

Xxxx, Executive Directors
Xxxx ?? Association
Address

Dear Executive Director,

The Council of the American Library Association is asking for your help in advocating for support of school library media specialists and school libraries. We enclose a copy of a resolution passed at the ALA 2003 Annual Conference for your information.

States all across the country have suffered severe loss of revenue due to the continuing recession, and state legislatures have considered various funding cuts. All too often, the victims of these cuts are school libraries and the school library media specialists who staff them. As you know, cuts in school library programs have a severe negative impact on students. At a time when federal legislation has created new requirements and new goals for education, school libraries and school library media specialists are more important than ever.

We know that a lack of resources will have long-term effects on students' abilities to access, analyze and capture information and to learn about and understand the use of library resources. Students who have not mastered information literacy skills taught by qualified school library media specialists cannot achieve high academic standards. A school operating without library media staff or adequate school library is a school operating without the resources needed to optimize student development.

Since the ALA 2003 Annual Conference, we have been working at ALA to strengthen our support for ALA members and others to advocate for school libraries and school library media specialists. As part of this effort, we would like to extend an invitation to your organization to discuss ways in which we can work together in partnership to support initiatives to strengthen the school library media programs that are so important to student achievement and student success.

Appended to this letter is a fact sheet that includes information on how you can help support advocacy efforts for school libraries. For further information, please contact Marci Merola, PR Specialist for Advocacy, ALA Public Information Office, at 1-800-545-2431, extension 2431, or via e-mail at advocacy@ala.org. We also urge you to contact our ALA Washington Office for legislative information or assistance at 1-800-941-8478.

If your organization is affiliated with like organizations within the states, we urge you to pass this information onto them. Within each state, the state library associations and school library media associations stand willing and eager to work with them to strengthen the school libraries that are so important to our students future.

Enclosure:

ALA Council Document # 57, passed in Toronto on June 22, 2003

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Carla Hayden
President, American Library Association

Keith Fiels
Executive Director, American Library Association



The Campaign for America's Libraries

Advocating for School Library Media Programs

In April 2001, the American Library Association launched a multi-year public education and advocacy initiative called **@ your library®**, **The Campaign for America's Libraries**, to speak loudly and clearly about the value of libraries and librarians in the 21st century. The campaign is built around a trademarked brand, @ your library®. During 2003-2004, school library media programs and the role of school library media specialists are featured.

The @ your library campaign for school libraries launched at the national conference of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) in Kansas City, Mo., October 22-26, 2003.

Campaign Goals

The new campaign, developed by the ALA and AASL seeks to:

- Increase public awareness of the significant contributions made by school library media specialists through school library media programs to further the academic achievement and lifelong learning of our students;
- Strengthen a belief in the value of school library media programs and school library media specialists;
- Position school librarianship as a desirable career opportunity.

Target Audiences

Primary audiences for the campaign are teachers and administrators, students and parents, and boards of education. Secondary audiences are legislators and the community at large.

Key Messages

The campaign's key messages focus on the unique value and characteristics of school library media programs, centers and specialists. The messages were developed based on research (focus groups and interviews) conducted by KRC Research, a subsidiary of Weber Shandwick Worldwide, a public relations and communication management firm that has worked with ALA to design the Campaign for America's Libraries. The messages are:

- *School library media programs are critical to the learning experience.*
- *School library media specialists are crucial to the teaching and learning process.*
- *School library media centers are places of opportunity.*

Strategies

The campaign is designed to support school library media centers in reaching out to key audiences by:

- fostering a greater collaboration with other types of libraries.
- enhancing the professional development of school library media specialists.
- providing customizable tools and resources that support the advocacy efforts of school library media specialists. These include camera-ready artwork, programming ideas, sample press materials and more.

How Your Organization Can Help Support Our Efforts

- **Learn the issues.** The American Library Association and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) have a wealth of information about school library media programs and the specialists who make those programs a reality everyday for our nation's students. Visit www.ala.org/aasl and click on Issues and Advocacy or see the ALA's School Library Campaign website at www.ala.org/@yourlibrary.
- **Spread the Word.** Share information about the critical role that school library media specialists play in their schools via your newsletter, Website, or journal. The ALA is happy to prepare copy and/or artwork for print PSAs. You are also welcome to utilize downloadable artwork from the Campaign for America's Libraries Website at www.ala.org/@yourlibrary. Click on School Library Campaign and then Graphics.
- **Build Coalitions.** Have your state chapters contact state library associations and/or state school media associations to help create an advocacy network that supports our schools and school library media programs. Please feel free to contact us at advocacy@ala.org and we will work with you to coordinate.
- **Swap Ideas.** Invite a school library media specialist to speak at your national conference. The American Library Association is happy to work with you to provide experts on the topic. ALA welcomes representatives from your organization to participate in our conferences as well.
- **Team up in talking to the press.** Our voices are louder when we work together, so let's jointly talk to the media about student achievement and the work our schools and school library media programs are doing to ensure student success. ALA is happy to co-write an op-ed article and conduct editorial board meetings with you. Sample press materials also are available in a new toolkit to promote school library media programs. See www.ala.org/@yourlibrary and click on School Library Campaign and then Toolkit.

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For more information, see the ALA Web site at www.ala.org/@yourlibrary under *School Library Campaign* or the American Association of School Librarians Web site at www.ala.org/aasl and click on *Issues and Advocacy*.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss ways that ALA and your organization can collaborate, please contact Gerald Hodges, ALA Associate Executive Director of Communications and Marketing, at 312-280-3217 or ghodges@ala.org.