

## The School Librarian's Role in Reading

### POSITION:

The American Association of School Librarians supports the position that “reading is the core of personal and academic competency” (AASL 2018, 11). Ready access to a wide variety of reading materials increases the chances that learners will become readers and choose to read (Krashen 2004). Deep reading for comprehension and meaning making is the foundation for constructing knowledge (Todd 2015, 13).

As literacy leaders, school librarians are positioned to elevate the importance of reading as well as reading proficiency to support all learners' academic success. Decades of research indicate that there is a positive correlation between learners' attending schools with full-time, state-certified school librarians and higher scores on standardized reading tests (Gretes 2013).

Reading promotion, instruction, resources, and services provided by school librarians (through the school library) are developed around six essential Shared Foundations—Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage.

### Inquire

The school librarian designs and teaches engaging inquiry-based learning experiences that incorporate multiple literacies and foster critical thinking. School librarians:

- Foster independent and curriculum-based reading, information literacy, and inquiry skills to support lifelong learning.
- Promote an inquiry process that includes posing questions, finding answers, and developing critical thinking and communication skills through information exploration (AASL 2018, 54).

### Include

The school librarian's role in reading development includes selecting reading materials and resources in a wide variety of formats that reflect diverse and inclusive points of view and contribute to each learner's ability to read for informational needs and for personal enjoyment. School librarians:

- Select resources according to principles of intellectual freedom, and provide learners with access to information that represents diverse points of view.
- Enable equitable physical and intellectual access by providing reading-level-free, universally designed environments and adaptive devices.

### Collaborate

The school librarian is an instructional partner who models and supports independent reading and the development of reading comprehension through curricular planning, instruction, resources, and literacy activities. School librarians:

- Co-design, co-implement, and co-evaluate interdisciplinary lessons and units of instruction that help learners increase reading proficiency through inquiry learning experiences.
- Collaborate with classroom educators and specialists to integrate paper and online reading comprehension strategies in library instruction that supports learners' development.

## Curate

The school librarian creates a rich reading environment and culture within school libraries and school communities to nurture learners' journeys in finding their passion for reading and lifelong learning. School librarians:

- Organize and maintain a current, diverse, and inclusive collection of reading and information materials in multiple genres and formats that support the developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of all learners.
- Create, evaluate, and maintain policies that reflect the principles of intellectual freedom, provide learners with access to information, and protect learners' privacy and confidentiality.

## Explore

With deep knowledge of the wide variety of authentic reading materials available in the school library and beyond, the school librarian has a key role in improving learners' reading proficiency and increasing their learning. School librarians:

- Support reading promotion initiatives in collaboration with classroom educators, reading specialists, public libraries, and community organizations.
- Provide opportunities and advocate for all learners to exercise choice and curiosity in what they read, view, and hear.
- Advocate for learners to explore innovative ideas and produce creative learning products.

## Engage

Along with classroom educators and reading specialists, school librarians provide and participate in continual professional development related to library services and reading that reflects current research. School librarians:

- Ensure open access so library stakeholders are served at the point of need.
- Model and advocate for the principles of intellectual freedom and the learner's right to read.
- Lead professional development opportunities to ensure the school community enacts effective practices in reading promotion, instruction, and resource integration.

## BACKGROUND:

The AASL Reading Position Statements Task Force was asked to review four position statements previously adopted and/or revised by the board:

- Role of the School Librarian in Reading Development (revised 9/01/10)
- School Librarian's Role in Reading (revised 9/01/10)
- Value of Independent Reading in the School Library Program (adopted June 1994; revised July 1999, September 2010)
- Labeling Books with Reading Levels (adopted 07/18/2011)

The task force considered the language from the AASL *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* (2018) in developing a comprehensive position statement that supports school librarians in achieving a fully collaborative and integrated school library philosophy in which they serve as literacy leaders on their school campuses..

## DEFINITIONS:

- **Collaboration:** "Working with a member of the teaching team to plan, implement, and evaluate a specialized instructional plan" (AASL 2016, 2).

- **Information Literacy:** Information literacy is knowing when and why information is needed, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use, and communicate it in an ethical manner (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals 2004, cited in AASL 2018, 277).
- **School Librarian Leadership:** The ability to influence and inspire a school community in order to move toward identified goals and/or a shared vision.
- **Intellectual Freedom:** Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation (ALA 2019).
- **Inquiry:** Stance toward learning in which the learner is engaged in asking questions and finding answers, not simply accumulating facts presented by someone else that have no relation to previous learning or new understanding (AASL 2018, 277).
- **Literacy:** The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute, using materials associated with varying contexts (UNESCO 2006, cited in AASL 2018, 278).
- **Multiple Literacies:** Multiple literacies include information literacy, media, visual, and technological literacies (AASL 2009, 23).
- **Open Access:** Free, unrestricted availability of the school library and its resources for the school community.
- **Reading Comprehension Strategies:** Reading comprehension strategies include the ability to assess and use background knowledge, pose and answer questions that are appropriate to the task, make predictions and inferences, determine main ideas, and monitor comprehension as well as the learning process (AASL 2009, 22).

## REFERENCES:

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- American Library Association. 2019. “Library Bill of Rights.” <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill> (accessed December 26, 2019).
- Gretes, Frances. 2013. “School Library Impact Studies: A Review of Findings and Guide to Sources.” Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. <http://bit.ly/2USKkQ9> (accessed December 26, 2019).
- Krashen, Stephen D. 2004. *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.
- Todd, Ross J. 2015. “Evidence-Based Practice and School Libraries: Interconnections of Evidence, Advocacy, and Actions.” *Knowledge Quest* 43 (3): 8–15.

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST:

- Coiro, Julie. 2017. “Building Young Readers’ Comprehension and Engagement through Inquiry and Research.” *Research into Practice*. Pearson Education. <https://goo.gl/Bjzfco>.
- Krashen, Stephen D., Sy-Ying Lee, and Christy Lao. 2017. *Comprehensible and Compelling: The Causes and Effects of Free Voluntary Reading*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.
- Moreillon, Judi. 2014. “Inquiry Learning and Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction: Processes that Go Hand in Hand.” *Knowledge Quest* 43 (2): E1–4. [http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/NovDec14\\_OE1\\_Moreillon.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/NovDec14_OE1_Moreillon.pdf).

Naidoo, Jamie Campbell, and Sarah Park Dahlen. 2011. *Diversity in Youth Literature: Opening Doors through Reading*. Chicago: ALA.

Reed, Karen Reed, and Eric L. Oslund. 2018. "School Librarians as Co-teachers of Literacy: Librarian Perceptions and Knowledge in the Context of the Literacy Instruction Role." *School Library Research* 21 (1): 1–29.  
<[http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org/aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/vol21/SLR\\_SchoolLibrariansasCoteachers\\_V21.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org/aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/vol21/SLR_SchoolLibrariansasCoteachers_V21.pdf)>.

Scales, Pat R. 2018. *Encourage Reading from the Start: Essays, Articles, and Interviews from the Field*. Chicago: ALA.

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**APPROVAL/REVISION DATES:** January 25, 2020

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