASL_Position%20Statement_Appropriate%20Staffing_2016-06-25.pdf

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

Van Buren Public Schools is rightly proud of its commitment to excellence and work to empower *curious, collaborative, and creative leaders able to adapt to a rapidly changing global society*. 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 Van Buren Public School and reinstate the certified high school librarian position and continue to build a learning community where students are *provided a high-quality, dynamic education empowering them to reach their full potential*.

Sincerely,



Emily Drabinski, President
American Library Association



Courtney Pentland, President
American Association of School Librarians

cc: Carma Roesch, President, Michigan Association of School Librarians
Scott Duimstra, President, Michigan Library Association
Kathy Lester, MASL Advocacy Committee, AASL Immediate Past-President