

ALA American Library Association

January 26, 2021

The American Library Association (ALA) endorses the confirmation of Dr. Miguel A. Cardona to be the next U.S. Secretary of Education. Dr. Cardona has classroom, administrative, and state governance experience, bringing an unusually deep and broad background to lead the U.S. Department of Education.

School libraries have a pivotal role in advancing student success and achievement in a technology-driven world. Dr. Cardona recognizes this. Under his leadership as the Connecticut Commissioner of Education, school librarians were regularly [engaged](#) in important education initiatives and activities.

When school libraries are well-equipped and fully resourced with appropriate materials, space, technology, and certified staff, school districts can expect improved teaching and learning outcomes at the student, school, and community level. These outcomes include access to and awareness of new technologies; media and information literacy; literacy and STEM gains; social-emotional learning; and increased college and career readiness. Studies demonstrate clear evidence that school library programs staffed by a qualified school librarian have a strong and positive impact on student academic achievement.

We highlight three of the many roles of school libraries & school librarians.

Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Whether learning takes place face-to-face, remotely, or a blend of these, school librarians [support the needs](#) of teachers and students during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- School librarians innovated during the pandemic by providing new services such as virtual check outs, home delivery of books, technology support for students, parents/caregivers, and school staff, and hybrid teaching with students in-person and live streaming—and much more.

School and District Leadership

- School librarians provide expertise and resources that cut across grades, disciplines, and administrative functions.
- Essential skills of inquiry, critical thinking, use of technology, use of digital content and services, and digital citizenship are among the topics taught by school librarians in their role as educators.
- School librarians plan and lead district-wide curriculum initiatives, provide professional learning opportunities to district staff, and are a resource for parents/caregivers and others in the larger school community.
- School librarians foster social-emotional learning and can leverage these skills by collaborating with school counselors and school psychologists.
- And, of course, school librarians foster a love of reading.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

- School libraries are well-situated to engage in activities beyond the curriculum, as well as collaborating on curricular learning with groups of students and via personalized learning.
- [Research](#) suggests that students tend to earn better standardized test scores in schools that have strong library programs.
- For reading performance, the presence of a certified librarian has an especially positive impact for students in at-risk groups.

School libraries staffed with state-certified professionals provide an approachable, equitable, personalized learning environment necessary for every learner's well-rounded education. ALA looks forward to opportunities to engage with the Committee and Department under the leadership of Secretary Cardona. Through provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act, the Innovative Approaches to Literacy program, and other Department mechanisms, libraries can help to address the pressing issues facing K-12 students and educators today and in the future.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathi Kromer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathi Kromer

Associate Executive Director, Public Policy & Advocacy

American Library Association

Cc: Kevin Maher