

SCHOOL/PUBLIC LIBRARY JOINT USE FACILITY STANDARDS  
DEVELOPED BY  
THE NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS  
THE NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION  
THE NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY

Continuous learning is the foundation of the twenty-first century. Every resident of New Jersey will be seeking new opportunities to learn and grow. From infants to older adults, learning will be an ongoing pursuit. Access to educational resources will be the key. It has been widely recognized that libraries play a critical role in our educational process. In New Jersey there are currently 451 public library facilities and 2,295 school libraries. The demand for library services is increasing. Currently 68 public library construction projects are underway throughout the state, and new construction supported by the state's \$8.6 billion Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act is underway. As the demand for library services increases, the question is often asked "Why not just combine the school and public library in the same facility?" Although at first glance this may seem simple, experience in other states has demonstrated that this is a very difficult process and should only be undertaken after careful consideration. Throughout the country there are a few successful models of combined school and public libraries, particularly in rural areas such as Colorado and Utah. New Jersey has very, very few models and the only true example of a joint/school public library that we could identify is in Cranbury, NJ. Merely designating a space in a new facility as "the school/public library" will not make this successful. Careful and systematic planning must be undertaken.

**The most formidable challenge of a joint-use facility is to ensure the safety of the children of the community.** While both the school library and the public library share this common goal they must *by law* employ different means to achieve that end. With this in mind, schools limit public access to promote the safety of the children they serve. They have strict sign-in procedures for parents/guardians visiting the building, and they tightly limit access to the school by outsiders. By their nature public libraries must be open to all members of the community. They offer the general public full and open access with few permissible restrictions. To fulfill its mission and to comply with the law, a public library must meet a high standard when considering exclusion of any individual or group. Public library users need not be residents of the community, are not requested to identify themselves and do not sign-in or need any identification of clearance to enter the facility. In dealing with children, school library staff may act *in loco parentis*; public library staff may not. To successfully serve the community, these differences must be reconciled in the day-day operations of the joint facility.

**School libraries and public libraries have different missions and constituencies.** School libraries provide essential materials and technology for curricular and instructional needs. School library media specialists teach information literacy skills essential for academic achievement and prepare students to be lifelong learners. Public libraries are centers for community life and learning, offering people of all ages free and open access to information resources, programs, technology and meeting space to support a broad range of educational and leisure interests. Public libraries must offer all members of the public full and open access with few permissible restrictions and are usually open from 9:00 am until 9:00 p.m. on weekdays and also on weekends.

These differences in mission and constituencies have a direct impact on the focus of the collection, the educational certification of the staff, the primary services of the library, and the facilities. See: *Libraries Working Together: Public and School Libraries Working Together to Provide Complementary Services*, developed jointly by the New Jersey Association of School Librarians and the New Jersey Library Association (see attached or <http://njla.org/statements/publicschool.html> or <http://njasl.org/Publicatons.htm>). Because of these differences, detailed planning must be undertaken before a school/public library is developed.

## LEGAL BASIS

New Jersey State Statutes do not provide any legislative authority for the establishment of a school/public library. Currently, schools and public libraries are organized under different statutory schemes. The administration of a public library is by a library board of trustees appointed under *NJSA 40:54.1* or a county library commission. Schools are administered by local school boards as provided by *NJSA 18A*. The NJ State Library promulgates administrative code regulations for public libraries and the State Board of Education issues administrative regulations for public schools. It is imperative that no school/ public library agreement abrogate any state law or regulation with reference to schools or public libraries. Local library boards of trustees and local school district boards are empowered to enter into contracts and to develop policies for their respective institutions

## CRITERIA FOR STANDARDS: COMBINED SCHOOL/PUBLIC LIBRARY

A local school board and a local library board must plan before entering into a contract for a school/public library. This contract will outline the specific terms of agreement for establishment of a school/public library. Proper planning is essential. This contract must be reviewed by attorneys for each of the legal entities before being signed by the president of the local board of education and the president of the local public library board.

### **Checklist for planning a joint-use school/public library facility.**

Because each community is unique, there is no single model that will ensure the success of a joint school/public library. However, there is a common set of issues that must be addressed in detail, to meet community needs and desires. The following checklist has been developed as an outline for a contract between local school boards and public library boards. To review this checklist a community planning group must be established with representatives from the local school board and the local library board. It is essential that the public library director and the school media specialist be involved in the review of this checklist. The following lists key areas that must be included in the planning document. This checklist has been developed by reviewing existing documents prepared in other states. A brief description of each area is presented and followed by a series of questions to be answered by a planning committee. A planning committee must develop a document that answers "yes" to these questions in order to ensure a successful school/public library operation.

### **Governance**

**Under New Jersey State Law public schools and public libraries are organized, operated and funded under different state statutes and regulations. Schools are organized under *NJSA 18A* and public libraries under *NJSA 40:54*. Local school boards have the authorization over local public schools to develop policies for schools and local public library boards have authorization to develop policies for local public libraries.**

### Checklist

\_\_\_ All state laws and regulations regarding the operation of public schools and public libraries have been followed in the establishment of this agreement.

\_\_\_ Public library boards of trustees and local boards of education agree to develop policies to ensure the use of the facilities by their primary constituencies.

\_\_\_ Funding for the school and public library portions of the joint facility has been determined.

### **Planning**

**School and public libraries have different missions. School libraries prepare students to become lifelong readers and effective users of information, and they directly support the curriculum and instructional programs of their schools. Public libraries are centers for community life and learning, offering people of all ages open access to information, resources, programs, and technology and meeting space to support reading, lifelong learning and a broad array of leisure interests.**

#### Checklist

\_\_\_\_\_ The differing missions of both the public library and the school library media programs are included in the planning document.

\_\_\_\_\_ Community members are involved in and are supportive of the decision to have a combined school and public library program.

\_\_\_\_\_ The two boards have defined the time frame for the agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_ The two boards have a defined process for handling disputes.

\_\_\_\_\_ The two boards have defined the terms for the dissolution of the agreement.

#### Staffing

**The primary role of a public librarian is to provide access to books, information and programming that support community needs and interests. The primary role of a certified school library media specialist is to teach information literacy skills and to assist students, teachers and other members of the school community with access to informational needs. Under state law the educational and certification requirements for school and public library personnel are different.**

#### Checklist

\_\_\_\_\_ The public library board will employ a library director who is certified under NJSA 45:8A and will employ additional staff as provided in NJAC 6:68-1 et seq. to meet state per capita aid requirements.

\_\_\_\_\_ The school board will employ a school library media specialist certified under NJAC 6:11-11.17 (update citation to NJAC 6A:9-13.14 in January 2004 and at least one aide to support the school portion of the program).

#### Facility

**In addition to housing a collection of print, media and technology resources, school and public libraries have very different space requirements. School libraries need additional space for large and small group instruction. Public libraries need additional public meeting room space and areas for public programming. Both facilities need their own dedicated space for quiet study, computer instruction, processing of materials and storage.**

#### Checklist

\_\_\_\_\_ The physical space dedicated for the school media portion of the library is at least the maximum square footage eligible for state funding under the Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act. (The Act establishes the following standards for maximum state funding allocations for school library media centers: 4,000 square feet for elementary schools, 6,250 square feet for middle schools, and 10,075 for high schools.)

\_\_\_\_\_ The physical space for the public library portion of the library meets NJ State Construction Bond Standards (NJAC 15:21-11.6 (e) Table 1)

\_\_\_\_\_ The building is accessible for all users and meets all applicable state and federal codes including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

\_\_\_\_\_ The building has a separate entrance directly from the outside for public library patrons. (A separate entrance is needed because public library patrons should not have to meet school procedures for signing into the building. This could violate the public library's role as a limited public forum)

\_\_\_\_\_ The building has dedicated parking spaces for the public library directly adjacent to the building.

\_\_\_\_\_ The library has adequate signage, furniture, and shelving appropriate for all users.

\_\_\_\_\_ The library is in close proximity to classrooms and a separate door connects the library to the main part of the school with provisions for additional security if necessary to ensure a safe school environment.

\_\_\_\_\_ The library has areas for quiet reading.

\_\_\_\_\_ The library has areas for large and small group instruction.

\_\_\_\_\_ The library has separate restroom facilities for school children and for public library users (preschools, children and adults).

\_\_\_\_\_ The library has areas for meeting rooms, computer labs, AV equipment storage, offices, and workrooms.

\_\_\_\_\_ The library has an area for preschool children where they do not bother adults or school children.

\_\_\_\_\_ A plan for the custodial work involving the library is established. The plan determines who is responsible for maintaining the facility during school hours, after school, on weekends, on school holidays and during the summer.

#### **Focus of the Collection**

**School libraries support curricular and instruction/research needs as well as the use of information technology. School libraries act *in loco parentis* and provide access to resources that are appropriate for the ages the school serves. Public libraries offer a collection that meets the broadest spectrum of community needs and interests. The public library collection will include some materials that may be inappropriate for children. Courts have found that public libraries must not limit their collections to only materials that are appropriate for children.**

\_\_\_\_\_ The school board and the library board each adopt collection development policies including procedures for handling challenged materials, for their portions of the collection.

\_\_\_\_\_ Public library purchases a broad range of materials in sufficient numbers and a variety of formats to meet library per capita state aid requirements.

\_\_\_\_\_ School library purchases sufficient materials to support curriculum needs.

\_\_\_\_\_ The school board and the library board each adopt policies governing borrowing and sharing of library materials and procedures for damaged, overdue, and lost materials.

\_\_\_\_\_ The collections are cataloged.

\_\_\_\_\_ Policies will be developed by the local school board to determine if students can access public library materials during school hours.

\_\_\_\_\_ The combined library will be a member of the New Jersey Library Network.

#### **Funding**

**Financial support for library services is critical to success. The public library board and the local board of education (school board) must assure strong financial support for library services. The public library and the school library receive support under different legal authorities.**

## Checklist

\_\_\_\_\_ The public library will receive at least the minimum level of funding as prescribed in NJSA 40:54.1 et seq.

\_\_\_\_\_ The public library will file an annual report with the NJSL in order to be eligible for state aid and state library grant programs.

\_\_\_\_\_ The school library will be a separate line item in the school budget.

\_\_\_\_\_ The local boards will yearly adopt an operating budget to support the costs of library materials, staff, maintenance, utilities, telecommunications costs, insurance and jointly purchased equipment.

\_\_\_\_\_ The local boards will jointly develop plans for, and agree to the terms of support for, capital improvements.

## Hours

**Public libraries are typically open 50-60 hours per week including weekends, holidays, and evenings. Public libraries cannot restrict access during the hours in which the library is open. A school library follows the school's hours of operation and schedule. Most school libraries are closed after the school day, during the summer months and on weekends and holidays.**

## Checklist

\_\_\_\_\_ The public library will provide access to the public with a schedule that accommodates daytime, evening and weekend use.

\_\_\_\_\_ The school library will be open to accommodate its primary clientele- the public school community.

## Internet Access

**School libraries are required to filter Internet access to children. Public libraries develop Internet use policies in response to the needs of the community at large. Depending on the community, the public library may choose to offer all unfiltered access, all filtered (with an option for adults to have the filters removed on request) or a combination of access levels.**

## Checklist

\_\_\_\_\_ Each board will adopt a policy for Internet access.

\_\_\_\_\_ Specific computers will be available for adult use only. These machines will not be used by students.

\_\_\_\_\_ The boards will jointly develop a plan for the purchase and maintenance of technology.

## CONCLUSIONS

This planning checklist will assist school and library boards to determine the feasibility of a school/public library joint use facility. A community planning team must use the checklist in developing its agreement. If all sections in the checklist are completed with a "yes", the planning document will become the foundation of a legal agreement between the school board and the library board. It is only through cooperative planning that this can be achieved.

## Acknowledgements:

The following materials were consulted: Combined School and Public Libraries: Guidelines for Decision Makers, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1998; Guidelines and Standards for Queensland

Pubic Library, State Library of Queensland, May 1997; “Combined School-Public Library Facilities, Part I”. *Public Libraries* ( Sept./Oct 2002) pg. 248-255; “Combined School-Public Library Facilities, Part II”. *Public Libraries* ( Nov./Dec. 2002) pg. 310-316; “Libraries Working Together: Public and School Libraries Working Together to Provide Complementary Services”, New Jersey Association of School Librarians and New Jersey Library Association, 2001; “Public Libraries and School Libraries: Perfect Together?”, New Jersey Library Association, Nov. 2002.

## OUTLINE FOR A JOINT USE FACILITY AGREEMENT.

If, after using the *Feasibility Checklist*, a community determines that a joint use facility is feasible, the following should be considered when drafting the agreement.

### **Mission:**

- a. *Are the missions and roles of each library compatible when combined?*
  - The primary mission of the school library is to support the school curriculum and prepare students to become effective users of resources, ideas, information and other intellectual properties.
  - The mission of the public library is to meet the learning, recreational, and informational needs of its customers, providing an open environment for its community.
- b. *Can a combined library meet the needs of the two separate populations?*
- c. *Would the combined program meet both current qualitative and quantitative school library media and public library standards?*

### **Administration:**

- a. *Who is responsible for the direct administration of the joint library?*
  - In a school library, policy and funding are set by the school district Board of Education.
  - The municipal government funds public libraries and the Library Board sets policies.
- b. *Which board (school or public) would make decisions, particularly in areas of conflict?*
- c. *Which board would establish operating policies?*
- d. *Which board would be responsible for hiring, evaluating and dismissing of the library staff?*

- e. Would the public librarian or the school library media specialist be “in charge” during joint operating hours?*
- f. Which board would be responsible for setting staff salaries and benefits?*
- g. Which board would provide the following: capital improvements, equipment, supplies, mailing, printing, telephone and insurance?*
- h. Would accounting procedures of each board be compatible?*
- i. Would a school district have legal authority to operate a public library?*
- j. What provisions would be made for legal and equitable division of materials and equipment if the libraries were separated at a later date?*

**Collections/Resources:**

- a. Would there be two separate collections, one for students and teachers and another for the general public?*
- b. Would a joint selection policy be adopted or would each library purchase materials under its own selection policy?*

The district Board of Education must approve all school instructional materials, which include library resources.

- c. Does the selection policy include a section that addresses controversial adult materials?*
- d. Is the existing material collection well balanced enough to support both school and public library use?*
- e. Would circulation procedures and policies be uniform?*
  - Reference materials
  - Special collections
  - Audio-visual materials
  - Periodicals
  - Fiction and nonfiction books
  - Audio-visual equipment
- f. Does the budget provide technology to support each program?*
- g. Who will determine procedures to access online databases and the Internet?*
  - Schools that accept Federal funding must comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA).
  - Public libraries do not need to comply with CIPA regulations.
  - Some school districts require individual login/password identification to access computer resources.
- h. Who maintains circulation records and Internet search histories; what decisions are made to access these records?*

- i. Is it possible that eligibility for Federal entitlements could be denied if school and public library collections are combined?*

**Staffing:**

- a. Are the qualifications and preparations of the staff adequate to serve the combined populations?*
- The primary role of the school library media specialist is to teach students to locate, evaluate and use information efficiently and responsibly. School library media specialists collaborate with subject/grade level teachers in planning, teaching, and assessing information skills according to local curriculum, and state and national standards.
  - The primary role of the public librarian is to provide access to materials, information, and programming that support a wide range community needs and interests. Public librarians serve people who range in age from toddler to senior citizen. They provide information to help homeowners and the homeless, business owners and hobbyists.
- b. Will the professional, paraprofessional, support and custodial staff have to meet all requirements for employment in a public school district (i.e. criminal background check, medical screening)?*
- c. Does the professional staff meet appropriate certification regulations established by the NJ Department of Education or required by the NJ State Library?*
- d. Does the library staff have both school and public library experience and/or course work?*
- e. Are the librarians committed to the philosophy of a joint school-public library program?*
- f. Would there be two specific and equal staffs? How would their salaries be determined?*
- g. Who determines the division of labor? (This list should be limited only to joint responsibilities- the public librarian should not have a role in instruction, curriculum planning, etc.)*
- Library staff development / professional development
  - Guided research / resource advisory
  - Processing of materials / various clerical tasks
  - Reshelving of books
  - Mail
  - Circulation
  - Keeping records and fines / memos and notification of overdues
  - Maintaining equipment
  - Division of daytime and evening tasks
  - Scheduling of library facility and programs
- h. Who determines the conditions and terms of employment?*
- Contractual conditions (salary, tenure, sick days, personal days, vacation days, professional development, benefits, prep-time, part-time/full-time, pension, union/professional association memberships).

- Background checks.
- Civil service positions.
- Termination.

- i. Who determines opportunities for and appropriateness of professional development activities/workshops to serve the entire staff?*
- j. Who will fund individual professional development activities/workshops? (their respective employers).*
- k. What provisions are made to assure students are supervised by certified school staff? (certified SMLS or classroom teacher must always supervise school students in SLMCenters).*

**Programming / Scheduling:**

- a. How will hours of scheduling (fixed and/or flexible) permit a continuation of programs unique to each population?*
  - Story hour
  - Recreational reading
  - Information literacy skills instruction/research/group instruction
  - Specific programs
  - Community meetings
  - Audiovisual productions
  - Open access to meet student/staff needs
- b. Who is responsible for program delivery? How is the delivery affected by year round/weekly/daily hours of operation?*
- c. Will there be an intergenerational acceptance of a combined library facility?*

**Facility:**

- a. What considerations are important in choosing the site and developing the design of a combined school -public library facility?*
  - Separate and direct means of access for public library patrons.
  - Close proximity to classrooms.
  - Means to physically divide or integrate the school and public portion of the library.
  - Areas for quiet reading.
  - Areas for pre-school children where they do not bother adults or school children.
  - Areas for instruction.
  - Restroom facilities to accommodate separate user populations (pre-school, elementary/youth, adolescents, adults, senior citizens).
  - Areas for meeting rooms, computer labs, AV equipment storage, offices, work rooms.
  - Sufficient parking to accommodate parking for two populations.
- b. Can the library facility, including the restrooms, be operated during the evening, summer and weekend hours without jeopardizing building security?*
- c. What happens to the library facility if the school, which houses it, must be closed permanently?*

**d. Does the facility meet state/Federal handicap accessibility code?**

**Security / Maintenance:**

**a. Who is responsible for repairs and capital improvements?**

**b. Who is responsible for general custodial maintenance?**

**c. Who will determine policies for building security?**

**d. How much intermingling of the two populations will the community tolerate?**

**e. How can you best assure the safety of each individual population?**

**f. What health safety issues are compromised?**

Communicable diseases

Student security

**g. Who will be responsible for maintenance or snow removal when public library is open and school is closed?**

**g. Will public parking be close to the library facility?**

**h. Is there adequate lighting to assure safe access to the library in the evening?**

**i. Are elevators available for public access to libraries not located on the ground floor?**

**Cost:**

**a. Will combining a school and public library save money?**

**b. How is it expected that each of these areas would provide cost efficiencies?**

- Staff
- Salaries
- Construction
- Maintenance
- Collections/Resources
- Professional development
- Programs
- Computers
- Ongoing expenditures
- Insurance

The following materials were consulted: "What Do you Say When... Talking Points: Suggested Responses for Frequently Asked Questions", New Jersey Association of School Librarians, 2002.  
(<http://www.njasl.org/Publications.htm> - - <http://www.njasl.org/documents/talkpts.PDF> )

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