

[SAMPLE OP-ED FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIANS]

Want to help students get back on track? Look to your school librarians.

By [NAME OF AUTHOR]

Length (CHECK WITH YOUR LOCAL PAPER. TRADITIONALLY 500 – 600 WORD COUNT.)

Students, parents, teachers, and administrators have embraced the reopening of schools in [SCHOOL DISTRICT] with both anticipation and a tremendous sense of responsibility—to advance academic progress and student well-being, to deepen engagement with all members of the learning community, and to ensure that inequities exacerbated by the rapid shutdown of schools last spring are addressed once and for all. [SCHOOL DISTRICT]’s librarians are at work supporting those efforts, and the district now has an opportunity to expand that work to the benefit of students and communities.

The sepia-toned image of school libraries as repositories of books was shattered during the early days of the pandemic. With reading and literacy as the very foundation of learning, school librarians *did* get books—in a variety of formats—into the hands of readers. They also distributed laptops, mobile hotspots, and other devices; prepared teachers to work with high quality digital resources; co-taught classes and led research across content areas and grade levels; implemented online clubs and learning opportunities to keep students connected to their learning communities and to each other; and partnered with community organizations to engage and support families.

[INCLUDE AN EXAMPLE FROM YOUR LIBRARY/DISTRICT/STATE THAT SHOWCASES THE WORK SCHOOL LIBRARIANS HAVE DONE DURING THE PANDEMIC OR SINCE THE RETURN TO IN-PERSON SCHOOLING.]

The empirical evidence is supported by more than 60 library and education studies from across the nation that highlight how effective school library programs transform teaching and learning and boost student success, not just in the classroom but in future educational pursuits, in the workplace, and in society. School librarians have the unique privilege to support academic growth over a period of years and empower learners to thrive and contribute to their communities locally and globally.

There remains much to be done and one thing is certain: there is no “going back” to the way things were *before*. The need to ensure that students develop a continuum of literacies as well as strong digital citizenship skills is undeniable, yet there is new urgency for [SCHOOL DISTRICT] to confront the challenges of today and prepare students for the opportunities of the future.

[INCLUDE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES ABOUT HOW ARPA FUNDING CAN BE USED IN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT TO STRENGTHEN, EXPAND, OR MAINTAIN CRITICAL LIBRARY SERVICES. CONNECT THAT USE TO THE SCHOOL/DISTRICT/STATE’S PLAN (IF AVAILABLE) OR TO STATED PRIORITIES.]

The future of [SCHOOL/DISTRICT/STATE]’s children is the future of our communities. As we work together to envision teaching and learning for schools, we must leverage funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to shape a child-centered, equitable and forward thinking [SCHOOL/DISTRICT/STATE]. [SUMMARY OF YOUR PROPOSAL] will help not just get students back on track, but will ensure that those tracks are pointed unidirectionally towards a better future.

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[Include byline information here]

Example:

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