

TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: Status of School Library Initiatives

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:
Information only

ACTION REQUESTED BY:
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DRAFT OF MOTION:
N/A

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SUMMARY: An update of school library initiatives

Background

The Office for Library Advocacy (OLA), in conjunction with ALA offices and divisions, has been coordinating the School Library Action Plan. This plan is an outcome of previous presidential school library campaigns. An ad hoc group, comprising American Library Association (ALA) President Barbara Stripling, American Association of School Librarians (AASL) President Gail Dickinson, and other member leaders, met at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia to refine the plan. The full action plan, plus an update on progress of individual initiatives follows.

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.

Status:

- OLA began to see a rise in the request for assistance from school libraries facing budget cuts and loss of positions in March. American Libraries covered the issue in a March 5 post: <http://www.americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blog/underfunded-school-libraries-fight-back>. The article has currently has 1,736 click-throughs.
- OLA has lead the ALA Crisis team in consultation and response to multiple school library crises with letters from Barbara Stripling and Gail Dickinson sent to decision-makers in Arlington, Virginia, Los Angeles, California, Fayette County, Kentucky and the state of Ohio.
- In addition, OLA Director Marci Merola has been working closely with a task force of Chicago Public School librarians as they prepare for budget cuts later this spring, most recently having developed a communications plan incorporating the Declaration for the Right to School Libraries.
- OLA and AASL continue to monitor media outlets and social media for news of potential budget cuts, layoffs and position eliminations.
- PIO organized a half day planning session to discuss recommendations from the summer 2013 Campaign for America's Libraries strategic review session. PIO, AASL and OLA staff discussed implementation to date and early successes of this effort, identified needs and strategic priorities. A framework for advancing the campaign was created to drive forward the action plan.

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.

Status:

- Barbara Stripling and her advisory group adopted a school version of the Declaration for the Right to Libraries, created by AASL School Library Month Committee Chair Susan Hess. This version has been designed and is available as a free download.
- A major push for school libraries to use the Declaration began in April. Information can be found here: at <http://www.ala.org/aasl/slm/2014/declaration> , www.ilovelibraries.org, and the Facebook presence for both I Love Libraries and the Declaration for the Right to Libraries.
- The Public Information Office worked with members of the Association of Philadelphia School Librarians, American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the ALA's Office for Advocacy to secure coverage of multiple school library advocacy events that featured the Declaration for The Right to Libraries during the ALA Midwinter conference. The events fueled coverage by local CBS Radio affiliate WKYW with a segment entitled "[Students, Librarians Speak Up For Lack Of Libraries In Phila. Schools](#)," and Philly Metro's multiple articles including, "[Self-evident: Declaring the right to library](#)," and [City kids fight to protect the libraries they love](#) could be found. Local media including the Philadelphia Inquirer were interested in the changing role of libraries with such headlines including "[Public libraries seek to rebrand](#)," and

[Philadelphia libraries turning into digital meccas](http://atyourlibrary.org/philadelphia-residents-sign-declaration-right-libraries). PIO/Campaign for America's Libraries staff prepared and posted this article about the Declaration signing in Philadelphia: Philadelphia Residents Sign 'Declaration for the Right to Libraries'
<http://atyourlibrary.org/philadelphia-residents-sign-declaration-right-libraries>

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 21st Century Learning. Includes a student-focused emphasis.

Status:

- PIO, AASL and OLA are working to update existing messaging used in op-eds, response letters and other communications.
- PIO, AASL and OLA will be creating an editorial board and editorial calendar to ensure consistency in messaging and consistency in news and promotion throughout the year.
- The Office for Research and Statistics continues to update the database of research findings to help advocates make the case for libraries at every stage of youth development and education. (Select "Add it Up" on the listing page for Libraries Matter: Impact Research, <http://www.ala.org/research/librariesmatter/>)

"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.

Status:

- Planning and discussion underway with AASL and OLA.

Web Portal: using www.ilovelibraries.org, ALA's advocacy website for the public, and www.atyourlibrary.org, the public website for the Campaign for America's Libraries, to showcase news, research and messaging about school libraries, as well as stories and testimony.

Status:

- OLA has hired a freelance writer to create this section of Ilovelibraries.org. OLA is working closely with AASL as concepts are developed so that there is continuity with AASL's digital supplement (see entry below) and so that those articles can refer back to www.ilovelibraries.org. This is targeted for late Spring 2014.
- The atyourlibrary.org website continues to publish content that encourages visitors to utilize the resources at their library, with an emphasis on reinforcing key messages on the importance of school libraries: [School Libraries: Champion of Change, Carolyn Foote](#), [School Libraries: Students Call Michigan Library 'Home'](#), [School Libraries: Small Town School Library Equips Its Students for the 21st Century](#)), and [School Libraries: Oklahoma Librarian Receives Check from Ellen Degeneres](#) <http://atyourlibrary.org/libraries/school-libraries-oklahoma-librarian-receives-check-ellen-degeneres>. The atyour library face book and twitter accounts also highlighted these and other stories.

Online tools for Advocates: Resources for parents and other advocates to make the case for school libraries, including talking points, PowerPoint presentations, and videos.

Status:

- Work will begin on reframing existing tools for librarians so that they are parent-focused. Will reside on www.ilovelibraries.org website.

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.

Status:

- AASL has begun work on various pieces of this project and is partnering with OLA to create concepts and article ideas.
- Executive Director Sylvia Norton is working with American Libraries for placement. Targeted for fall of 2014.

Success Stories: working with affiliates to find and showcase success stories

Status:

- AASL has begun a member request for success stories, placed both on AASL's website and www.ilovelibraries.org.

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

Status:

- AASL Executive Director Sylvia Norton has begun meeting face to face with multiple external partners, including The National Education Association, The American Federation of Teachers, The National Association of School Principals, The American Association of School Administrators, The National School Board Association, and the National Center for Literacy Education.
- Formal strategies are under development.

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.

Status:

- Work has been handled at executive leadership level so far.

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.

Status:

- April
PIO worked with the national PTA, which will publish an op-ed by ALA President Barbara Stripling on the value of school libraries in its April edition of *Our Children* to help highlight that April is School Library Month. The magazine reaches 30,000 PTA® leaders directly involved in schools, community and educational programs, activities. Our Children provides leaders with resources to help them improve and maintain their children's health and safety, effectively manage their PTA, and work with their schools and communities in support of their children's educational achievement. The circulation list includes all local PTA presidents: Nearly 22,000 volunteer PTA leaders actively involved in school and PTA decision making. All state PTA presidents: PTA leaders with experience at the local, regional, and state levels. State PTA board members: Nearly 5,000 PTA representatives working at the state level. State office personnel: PTA office administrators actively serving local PTAs throughout their states. Others: 2,000 parents, education organizations, teachers, and others. Here is a link to the magazine web site: <http://www.pta.org/members/content.cfm?ItemNumber=1177&navItemNumber=574>
- March 22, 2014
Publication: Education Week News
Reporter: Katie Ash
Interviewed: Gail Dickinson
Article title: [Colorado Administrator Forges New Path for School Librarians](#)
Topic: New role of school librarians in the digital age
- March 4, 2014
The Morning Call
Adam Clark
Interviewed: Gail Dickinson
Article title: [Allentown School District and its low priority for libraries](#)
Topic: the state of school libraries. Due to budget cuts within the Allentown (Pa.) School District students have limited access to a certified school librarian and materials.
- Feb. 28, 2014
Publication: TakePart
Reporter: Solvej Schou
Interviewed: Gail Dickinson
Article title: [How Cuts and Closures of Elementary School Libraries Are Hurting ...](#)
Topic: Value of school libraries
- Feb. 24, 2014
Information request: NBC Nightly News
Producer: Janelle Richards
Phone Interview: Gail Dickinson
Topic: State of school libraries
- Jan. 27, 2014
Publication: Metro Philly
Reporter: Tommy Rowan
Interviewed: Gail Dickinson
Article title: [Philadelphia libraries turning into digital meccas](#)
Topic: Changing role of libraries/ Declaration signing event in support of school libraries

- Jan. 13, 2014
Publication: School Library Journal
Reporter: Karen Springen
Interviewed: Gail Dickinson
Article title: [How to Create a Knockout Summer Literacy Program](#)
Topic: School libraries and how to make summer reading count