



Rochelle Hendricks, Assistant Commissioner
NJ Department of Education
100 River View Plaza
P.O. Box 500
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June 15, 2009

Dear Assistant Commissioner Hendricks,

We are writing to comment on the proposal level regulations recently published in the New Jersey Register for Programs and Practices to Support Student Achievement N.J.A.C. 6A:13. The New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) strongly recommends that the regulations governing school library media services outlined in N.J.A.C. 6A:13-2.1 Standards-based instruction, paragraph (h) be strengthened to say:

“All school districts shall provide a comprehensive school library media program that enables students to meet NJCCCS, and that is connected to classroom studies in each school building. The program shall include access to computers, district-approved instructional software, appropriate books including novels, anthologies, reference materials, and supplemental materials that motivate students to read in and out of school and to conduct research. All students, teachers, and administrators in each school building in New Jersey at all grade levels shall have access to a library media program provided by one or more certified school library media specialists working full time in the school library media center.”

The Partnership for 21st Century Schools, of which New Jersey is a member calls for states to create visionary education policies conducive to the integration of 21st century skills into education. Information, Media and Technology are among the skills highlighted in the Partnership’s framework document. School librarians firmly believe that students can only learn these skills in a comprehensive school library program staffed by a full time certified School Library Media Specialists (SLMS).

In recent months as local school districts developed their proposed budgets many elected to eliminate one or more SLMS positions. One school board went so far as to eliminate all SLMS employed in ten elementary schools in the district. NJASL recognizes that in these challenging economic times local school districts are faced with difficult choices. However, to slash SLMS from their employment roles to save money is shortsighted and irresponsible. Without SLMS, how will these districts implement a coherent curriculum to ensure that their students receive a Thorough and Efficient education designed to meet the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards? How will

these districts infuse 21st Century Skills in information, media, and technology without SLMS – the teachers who are most highly qualified to teach them? How will school districts provide the school library media services outlined in the current regulation?

Studies in 16 states document that schools that spend more on school library resources including certified librarians, technology and print materials have higher average test scores. The Illinois Study showed that at every grade level, schools with more library and library-connected computers – particularly, in the latter case, Internet computers relative to the school's enrollment – average higher test scores. Based on the findings in this study the following recommendation was advanced "Last, but not least, students achieve academically when their visits to libraries bring them into contact with librarians as teachers and co-teachers. Clearly, visits to libraries impact academic achievement most when libraries are being used as classrooms, study spaces, training facilities, and research centers. School libraries and librarians should not merely support instruction in their schools; they should be integral to it." Lance, Keith Curry, Marcia J. Rodney, and Christine Hamilton-Pennell. Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners: The Illinois Study. 2005. <http://www.islma.org/pdf/ILStudy2.pdf>

A similar study in Pennsylvania concluded, "Resource-rich school libraries and credentialed school librarians play key roles in promoting both information literacy and reading for information and inspiration. When staffed by qualified professionals trained to collaborate with teachers and engage students meaningfully with information that matters in the real world, school libraries become sophisticated 21st-century learning environments that offer equal opportunities for achievement to all students, regardless of the socio-economic or education levels of the community."

http://www2.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/s/slw3_2008.pdf

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the regulations governing Programs and Practices for Student Achievement. If you would like to discuss our recommendation, or if you have any questions please contact us.

Sincerely yours,

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