

January 6, 2021

Education Review Team, Biden-Harris Transition Team
Presidential Transition Headquarters
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Members of the Biden-Harris Education Transition Team:

The transition to a Department of Education under President-Elect Biden's leadership comes at a moment of great consequence, when inequities in the American education system have been exacerbated and brought into stark relief by the coronavirus pandemic and other events this year. We are educators and librarians who believe this is also a moment of opportunity to shape the future of education for a stronger, more equitable, and just society.

One thing is clear: not all learners were equally resourced to confront this year's challenges. What prepares students with the critical thinking skills to understand an international health crisis, an onslaught of misinformation, an education system and job market that require the ability to retrain and retool, and a nation-wide call for racial justice? Who supports classroom teachers as they pivot to new modes of instruction, providing digital resources and collaborative instruction, with increased intentionality around social-emotional learning? What ensures that the community remains connected, not only through digital access but also around a shared sense of inquiry and exploration? The short answer...a certified school librarian.

School librarians are integral to fostering a culture of inquiry, developing critical thinking, nurturing multiple literacies, differentiating learning, personalizing resources, and building empathy and a disposition for lifelong learning. They bring a unique view to the learning community as they serve in an instructional role that spans grade levels and content areas, engaging with students throughout their years in the school. Literacies and inquiry undergird today's school librarian's work, a role that has become even more essential with increased reliance on digital learning. School librarians have responsibilities as teachers, leaders, instructional partners, information specialists, and program administrators.

While a 2014 Dear Colleague letter¹ affirms that equitable access to educational resources, including staff, is a right codified in *Brown v. Board of Education*, all too many learners and educators are without the benefit of a school librarian, despite research² highlighting how they transform teaching and learning through instructional and programmatic practices that are critical for student success, not just in the classroom but in future educational and career pursuits, and in society.

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (2014, October 1). Dear Colleague Letter on Resource Comparability. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-resourcecomp-201410.pdf>

² Gretes, Frances. (2013, August). School Library Impact Studies: A Review of Findings and Guide to Sources. <https://baltimorelibraryproject.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/09/Library-Impact-Studies.pdf>

As your team lays the groundwork for a Department of Education centered on President Biden's and Secretary Cardona's vision of equity for all learners, we respectfully ask you to include these priorities:

- provide ESSA guidance that addresses the role of school librarians
- improve NCES data collection to accurately reflect the presence of a certified school librarian at the building level
- adjust the NCES definition of school librarian to reflect their instructional role³ and national standards⁴
- ensure that, as teachers, school librarians are eligible for the same federal supports as their colleagues

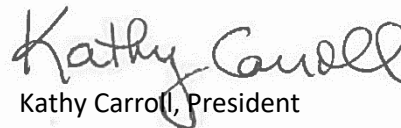
The American Library Association, its division the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), and the AASL State Chapters urge you to consider how school librarians are an equity-oriented solution to some of the most pressing concerns facing educators at this moment. Please contact Sylvia Knight Norton, AASL Executive Director (snorton@ala.org) for further conversation towards including school librarians as critical partners in plans for America's schools, educators, and learners.

Thank you for your work on behalf of the incoming administration and America's schoolchildren.

Sincerely,



Julius C. Jefferson, Jr., President
American Library Association



Kathy Carroll, President
American Association of School Librarians

AASL Chapters Assembly

Catherine Fuhrman, Chair
Lindsey Kimery, Chair-Elect
Blake Hopper, Past Chair
Matthew King, Secretary

AASL Chapters

Laura Graves Massey, President, Alabama School Library Association
Pam Verfaile, President, Alaska Association of School Librarians
John Walsh, President, Teacher Librarian Division of Arizona Library Association
Anne Canada, President, Arkansas Association of Instructional Media
Katie McNamara, President, California School Library Association
Terri Brundgardt, President, Colorado Association of School Libraries
Barbara Johnson, President, Connecticut Association of School Librarians
Katelynn Scott, President, Delaware Association of School Librarians

³ American Association of School Librarians. (nd). The Instructional Role of the School Librarian.

http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/positionstatements/AASL_Position_Statement_Instructional_Role.pdf

⁴ American Association of School Librarians. (2017). National School Library Standards. <https://standards.aasl.org>

AASL Chapters (continued)

Lorraine Stinson, President, Florida Association of Media in Education
Holly Frilot, President, Georgia Library Media Association
Danielle Fujii, President, Hawaii Association of School Librarians
Kate Lovan, President, Idaho Library Association - School Library Division
Anna Kim, President, Association of Illinois School Library Educators
Chad Heck, President, Association of Indiana School Library Educators
Jenahlee Chamberlain, President, Iowa Association of School Librarians
Martha House, President, Kansas Association of School Librarians
Sam Northern, President, Kentucky Association of School Librarians
Kimberly Adkins, President, Louisiana Association of School Librarians
Jennifer Stanbro, President, Maine Association of School Libraries
Jen Sturge, President, Maryland Association of School Librarians
Laura Luker, President, Massachusetts School Library Association
Shannon Torres, President, Michigan Association for Media in Education
Ashley Krohn, President, Information and Technology Educators of Minnesota
Angela Mullins, President, Mississippi Association of School Librarians
Kirsten Shaw, President, Missouri Association of School Librarians
Angela Blankenship, President, Nebraska School Librarians Association
Forrest Lewis, President, Nevada Library Association - Nevada School and Children Librarians' Section
Deborah Ehler-Hansen, President, New England School Library Association
Karen Abraham, President, New Hampshire School Library Media Association
Beth Thomas, President, New Jersey Association of School Librarians
Mary Chappell, President, New Mexico School Libraries
Dawn Pressimone, President, New York Library Association-Section of School Librarians
Cindy Sturdivant, President, North Carolina School Library Media Association
Brandi Young, President, Ohio Educational Library Media Association
Ashleigh Dautermann, President, Oklahoma School Librarians
Laurie Nordahl, President, Oregon Association of School Libraries
Robin Burns, President, Pennsylvania School Librarians Association
Deanna Brooks, President, School Librarians of Rhode Island
Heather Loy, President, South Carolina Association of School Librarians
Ashia Gustafson, President, School Section of South Dakota Library Association
Lindsey Kimery, President, Tennessee Association of School Librarians
Kristi Starr, President, Texas Association of School Librarians
Emily Dejong, President, Utah Educational Library Media Association
Peter Langella, President, Vermont School Library Association
Jennifer Cooper, President, Virginia Association of School Librarians
Hillary Marshall, President, Washington Library Association School Library Division
Raquel Rand, President, Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association
Melissa Snider, President, Wyoming Library Association School Library Interest Group