

**TO:** ALA Executive Board

**RE:** Status of Advocacy Initiatives

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:**  
Information only

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:**  
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**DRAFT OF MOTION:**  
N/A

**DATE:** 01-23-14

**SUMMARY:** Updates on the ALA School Library 2013-2014 Strategic Plan and Action Plan

### **1. ALA School Library 2013-2014 Action Plan**

- **Community Outreach:** Outreach to school libraries in crisis or difficult situations, including consultations, letters to the editors, and op-eds. Creation of templates for op-eds and letters to the editors
- **“Crisis-Proofing” Initiative:** Committee on Library Advocacy’s new effort to create proactive tips and resources for laying groundwork to protect libraries and prepare them for crisis situations. Will focus on all library types, beginning with school libraries.
- **Declaration for the Right to Libraries:** Outreach to school librarians, asking them to sponsor Declaration signings during AASL’s School Library Month, using a school version of the Declaration for the Right to Libraries in order to bring the critical role of school libraries into the spotlight.
- **Digital Supplement:** a stand-alone, strategic supplement of American Libraries magazine for use among members and external stakeholders. Potential partnerships with vendors and legislators who have championed school libraries and librarians. Targeted for 2014

- **Messaging:** enhancement of current school library messaging for media opportunities such as op-eds, and letters to the editor, as well as advocacy opportunities such as crisis messaging and talking points for decision-makers. Will include talking points on college- and career-readiness, Common Core (when needed) and other key points as indicated in AASL's Standards for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning. Includes a student-focused emphasis.
- **National Partnerships:** expansion and further development of existing relationships and development of new relationships with organizations like the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and American Association of School Administrators (AASA) at the national level
- **Online tools for Advocates:** Resources for parents and other advocates to make the case for school libraries, including talking points, PowerPoint presentations, and videos.
- **Op-Eds:** placements targeted to multiple audiences, including school administrators, state and local-level decision-makers, and national policy makers. Specific focus on March 1 benchmark, when many school librarian and library cuts are determined.
- **Success Stories:** working with affiliates to find and showcase success stories
- **Vendor & Publisher Partnerships:** strategic collaboration on new and/or existing school-library focused initiatives, such as Follett Project Connect, which hopes to raise the profile of librarians while connecting the library with the classroom and influencing digital decisions.
- **Web Portal:** using [www.ilovelibraries.org](http://www.ilovelibraries.org), ALA's advocacy website for the public, to showcase news, research and messaging about school libraries, as well as stories and testimony. Targeted for spring 2014.
- **Toolkit for Parents:** materials for parents and local advocates to make the case for school libraries and librarians

## 2. Strategic Plan Update

### Background

- There is no one better able to teach research skills than a school librarian. Among the priorities of school librarians are to instill the ability to:
  - employ critical thinking and evaluation skills;
  - conduct research independently;
  - develop a deep understanding of content;
  - synthesize information -- beyond reporting, to create new knowledge;
  - engage students in the love of reading.
- Although parents indicate that the most important factor in education is having teachers who are experts in their subject areas, it seems that librarians were not factored into this equation, as the majority of the nation has seen a decline in the number of school librarians serving their students.

- A recent study from the Pew Research Center concludes that 47% of teachers surveyed strongly agree, and another 44% somewhat believe, that courses and content focusing on digital literacy should be incorporated into every school curriculum, while a growing body of evidence, including more than 25 state studies, validate that higher test scores are found in schools with school library programs.
- In a few communities, such as Baltimore, Maryland, a recognition of the vital role of school librarians is taking place: schools that had eliminated school librarians from the teaching equation are recognizing adverse effects on their students' research abilities and are bringing librarians back.
- Further, school systems in other countries are recognizing the value of school librarians and increasing their numbers and resources. If our youth is to compete in a global economy, we need to look at how other countries are re-evaluating education.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The goal of the school library campaign is to raise awareness about the value of school librarians that will ultimately lead to ongoing, sustained support for school library programs. Three audiences have been determined, each with specific but related goals, key messages and strategies:

- Parents and local communities;
- School administrators and local and state decision-makers;
- National policy makers.

### **Component 1: Parents and the Local Community**

#### **Vision**

To develop an awareness, understanding and commitment to a shared vision of how excellence in school libraries provides a foundation for ongoing student success and lifelong learning, which promotes literacy, productivity and citizenship.

#### **Key Messages**

Students who benefit from school library programs staffed by credentialed school librarians are better prepared to succeed in college and the workplace.

#### **Strategies and Tactics**

- Find editorial placements in publications such as the Huffington Post, women's and men's magazines, as well as education blogs, written by both librarians and those outside the field.
- Utilize ALA members to hold informal focus groups with parents to help inform key messages and next steps with plan.
- Provide key messaging for this audience to reinforce messages at state and national levels.

Create tools and resources for community presentations, including a website, downloadable handouts, PowerPoint presentations and videos.

## **Component 2: School Administrators and Local and State Decision-makers**

### **Vision**

To further an understanding among school/district leaders and funders that strong school library programs are essential to providing a quality education for all children, leading to increased support and funding for all aspects of the school library program.

### **Key Messages**

Quality school libraries staffed by credentialed school librarians have a proven, measurable and significant impact on student achievement, including literacy levels and high-stakes test scores, and are an effective tool in closing the achievement gap for poor and minority students. School libraries and school librarians are critical resources necessary for effective implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

### **Strategies and Tactics**

- Identify administrators who are school library champions around the country and utilize them as spokespeople in peer-to-peer communications.
- Utilize this cadre of administrator's op-eds and media placements in peer publications and other publications within their circles of influence; to speak on behalf of school librarians.
- Develop tools and resources for peer-to-peer presentations, including a website, downloadable handouts, PowerPoint presentations and videos.
- Have a presence at trade shows that target administrators, both as exhibitors and as speakers, such as these (identified by AASL's Learning4Life Task Force as educational associations most important to influence):
  - National Association of Elementary School Principals
  - National Association of Secondary School Principals
  - National Council of Teachers of English
  - National School Boards Association
  - American Association of School Administrators
  - American Federation of Teachers
  - National Association of State Boards of Education
- Identify states already doing exemplary work on behalf of school libraries, such as NJ and NY, and elevate them as models for other states to follow.
- Create a partnership with ALA chapters and AASL affiliates to get local media placement and help move campaign to state and local level, including messaging to library communities.
- Create key messaging for this audience to reinforce messages at local and national levels.

## **Component 3: National Policy Makers**

### **Vision**

To demonstrate the critical role school library programs and school librarians play in education which directly contributes to their goals of educational skills focusing on college and workforce readiness.

## **Key Messages**

Schools with strong library media programs have higher test scores in both reading and writing skills. Direct correlation between having a strong school media program and test scores. School libraries play critical role in supporting student learning and student achievement. Librarians help develop reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. School librarians have the educational training and expertise to support learning at all grade levels through knowledge of both print and digital information which prepare students for college and workforce readiness.

## **Strategies and Tactics**

- Work with ALA leadership to reach out to national educational policy leaders including members of Congress and members of the administration such as the Department of Education and the FCC, as well as leaders in the business community such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.
- Work with ALA leadership to reach out to leaders of major educational associations to conduct information sharing sessions on issues of mutual concern, such as these (identified by AASL's Learning4Life Task Force as educational associations most important to influence):
  - International Society for Technology in Education
  - Parent Teacher Association
  - National Education Association
  - International Reading Association
  - Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

As well as:

- The Council for Higher Education Accreditation
- Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills
- Campaign for Grade Level Reading
- Find editorial placement in publications of these national associations/
- Find editorial placement in publications such as the Huffington Post, women's and men's magazines, as well as education blogs, written by both librarians and those outside the field.
- Develop tools and resources for presentations, including a website, downloadable handouts, PowerPoint presentations and videos.
- Create key messaging for this audience to reinforce messages at local and state level.