

## **Learning Together, Standing Together**

School librarians have always been the guardians of learning and learners in our communities. Whether we are ensuring access to information; protecting, practicing, and promoting fair use; or sharing resources and tools to develop lifelong learners, we stand on guard.

The American Association of School Librarians as an association, and the AASL National Conference as an event, are the only national organization and event dedicated solely to the role of the school librarian and our undeniable critical need to serve as guardians of learning and learners. The AASL National Conference has always been an event of great learning, networking, and fellowship.

Convening the profession at an AASL National Conference is an opportunity for AASL to shine a spotlight on issues facing school librarians, school libraries, education, inequity, civil liberties, and human decency. While school librarians plan to attend sessions, network with vendors, and expand their personal learning network, AASL starts well in advance to line up media requests, run op-ed articles, and shout from the rooftops “The School Librarians Are Here!” This is not new, but we know our strategy will need to be amplified as we head to Tampa, Florida in 2023.

As always, AASL is dedicated to supporting its state chapters and their members. Our national conference is the time to stand with a commendable AASL chapter in Florida, the Florida Association for Media in Education (FAME). In addition, AASL is a collaborative partner with other organizations such as with the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). As a division of the American Library Association (ALA), AASL also works with both the office of ALA Public Policy and Advocacy (PPA) and the Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF). ALA also has a strong chapter in the Florida Library Association (FLA).

Thus, to answer a question posted by some – why would AASL go to Florida? We say, how could we not?! The AASL Board of Directors believe that we need to stand side-by-side with our colleagues in Florida as together we fight for the future of our learners. AASL, along with our partners, including ALA, PPA, OIF, FLA and the Human Rights Campaign, need to proactively speak out and show support for our Florida chapter (FAME), school librarians, and their learners. We are dedicated to lifelong learning. We are a voice for school librarians across the country as we support our learners’ rights and provide safe spaces. WE stand up for the right of every learner to think, create, share and grow. WE ARE SCHOOL LIBRARIANS.

AASL National Conferences are like no other. The AASL Board of Directors, AASL leaders, members, and staff will take this opportunity to work together with FAME to support our colleagues in Florida by speaking up, engaging in dialogue, and fighting for our learners’ rights. Won’t you join us?

Let’s stand together, school librarians on guard to ensure the opportunity to support our learners and to learn together in Tampa at the AASL National Conference in October 2023.

American Association of School Librarians (AASL), 2022-2023 Board of Directors