

KNOWLEDGE QUEST



TAKEAWAYS FROM VIRTUAL AND HYBRID LEARNING

Journal of the American Association of School Librarians

VOLUME 50, NO. 3 | January/February 2022 | ISSN 1094-9046 | www.aasl.org

American Association of School Librarians, a division of the American Library Association

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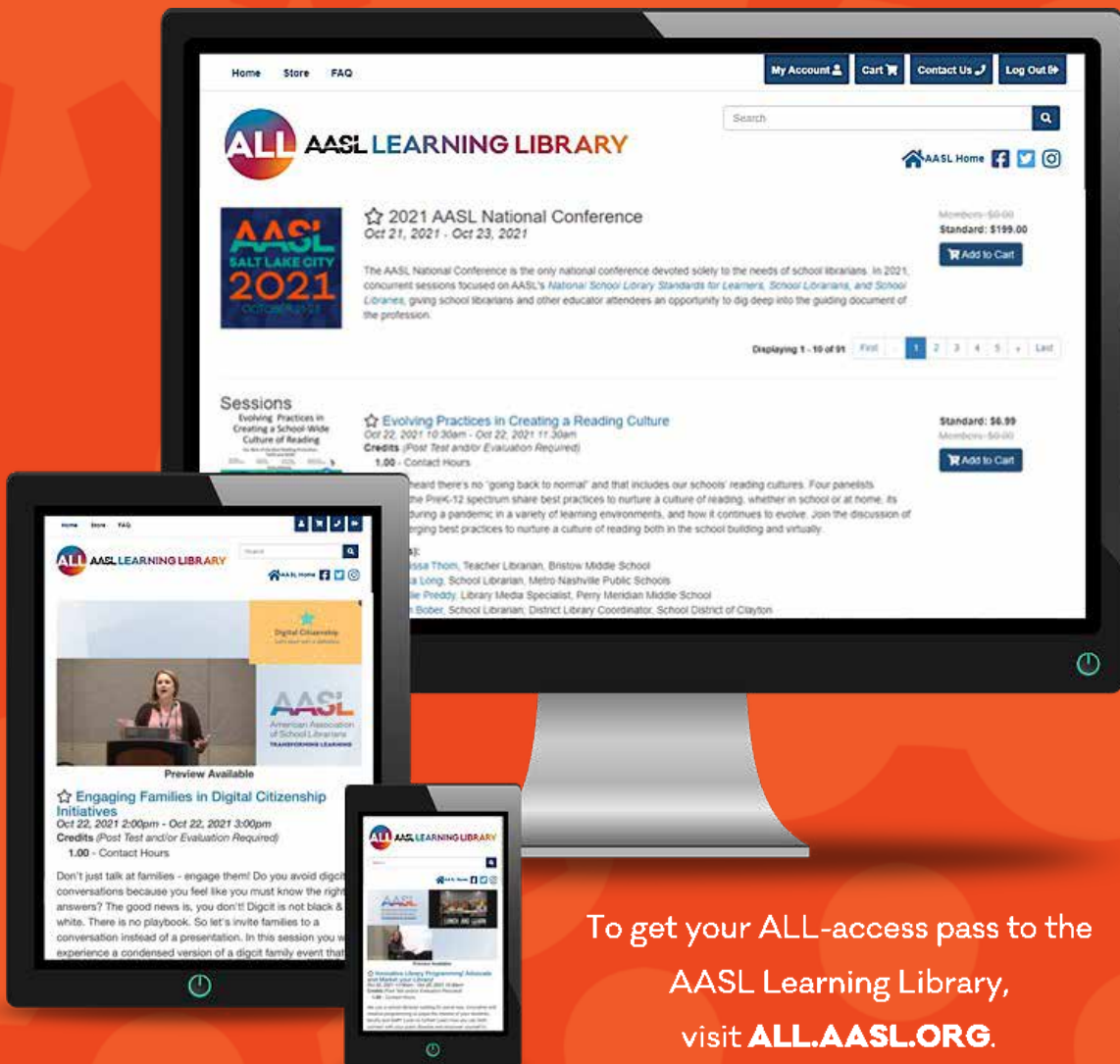
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Knowledge Quest is read by building-level school librarians, supervisors, library educators, and others concerned with the development of school libraries and school library services in elementary and secondary schools.

Indexing and Abstracting

Knowledge Quest is indexed in *Academic Abstracts/CD-ROM*; *Book Review Index*; *Current Contents*; *Social & Behavioral Sciences*; *Current Index to Journals in Education*; *Exceptional Child Education Abstracts*; *Information Science* and *CSA Illumina*.

School Library Research, AASL's online research journal, can be accessed at <www.ala.org/aasl/slr>.

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Now that virtual professional development is a permanent part of our culture, school librarians can consider areas of learning that we never thought we'd have an opportunity to pursue.

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Knowledge Quest (ISSN 1094-9046) is published bimonthly September through May by the American Library Association (ALA), 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601, <www.ala.org/aasl>. It is the official publication of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), a division of ALA. Subscription price to members of AASL, \$20 a year, included in membership dues; to nonmembers, \$65 in U.S., \$75 in foreign countries. Single copies \$15 from ALA. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, Illinois, and at additional mailing offices.

Change of address notices and subscription inquiries should be sent to the Subscription Dept., ALA, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Knowledge Quest*, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

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KQ

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KNOWLEDGE QUEST
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your thoughts on this issue.



School librarians teach the learners of today the lessons of the past and guide them into creating the society of the future.

School Librarians Lead through Time

Jennisen Lucas, 2021–2022 AASL President | jennisenlucas@park6.org

Long, long ago, in a lifetime that seems far, far away, a ten-year-old girl lived with her mother, father, two sisters, and two brothers in a 300-square-foot house with no electricity or indoor plumbing. Evening and weekend family time consisted of gathering, cutting, and stacking firewood or hauling water from the spring at the bottom of the hill. The firewood heated both the house and the bathwater. After chores were done, the girl and her family would do homework or read books—borrowed from the library via the card-and-pocket system—by the light of kerosene lamps. Everything seemed right with the world when she was home with her family. Life was simple, but it was good.

In the not-so-distant past, a young boy, six years old, sits at a small table in the living room of a 2,400-square-foot house connecting with his teacher and classmates via a video-conferencing program. Lessons are delivered via the program, and almost all the boy's schoolwork is done via computer interactions, either with his teacher or on his own. Family time with his parents is snatched in between work meetings and schoolwork and is often centered around the use of various electronic devices. Even communications with grandparents happen by way of a video call. The family does not leave the house much as they and most people hide away from a virus that is plaguing the world for which there is no cure or proven immunity.

If this sounds like a crazy juxtaposition of historical fiction and science fiction, it should. Your experience may not be quite as drastic as mine—yes, the child in the first paragraph is me, and the child in the second paragraph is my son. But for some of you, it may be close. The past two years have been a crazy mix of past meeting the future. When I was a child, computers were still a dream far away in the future, so living in a time in which we rely on them for connections as simple as family and school is quite remarkable if we think about it.

I have been truly lucky during this pandemic. My immediate and extended family are safe (so far). My school was closed for the first three months only (March to May 2020). I am supported and valued in my position. I know the same is not true for everyone else. One thing that my past has taught me is that each new day is an experience. It is our preparation and reactions that define these experiences for us.

The past two years have been a crazy mix of past meeting the future.

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more as a state library community.*

When I was a child, I knew I was very different from my classmates, who spent their evenings watching TV or, if they were very lucky, playing on new video-game consoles. This often made me feel self-conscious around my peers because I didn't know about the television shows they watched, and they didn't know about the books I read. I used to wish so hard that I could be more like them. As an adult, I look back and see how that experience shaped my life by teaching me resilience, family values, and the confidence that I can survive what the universe may throw my way.

Now, as we start to move forward through—if not out of—this pandemic, I can already look back and see how this experience has shaped me and my family. There are numerous moments from this experience that I am ready to toss away, like remote schooling, closed school libraries, and the anxiety about going out to get a gallon of milk.

However, there are more than a few things I think may be worth keeping. Remember: I live in Wyoming. This pandemic may have been the push my colleagues and I needed to jump into the virtual world to connect a little more as a state library community. Being involved in AASL, I have absolutely LOVED our monthly town hall meetings, a chance to regularly meet with people who really get me. I love the creativity and sense of community that has come from artists doing classes online, authors and actors providing reading entertainment (I hope I am not the only one who tuned into Patrick Stewart's daily Shakespearean Sonnet), publishers reaching out to help us make sure our learners had access to resources, online music concerts, virtual museum tours, and so many other

amazing experiences. I even have had the opportunity to tell stories at an International Online Storytelling Festival and organize an online festival for Wyoming storytellers.

I know that for many, 2020 was hard, and 2021 sometimes seemed even harder as our society tried to stretch and find its footing in the post-pandemic world. There are absolutely growing pains. We can see this in every story we encounter about the current hot-button topics: vaccines, hospitals, healthcare workers, education, race, gender, politics, teachers, librarians, etc.

As school librarians, we must remember one of the biggest lessons we should have learned: whether our communities know it or not, we are vital to the rebuilding of society. We are the connectors, the conduits, between our learners and the human record. We light the kerosene lamps and curate online resources. School librarians teach the learners of today the lessons of the past and guide them into creating the society of the future.

Jennisen Lucas (she/her/hers) is the 2021–2022 AASL President. She is the district librarian for Park County School District #6 in Cody, Wyoming. She earned her MLS from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2003, and earned National Board Certification for 2006–2026. She has been chair of the Wyoming School Library Interest Group and has been a member of and chaired multiple AASL committees.

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While there hasn't been a single school library experience or a simple, well-defined list of lessons learned, I hope we can all take a moment to reflect on how our individual experiences, considered collectively, illustrate the depth and breadth of our collective learning.

What We're Taking Away from Virtual and Hybrid Learning

Rachel Altobelli | rkaltobelli@gmail.com

By the time this issue reaches you, two full years will have passed since we started to hear about a novel coronavirus and collectively wondered what—if any—impact it would have on our lives and libraries. Most of us probably did not imagine we were about to embark on such a strange and stressful journey or how our experiences would converge and diverge depending on our location and level.

While there hasn't been a single school library experience or a simple, well-defined list of lessons learned, I hope we can all take a moment to reflect on how our individual experiences, considered collectively, illustrate the depth and breadth of our collective learning. As another new year begins, we can look at what came before, what is happening now, and what we'd like to carry forward into the future.

We can also look at what we would *not* like to carry forward. Not every lesson learned throughout the course of the pandemic has been one we would choose to repeat. We all made discoveries that helped propel us forward, and we all tried things that, upon reflection, propelled us in no particularly helpful direction whatsoever, even if they did take sixteen hours to plan.

When we had to invent new methods and strategies, we had to think about what we were doing and why. We had to go back to the drawing board (which was now virtual, and to which we possibly could not remember the

Not every lesson learned throughout the course of the pandemic has been one we would choose to repeat.

log-in) and ask ourselves fundamental questions. What role do school libraries play in the lives of students? How can we support all students? How can we keep students reading and learning and provide equitable library services, no matter what is happening in the world around us? How do we support each other and ourselves so we can continue to do the good work we want to do?

Of course, as we evolve and grow, we also need to rest and reflect. As we add new strategies and approaches, sometimes we need to move past previous methods. We can't only add; we have to be willing to subtract, as well. When we find new ways, we may need to replace the old ways and not try to do all of them at once. When we consider our work deeply, we may realize we can let some things go, because what we were doing no longer serves our truest purposes. (And also, regardless of how deeply weird time has gotten over the past two years, there are still only so many hours in the day, and we need to remember that we need quite a few of those hours to sleep, breathe, and take care of ourselves!)

The authors in this issue—who wrote these articles at the beginning of the 2021–2022 school year, which was definitely not a calm and relaxing time during which to breezily add an additional professional responsibility—generously share how they grew, struggled, and plan to move forward. Their hopes and dreams for their students and their focus on ensuring that reading, learning, and growing can continue, no matter what, shine through.

Cathi Fuhrman, one of our content experts, gives us a framework to think about the benefits and drawbacks of virtual professional development in “The Power and Pitfalls of Virtual Professional Development.” She reminds us to seek balance, to focus on what we hope to learn and accomplish, and to be thoughtful and purposeful as we nurture our professional lives and growth.

Her fellow content expert, Courtney Lewis, shares how she is looking to move beyond the in-the-moment research instruction that is so often the norm in “Envisioning Effective Digital Instruction.” While the pandemic may have been the specific inspiration for this work, the lesson is universal—we can use data and our own experiences to evaluate the underlying goals of our instruction and, if need be, take new approaches to achieve those goals.

Throughout the past two years, the need for continued and continual advocacy for school librarian jobs has continued, as Courtney Pentland details in “The Advocacy Efforts for School Librarian Staffing during the Pandemic.” She shares the stories and lessons learned of school librarians across the country, including Judi Moreillon, Laura Ward, Kathy Lester, and Tricina Strong-Beebe.

Lindsey Kimery shares how she found new ways to encourage reading during the pandemic in “Re-Inventing Reading in a Pandemic.” To keep students

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The future is unknown, but the lessons we have learned since 2020 can help us find a way forward, no matter what comes next.

engaged and reading, Lindsey put everything on the table, harnessed the power of collaboration, and focused on goals instead of rules.

Finally, three elementary school librarians, Kris Fedeli, Margaret Kennelly, and Allison Dunn, share their unique stories of beginning their school library careers during the pandemic in “Diving into School Librarianship during the Pandemic.” They tell us what they learned from their incredibly unique perspectives on pandemic librarianship. They saw school librarianship through a different lens, but those lenses still led them to focus on the fundamentals of learning, making safe spaces and responding to the needs of their school communities.

While we don’t know what 2022 has in store for us, we do know that school librarian creativity is unmatched and unbounded. We know that ways can be found, methods invented, and strategies adapted. The future is unknown, but the lessons we have learned since 2020 can help us find a way forward, no matter what comes next.

Rachel Altobelli (she/her) is the director of library services and instructional materials for Albuquerque Public Schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She received the 2020 Excellence in Student Achievement Award from the New Mexico School Boards Association. Rachel was the member guide for the 2017–2018 ALA Emerging Leaders cohort that created the toolkit “Defending Intellectual Freedom: LGBTQ Materials in School Libraries.” She was a panelist for the Junior Library Guild for the July 16, 2020, webinar “Innovation in Uncertainty: Back to School” and the May 20, 2020, webinar “Innovation in Uncertainty: How Librarians Step Up, Support Students, and Find Solutions.” She was also a co-presenter for the June 20, 2020, online presentation “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: The School Library and Me in the Global Learning Community” to the AASL Chapter Assembly. She was the guest editor for the January/February 2020 issue of *Knowledge Quest*. She is a member of AASL and is a member of the *Knowledge Quest* Editorial Board.



ENVISIONING EFFECTIVE DIGITAL INSTRUCTION

MOVING AWAY FROM JUST-IN-TIME
INFORMATION LITERACY INSTRUCTION
TO A MORE MEANINGFUL APPROACH

Courtney Lewis

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One vivid memory I have of the pandemic centers on the weekly (and sometimes twice weekly) department meetings I would have with my middle school and lower school librarians to discuss our age 3 through grade-12 approach to managing instruction during spring 2020. Stress, worry, laughter, and exasperation all made the rounds while we discussed logistics and brainstormed ideas, but these sessions offered a chance to explore what we actually teach. Our rushed and infrequent department meetings during a regular school year centered on immediate concerns and would rarely include pedagogical discussions, much to our mutual frustration.

During the pandemic, we were looking closely at our scope and sequence and figuring out what we could teach in Zoomlandia while five-year-olds left their devices to bring their cat into the picture or disinterested teens insisted on the forehead-only level of engagement. As my online spring 2020 research roster had only a single 11th-grade class left that needed to do their U.S. History project, my yoga pants-clad self thought, "This is totally doable." I was wrong.

At first I thought the dozens of student requests for one-on-one meetings was a sign of pandemic panic, but when I compared my Google calendar data, I actually had roughly the same number of meetings as previous years, averaging three per student. The endless stream of Zoom meetings was not only exhausting but also helped me realize the constant bombardment I would experience at the desk during a regular school year. I had taught these wonderful students for five years and, while they were using new databases like JSTOR, the basics were not so dissimilar that

everything should have inspired anxiety.

So why was every year—regardless of a pandemic—so fraught with research angst? And why was I just noticing this phenomenon?

Questioning Just-in-Time Information Literacy Instruction

My fellow school librarians and I dug deep and acknowledged that our information literacy instruction followed a just-in-time philosophy. Beginning in sixth grade we switch from a weekly library class (which is our junior Kindergarten to grade-5 model) to collaborative instruction as the vehicle to continue fulfilling our Library Scope and Sequence (Lewis, Spurlock, and Irving 2018). This progression largely relies on humanities projects where we come in for one or two classes and focus our instruction on information-seeking, awareness of plagiarism, and citation practice. Essentially, limited just-in-time information literacy instruction is like teaching a kid how to play soccer for seven days out of each year and expecting them to be a great player when they graduate.

My library department also acknowledged that our culture was one of praising students for what they were doing right and offering little feedback other than verbal redirection of what they did wrong. Students had little actual data on their strengths and weaknesses in information literacy skills, resulting in either an inflated sense of their ability or the need for constant reassurance they weren't making mistakes. My husband witnessed my self-flagellating rants deriding my previous delusions during our pandemic walks around the neighborhood. While after twenty-seven years of marriage he's mastered his impulse to solve my problems and

instead empathized like a champion, he couldn't help but ask me what I was going to do about my dissatisfaction.

I knew I needed to do something but—complete vulnerability here—by August 2020 our school was opening for in-person instruction, renting trailers for classes, using miles of gaffer's tape to mark the floors so desks were six feet apart, and studying ever-evolving CDC guidelines like we were Anthony Fauci's interns. The school library had its comfortable furniture removed and 99 desks and chairs put in for study hall. Work related to my role as school librarian didn't take place until usually 3:30 p.m. when students went home and I could create instructional videos for the classes I couldn't go to because I had study hall duty when they met.

Checking What Students Think They Can Do versus What They Can Do

There wasn't a lot of mental space left to devote to solving a gigantic problem I had wrestled with my entire career. Face-planting on my bed at 7:30 at night and being asleep within an hour let me know my reserves were running low, but I didn't want to let go of this problem as my focus. Many research projects were cancelled in 2020–21, but one teacher felt her students needed the practice. Her two junior U.S. History sections comprised thirty students, and we partnered to do our typical progression: teaching the research model, having students do reflection videos during topic selection, creating an annotated bibliography, drafting a detailed outline, and having a draft and final version of a seven- to ten-page paper.

During the instruction for this project, I found myself paying more attention to my instruction, to student emotions, to the kinds of feedback I gave (mostly spoken

Of the below reading/note taking skills, please rate how well you think you perform in this area. *

	Still really struggle	Some struggle
Understands how a textbook is organized and should be read	☐	☐
Can determine the main idea of a paragraph or source	☐	☐
Extracts key information from a reading assignment (themes, dates, key people, events)	☐	☐
Understands how to read different nonfiction sources and who their intended audience is (magazines, journals, chapters, anthologies, news articles)	☐	☐

Of the below research skills, please rate yourself with your level of ability/comfort in these areas. *

	Still really struggle with this	Some struggle
Understands difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources	☐	☐
Knows to use databases to find quality sources	☐	☐
Constructs quality keyword searches for web and databases that yield focused results (using Boolean operators)	☐	☐
Knows how to cite sources in the MLA style	☐	☐
Takes notes from distinct sources for ethical management of information and easy citing	☐	☐

Of the below organization and communication skills, please rate your ability in these areas. *

	Still really struggling with this	Some struggle	I'm okay	Pretty competent	I'm really good at this
Can plan a long-term project using planner or calendar	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reads assignments carefully to determine the steps and deadlines they need to accomplish	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Manages time well and resists procrastination	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Asks questions and displays intellectual curiosity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reaches out for help to key adults when floundering	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understands how to study for upcoming tests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communicates honestly about her situation and emotions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Figure 1. Notetaking, research skills, executive function self-assessment for students.

but also written on the bibliographies I graded for the annotated bibliography, outline, draft, and final paper). Roughly the same number of individual student meetings took place, and I praised and encouraged students who were hesitant about their research skills or who previously had experienced bad outcomes with research projects and approached this one with trepidation.

Despite recognizing the feedback problem, I did what I always do when confronted with panicky students. Rather than asking them what their keyword searches were, I brainstormed with them. I demonstrated how to use database filters to find exactly what they needed and printed the articles that they thought looked on point for their topic. Yes, it was similar to my instruction, but when presented with a student with limited time and unlimited research anxiety, my response was to demonstrate and solve their problem rather than

have them practice until they were confident and doing the skill well.

At the end of the project, I conducted a survey to see if my instinct was accurate that the lack of data—in addition to the less-effective one-shot instruction model—affected students' understanding of their ability. Students were given the chance to take the survey after they handed in their final paper. I asked them to rate themselves on three sets of skills: reading/notetaking, research, and executive function (which I titled "Organization/Communication Skills") (Lewis 2021). Each skill in the category was listed in a matrix, and students could rate themselves on a scale of "Still really struggle," "Some struggle," "I'm okay," "Pretty competent," or "I'm really good at this." An additional open question allowed them to reflect on how we could help new upper-school students or those coming from our middle school to be better

prepared. Eighty-six percent of students (25) completed the survey.

The results revealed students lacked a clear sense of their ability. Because I collected e-mail addresses, the teacher and I were able to look at each individual answer and rate them on the skills listed from our perspective. We thought about 23 percent of the students were accurately assessing their ability, but 77 percent were not, with around 30 percent overestimating their skill set. The skill that had the most accurate answer set was "Manages time well and resists procrastination," in which a third of students rated themselves in the struggling categories. "Understanding the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources" received some honest feedback with more than 80 percent picking the neutral "I'm okay," while the teacher and I would have collectively rated the class slightly lower at "Some struggle."

BOYER OFFERS AN ERUDITE DISCUSSION OF THE BENEFIT OF ADDING BADGING TO HER MODULES. STUDENTS ARE INCENTIVIZED TO WORK THROUGH MODULES BY THE REWARD ASSOCIATED WITH EARNING A BADGE, AND THE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN AND TEACHERS ARE ABLE TO SEE STUDENT MASTERY OF CONCEPTS BEFORE ASSIGNING RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT REQUIRE THOSE SKILLS.

In contrast, two of the biggest areas of concern centered on student use and understanding of sources. “Understands how to read different nonfiction sources and who their intended audience is” had 88 percent of students responding they were “Pretty competent” or “I’m really good at this,” when we felt that perhaps less than five of the thirty students understood our instruction on the different ways to approach sources. The second area of concern was “Can determine the main idea of a paragraph or source.” My vague wording probably skewed these results since 73 percent indicated they were “Pretty competent” or “I’m really good at this”; while that may be true for a paragraph, the students struggled to determine the main message or thesis of primary source articles and secondary journal articles.

I had expected that the survey would reveal a minor inflation of ability, but I was startled by the degree of disconnect between student ability and their perception of themselves. While

I’m sure our school culture of warmth and praise amplifies this misperception, the disconnect occurs because students do not understand what their actual knowledge is until they receive clear feedback, and that means offering up data amidst the encouragement.

The Need for an Asynchronous Digital Platform for Digital Literacy Instruction

Collecting real data that is easily accessed by librarians, teachers, and students to prove what they have learned is complicated. Back in the early 2000s, I got excited by San Jose State University’s beta development of the iSkills test for the Educational Testing Service (Matoush n.d.). This product was used as a formative assessment, largely geared toward high school seniors or college students applying to engineering schools. The iSkills exam tested searching skills, data literacy, product creation, and other skills that fall under our information literacy umbrella via a contained proxy environment, which asked

students to show their skills with situational questions rather than answer multiple-choice questions (Martin 2011).

My original idea was to use it as a pre- and post-test for my high school students to determine what they learned during their four years, but the testing required a large amount of time, PC computers (I was at a Mac school), and it was a test of ability rather than a learning platform. It was also prohibitively expensive.

Kent State’s TRAILS assessments provided a better match to school librarian needs, but it was a test of skills rather than a self-paced teaching tool for students (“History of TRAILS” n.d.). Major pros were that it was free, didn’t collect student data so privacy was protected, and had third-, sixth-, ninth-, and twelfth-grade tests available. Most importantly, its questions aligned to the AASL standards of the time, *Information Power*. There were teacher-level reports as well as student-level reports, but the feedback was more by category than by question, which was



Figure 2. Curriculum overview by badging areas.

great for school librarians looking to figure out what was working and what they needed to improve in instruction, but unhelpful for students wanting to know what they got wrong. Project SAILS was Kent State's college-level formative assessment that paralleled TRAILS and utilized the ACRL standards for its focus ("Project SAILS" n.d.).

With all the conversations about flipped classrooms and self-paced learning before the pandemic, why is information literacy instruction taking so long to adopt some of these methods? My immediate guess is that it's too time consuming for all of us to do individually, and just the idea of keeping up with our videos depicting ever-changing platform interfaces consumes most of our time. I also believe that school librarians are not on the educational technology business radar compared to math, English, and science teachers who are frequently targeted by marketers of textbooks.

Students need a self-paced platform they can use to learn basic concepts

about information literacy ideas, particularly one that gives them feedback so they know what they haven't yet mastered (letting them practice again and again until they do). School librarians need a platform where student acquisition of foundational information literacy skills has data attached so we know where to focus our in-person instruction. If we could assign modules for homework, our in-person instruction would become far more meaningful. School librarians always complain that our time is limited with students, so why not maximize our efforts to emphasize more-complex conversations around information rather than spend time on the basics that can be actually learned better by students on their own?

If you haven't watched Brenda Boyer's archived AASL presentation "Research Ready? Prove It! Using Digital Badges to Measure Information Fluency," do so now, I'll wait. Boyer shares how she used her school's LMS interface to create self-paced information literacy modules with videos and questions

that students could watch and then test themselves (Boyer 2017). One of my favorite takeaways was when she spoke about how if you don't like teaching a topic and kids don't like learning it, then it's a topic designed for online learning (MLA citation, anyone?). Boyer offers an erudite discussion of the benefit of adding badging to her modules. Students are incentivized to work through modules by the reward associated with earning a badge, and the school librarian and teachers are able to see student mastery of concepts before assigning research projects that require those skills.

What School Librarians Really Want in Online Information Literacy Instruction

In one of my pandemic support sessions with my fellow school librarians where we just let one another have a safe space, I brought up my wrestling with this issue. We all agreed on our frustrations with the shallowness of just-in-time instruction and brainstormed what we wanted in a self-paced platform:

- engaging video for foundational concepts;
- diverse representation in examples and the people depicted;
- embeddability of videos and question modules in LMS systems and LibGuides;
- accompanying lesson plans that align all modules to AASL/ACRL/ISTE standards and have suggestions for complimentary in-person instruction;
- digital badging/gamification to incentivize student engagement from a badging company that offers the ability for badges to travel with students so college librarians and employers can see students' information literacy skills (Boyer 2017);
- raw video files so individual school librarians can swap out pictures of their databases or library catalogs in relevant lessons;

- accessibility for introductory level lessons, which should work for middle-school ages but not be so young in focus as to be insulting or babyish for ninth-graders needing an introduction; and
- professional development modules for teachers with the same type of self-paced instruction that school librarians and administrators can access (think of the impact of a teacher copyright course your faculty would have to take...and pass).

I don't think there is any company that offers all these features for an educator to build a course, but some of them are attainable with some current platforms. On one of our pandemic walks around our neighborhood, I was again talking about this issue with my long-suffering husband, when he reminded me that

the company he works for, which was founded to offer affordable, quality SAT/ACT prep in an online platform, was developing a new interface that would allow them to expand their offerings to other self-paced courses. He suggested I speak with one of his bosses to see if I could potentially use their platform.

The feedback I received was gracious and enthusiastic. I made a case for this type of digital product as meeting the needs of an untapped market. Having brainstormed with my department the types of classes we teach from grades 6 through 12, including the ones we wish we taught, I came up with the rough topics and subtopics detailed in figure 2. Most school librarians will recognize familiar topics such as Finding Quality Resources, Working with Sources, and Ethically Using Information, but many would also

TEACHERS ARE
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THIS AREA, AND
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OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE BASE.



Figure 3. Finding quality resources.

agree that basic information on how learning takes place and best practices in creating products like papers and presentations also end up falling into our formal and informal work with students. The last few years have also seen a dramatic rise in media literacy instruction and the techniques taught cross over to other evaluative techniques so this inclusion felt important.

Taking each subtopic into account, I wanted to demonstrate how these units could be chunked into lessons that were aimed at various levels: introductory (grades 6–9), intermediate (grades 10–11), and advanced (grades 12–14) audiences (see figure 3). Talking about how we teach these topics, my fellow school librarians and I gained insight from discussing what we wish we taught because it highlighted the gaps we saw in student understanding. What could be more perfect for online asynchronous discussion than those core topics that no one thinks they have time to teach (but that every teacher complains about kids not knowing)?

Possible Implications and Next Steps

In looking at all the possible courses to begin creating, *Ethically Using Information* was the logical first course to create, because understanding plagiarism and citation are complex issues that affect all our grades, particularly 6 through 12. Teachers are hungry for collaborative instruction in this area, and seeing which lessons a student successfully completed allows for reasonable expectations of their knowledge base (and student accountability if they misstep). With a normal “avoiding plagiarism/citation” one-shot lesson, I worry I’m moving too quickly for some students; a self-paced lesson with a video a student can watch as much as they need offers a degree of differentiation. In the past, plagiarism cases appearing before our honor council also struggled with understanding a student’s comprehension of plagiarism, but having actual evidence of lessons successfully completed would offer a clear indication of what they knew.

I have begun writing the video scripts and questions but find myself devoting time for Powtoon and Camtasia tutorials in order to learn better video production. Always willing to admit when I have a knowledge gap, I have enrolled in a Syracuse University Certificate of Advanced Study program in Designing Digital Instruction and am looking forward to taking a class each semester for the next couple of years to better understand foundational concepts and execution of this type of instruction.

Ethically Using Information will hopefully be completed by the end of this school year so I can actually start using it by 2022–23. My fellow librarians and I are eager to see the impact of a parallel digital curriculum that offers more depth and, most importantly, more data for students and teachers as we forge a path to move away from just-in-time information literacy instruction. While working through the pandemic has been brutal and exhausting, I will be forever grateful that it forced me to face the flaws in my information literacy instruction and envision a new and more powerful curriculum.

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The Power and Pitfalls of Virtual Professional Development

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Let's not kid ourselves: when Educational professional development (PD) went virtual in March 2020, it felt like someone shut the door on our face-to-face school library conferences and workshops in an instant. As president of the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association at the time, my heart broke when our board had to cancel our annual conference, a tough decision, but one that had to be made. Who wants that as part of their presidential history? The only annual school librarians Pennsylvania conference to ever be cancelled.

For many, our state, local, and national school library conferences, workshops, and meetings are the height of our professional development each year. A physical space that is all our own where we can hang with our peeps, have PD tailored to our everyday work, and talk the talk about our profession and everyone around us "gets it."

K–12 schools tried to quickly get all teachers up to speed on remote learning. School districts developed and offered synchronous and asynchronous technology workshops centered around software

and pedagogical best practices for remote learning. School librarians, ever the leaders in education, quickly jumped in, creating and offering what was needed for their schools, students, and teachers.

Thankfully, as always, school librarians came together as a profession. AASL Town Halls and state and regional virtual spaces were available so that we could share, learn, and grow. However, the 2020–21 school year began a change in professional development for education. All professional development had to be offered virtually. Organizations, associations, and companies developed both synchronous and asynchronous professional development. This was not a new idea—it had been available before—but it was the only option for the 2020–21 school year. School librarians had to adapt and become remote learners themselves and determine exactly how to engage and use virtual professional development for their own growth, as well as for their teachers' and students' growth.

Through this forced mode of access, school librarians, like other educators, had to analyze their own learning styles. Metacognitively, they

became reflective practitioners in determining how virtual professional development would allow them to learn and grow in their teaching and best practices.

The Pros of Virtual PD

As immediate past president of the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association in 2020–21, I was responsible for facilitating and guiding an LSTA grant for developing leaders in our association. I quickly learned that there are advantages to virtual professional development.

First and foremost, offering virtual PD provides access to so many more school librarians than ever before. School districts that in the past were not willing to pay for specific school library PD due to substitutes and travel, saw the advantage of allowing school librarians attend asynchronous virtual PD. In fact, I believe more school librarians were willing to attend virtual PD.

Mary Schwander, school librarian at New Hope–Solebury High School in New Hope, PA, took advantage of the flexibility and cost savings of virtual professional development. "I found that I attended many more

Now that **virtual professional development** is a permanent part of our culture, school librarians can consider areas of learning that we never thought we'd have an opportunity to pursue.

professional development sessions since they were offered virtually. The fact that I didn't need to travel to the sessions gave me the flexibility and opportunity to more easily attend. In addition, in most cases the sessions were recorded, which gave me the opportunity to watch them at a more convenient time OR watch them a second time to better utilize the material and information" (Schwander 2021).

In Pennsylvania we saw more school librarians attending our town halls, meetings, and professional development opportunities. The Pennsylvania School Librarians Association was able to increase its leadership academy participants by 68 percent, which was 66 more participants than the previous grant cycle. It was amazing to see people more involved in the profession and in their own professional growth.

Building a professional learning community (PLC) was one of the biggest power advantages that I saw through the pandemic. Nationally, I saw more involvement from school librarians across the country who had never had the opportunity to connect with their colleagues. Statewide, school librarians felt that they were not alone, that they mattered, and that they had a voice in their association and in their profession.

Locally, K–12 school librarians who had never been able to meet regularly due to time and geographic constraints were able to form stronger and more-successful school library district programs. They not only learned from each other but also were able to forge consistent and equitable practices for their school districts. Where once we felt that we were a school librarian on an island in our school buildings all by ourselves, we now were a connected group—stronger with one voice.

Mary Schwander felt that the added time with local school librarians was a lifeline during the pandemic. "As soon as our districts were closed and we switched to virtual learning, the school librarians in our county connected with one another and did weekly Zoom meetings. We brainstormed teaching and management ideas, shared our successes, as well as vented our frustrations. I truly don't know how I would have survived if I didn't have that wonderful connection with my library colleagues!" (Schwander 2021).

Jayne Downing, school librarian at Penn Alexander School, School District of Philadelphia, had virtual professional development time each week. "This allowed groups to meet and discuss topics. The great part of this was that the specialists had the chance to actually meet, discuss, and plan together. This does not happen in the non-virtual world" (Downing 2021).

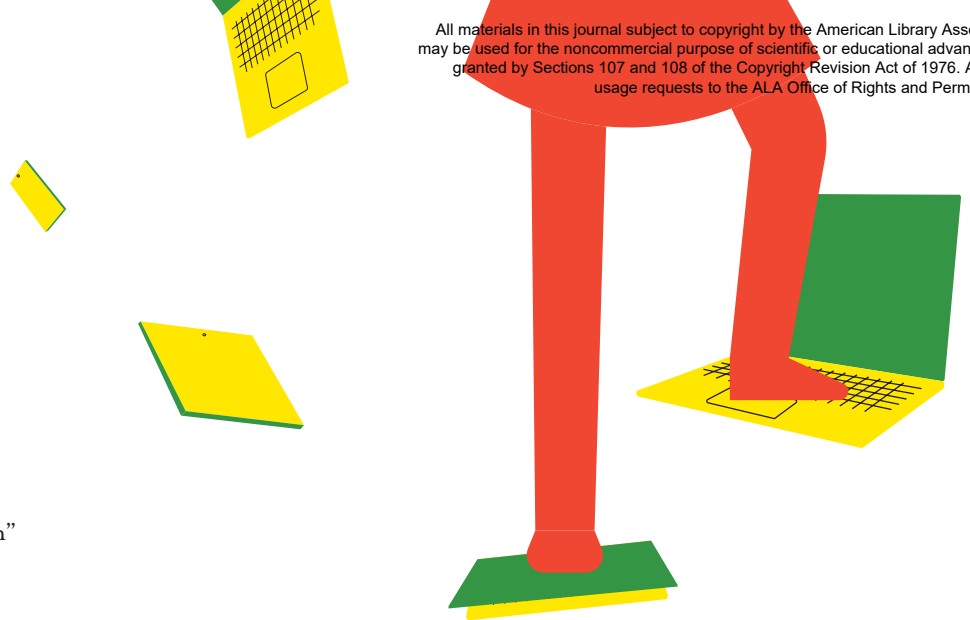
The Cons of Virtual PD

The power of virtual PD is not without a price. And this is where we as school librarians must navigate our way forward. We as school librarians always want to be all things to all people. Throughout the past eighteen to twenty months, I've seen many school librarians start to burn out on the flexibility of virtual PD.

It's easy to sign up and register for more hours of asynchronous PD than you can possibly watch, listen, or engage in a week or a month's time. Our inboxes were flooded with so many virtual professional development opportunities, free and those that came with a cost. We set the bar so high on what we wanted to learn and participate in that we forgot that we only had so many hours in the day and that our professional selves had only so much capacity for attention and engagement.

Jayne Downing explained that it wasn't just the scheduled virtual professional development events that were draining. "When virtual PD is attached to too many readings, it becomes a chore rather than a pleasure. I will confess that I prefer to read and discuss in chunks" (Downing 2021).

Again, we didn't want to be left behind and didn't want to miss that one thing that would help us be more valuable to our students and staff. If you're like me, I have five to seven conferences, workshops, institutes, and such that I still need to go back and go through and organize the resources and learnings. Unfortunately, some of us spread ourselves too thin and crowded our daytime and nighttime schedules with Zoom



links. Try counting those Zoom events on your calendar from March 2020 to August 2021.

We also pride ourselves on organizing information. Yes, we are the experts. But I have to admit: I've got Google notes, lists of resources, a plethora of recordings, tons of PDFs and links to click on that I just haven't gotten to. I can't say that I've been able to get my head around organizing them either. I rely on other school librarians who have made Wakelets, LibGuides, Twitter hashtags, blog posts, and other means. (Thank you, friends!)

In talking with many school librarians, we might have bitten off more than we can chew and are now left feeling overwhelmed and like we have not accomplished what we set out to do. Webinars, recordings, and websites seem to blend together, and we can't remember all the places we stored those amazing resources.

Steps to Move Forward

I'm here to say, that's okay. We did the best we could for the past twenty-two months, and we learned so much about ourselves as professionals, teachers, and learners. Now let's be reflective on what we need to do moving forward so that we ensure that the professional development we engage in, virtual or in person, helps us grow and lead beyond the pandemic.

Set Professional Development Goals and Evaluate Them

"Lifelong learning...permeates every aspect of an effective school library" (AASL 2018, p. 148). Chapter 13 in AASL's *National School Library Standards* provides an excellent roadmap for professional activity. It's worth the time to go back and read or reread this chapter. "Self-reflection is an essential starting point for self-assessment and assessment by an administrator" (AASL 2018, p.

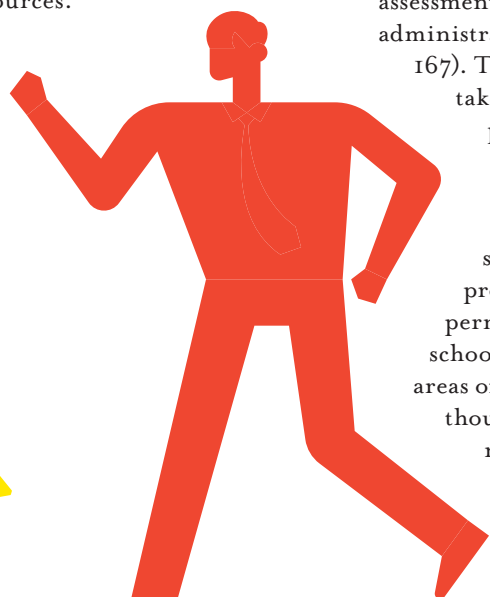
167). That means that we must take the time to evaluate our professional practice and determine our specific needs that will impact our students, staff, and schools. Now that virtual professional development is a permanent part of our culture, school librarians can consider areas of learning that we never thought we'd have an opportunity to pursue. We've always been in front of the curve, so we shouldn't

limit ourselves to topics that are the traditional school library PD.

In *Think Again* Adam Grant reminds us that we need to be open to rethinking our future. "Building a sense of purpose often starts with taking actions to enhance your learning or your contributions to others" (2021, 257). Grant also points out that we need to constantly be checking our professional learning and growth. "Just as you schedule health checkups with your doctor, it's worth having a life checkup on your calendar once or twice a year. It's a way to assess how much you're learning, how your beliefs and goals are evolving, and whether your next steps warrant some rethinking" (2021, 257). Evaluating your professional goals should be something that is done honestly, regularly, and with purpose.

Give Yourself Space—Virtually and Physically

Virtual professional development is certainly convenient. You can wear your earbuds and use your computer, phone, or tablet. Asynchronous learning is even easier to participate in 24/7. However, just as the speaker who delivered the face-to-face workshop asked you to turn off your phones and stop answering e-mail on your laptop, so too you need to set those expectations for yourself in the virtual PD world. Mentally, allow yourself to be in the moment of the professional development experience. Trying to participate in or even just listen to a synchronous or asynchronous event while you're between classes, supervising your library during a study hall, making dinner, or putting your kids to bed will leave you feeling like you didn't get anything out of the workshop or learning. We've all done it but think about the best practices we espouse to our students during lessons. We know they get more out of learning



when they are focused and engaged. Let's follow that same expectation for our own learning as well.

It goes without saying that when you set your professional development goals you need to be realistic. We've been through the intense months of the pandemic when we shifted to remote learning in a heartbeat and had to work hours and hours virtually in order to meet our students' and teachers' needs. Now is the time to also evaluate the balance of your work and personal life with your virtual learning. Just because you can fit virtual PD into your budget (free many times) and the hours in a day, doesn't mean you sacrifice your family, hobbies, or sanity. You don't *have* to do every free PD that's offered. You didn't attend a face-to-face workshop every week pre-pandemic, and you don't need to schedule something every week virtually either. Be strategic based on your goals. When you start to feel as if you can't do one more Zoom meeting, one more recording, or one more webinar, DON'T. Set your boundaries and stick to it.

Advocate with Administrators on the Importance of School Library PD

Education is rethinking so many aspects because of the pandemic and the remote learning that was a necessity in March 2020. The delivery method for professional development is just one of those aspects. I've heard from many school librarians throughout the country that school districts will not allow or pay for teachers and school librarians to attend face-to-face conferences and workshops this school year. However, school librarians must continue to advocate for and request professional development (whether in person or virtual) that is school library specific. Additionally, when you participate in a virtual

or face-to-face event, follow up with your stakeholders and administrators with a brief summary and how this particular PD will allow you to positively impact students and staff. Frame those points based on your district's or school's goals and mission. Then, when you feel comfortable attending face-to-face professional development, you've laid the groundwork for future learning.

School librarians with a growth mindset focus on the process of learning, not the outcome.

There are many free, no-cost options for professional development for school librarians. However, in line with the previous point, these opportunities aren't without a cost. Educate your administrators on why needing the professional time during the day is important so that you can maximize the professional learning and focus solely on what is being offered, especially if the event is live and not asynchronous. School librarians shouldn't be expected to spend hours and hours of personal time to grow as leaders and teachers.

Don't be afraid to advocate for professional development that has a registration cost either. Spell out to your administrators and stakeholders that the time and the dollars are worth what will pay dividends to all

the students that you impact. Your administrators will see you as an educator who self-evaluates their own learning. This advocacy reinforces your leadership role in your school and district.

In *Leadership: Strategic Thinking, Decision Making, Communication, and Relationship Building* Ann M. Martin and Kathleen Riopelle Roberts state, "School

librarians are leaders when they take time to practice self-awareness in order to develop their professional skills and create stronger relationships with stakeholders. This self-awareness leads to more effective clarifying questions in conversation and lessons, better interactive professional development sessions for educators, and strong resource decisions based on data" (2019, 130).

No Shaming—Give Yourself Grace

School librarians were at the forefront when remote learning became a reality in March 2020. School librarians all over the country demonstrated to the entire field of K–12 education why we are so valuable based on our ability to not only have the digital resources needed

School librarians told me several times that when they looked at what other librarians were doing, **they felt that they weren't keeping up with everyone else.**

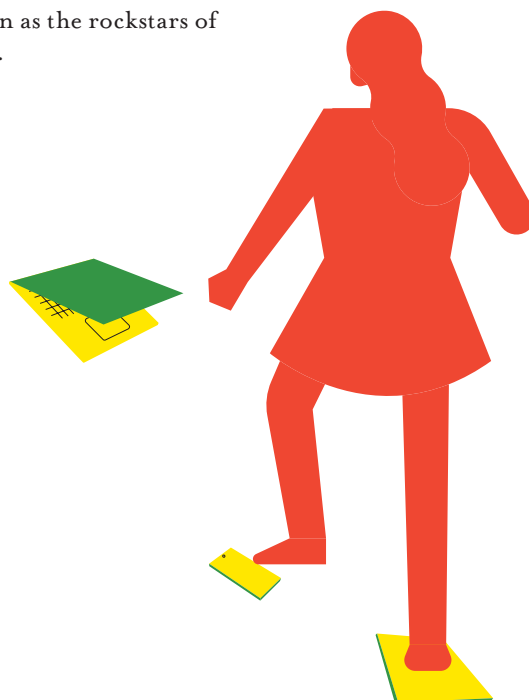
to support students learning from home, as well as our creativity and unique perspective to reinvent school libraries during the pandemic. During those first few months, we were able to share with our fellow school librarians so many different new ways to present instruction, resources, and new ideas for engaging our students virtually. In true school library tradition, everyone shared their lessons, ideas, projects, boards, images, videos, and more. All our professional peers became more visible. School librarians told me several times that when they looked at what other librarians were doing, they felt that they weren't keeping up with everyone else.

What we need to remind ourselves is that this isn't a competition. We don't have to implement every new idea, new app, new project, or new technology that we saw on Twitter or Facebook. Yes, we want to explore what other school librarians are doing. No one needs to reinvent the wheel. However, stay focused on your professional goals and what you set out to accomplish in your own learning. We know that best practice in teaching is to meet students where they are and look for growth. We don't want our students to compare

themselves with other students, but to realize growth. "[Carol] Dweck explains that a mindset is a theory that people hold about themselves. Our mindsets profoundly impact learning, achievement, relationships, and overall success and well-being" (Big Life Journal 2020). School librarians with a growth mindset focus on the process of learning, not the outcome. Give yourself grace to learn and implement new ideas at your own pace, not someone else's or who you envision as the rockstars of school libraries.

Use Virtual PD to Get Involved

Virtual professional development brought together school librarians who would never have been able to meet with face-to-face conferences and workshops. Connections were made that were invaluable for all of us as we navigated our way through the pandemic. As our school library world continues to evolve, continue to use the flexibility of virtual communication and professional development to stay connected and to stay involved. Virtual town halls were a lifeline back in March and April of 2020 and can remain an avenue for you to join a committee or get more involved with your state school library chapter or AASL or ALA. If you're not finding what you're looking for, create your own professional learning community virtually. There is no reason any longer to feel as if we are isolated or on an island in our school because we're the only school librarian in that physical space. Get involved—that's how we continue to grow our school library profession.



Share!

I am always so proud when I speak with other educators and administrators and those outside of the education world when I talk about how school librarians are always so willing to share what they've learned, created, or used in their libraries. I know that when the aftermath of the pandemic is behind us, my school library peers will continue to share freely. It's the nature of what we do each day with our students. Continue to share what you're learning, how you're organizing it, your reflections, and the questions that you don't have answered. Somewhere out there, there is a school librarian who needs your help!



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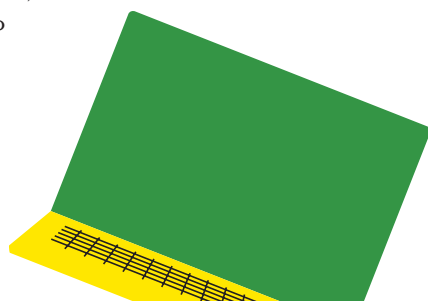
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Get InVolved

You've joined us. Now join in.

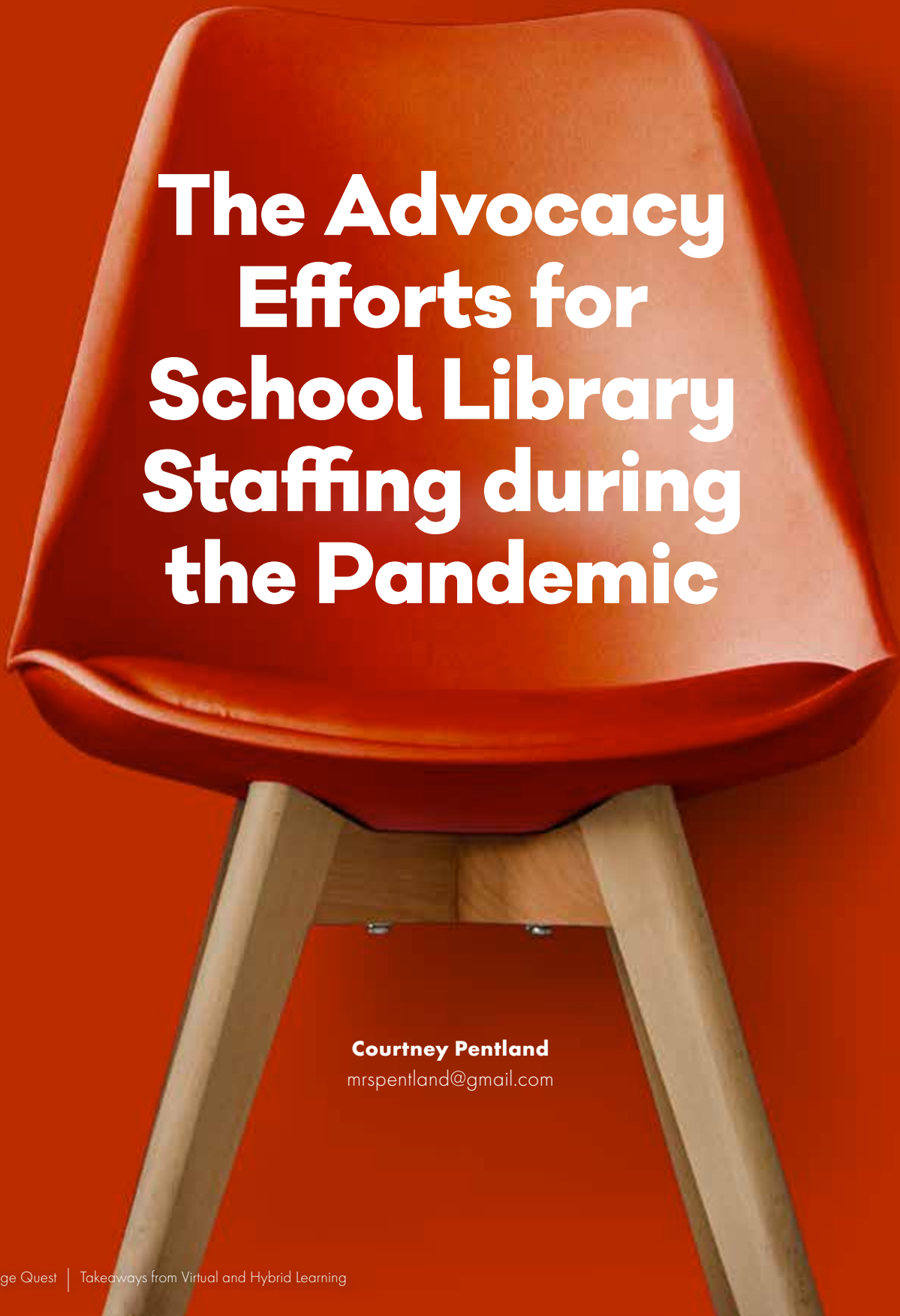
Small Contributions Add Up

Would you like to be involved but feel that you don't have the time to commit? Or are you new to school librarianship and feel intimidated? AASL has various opportunities for members to participate in the work of the association through short-term projects. Your colleagues value the unique perspective you bring to the profession. Contribute to your community and submit your interests today!

- Participate on an AASL committee
- Review program submissions
- Contribute to a position statement
- Develop a resource guide or brochure
- Deliver e-learning on a current topic
- Share your expertise in an AASL Publication
- Write an article for *Knowledge Quest*
- Blog on a timely professional topic for KQ

And many other opportunities to get involved at various levels!

For more information, visit www.ala.org/aasl/getinvolved



The Advocacy Efforts for School Library Staffing during the Pandemic

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Amid the ongoing pandemic, school librarians across the country have been facing a different kind of battle, one that has been going on for years in some cases: the fight for every student to benefit from the instruction and carefully curated resources a certified school librarian can provide. Several states are working to introduce or retain legislation that requires a certified school librarian in every school building. We've seen some recent victories in places like Washington, D.C., but many state school library associations are continuing to see a great need to advocate for staffing school library positions as districts continue to cut positions despite calls and additional funding for literacy and learning supports stemming from the COVID crisis.

States across the country have seen a decrease in certified school librarian staffing. In some districts, positions have been reduced dramatically or cut entirely despite research showing the benefits students, staff, and the entire school community receive from these specifically trained educators. State school library associations are working diligently with lawmakers, fellow state-level education organizations, and national-level partners to advocate on behalf of their students.

Below are stories from Arizona, Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania about their states' fights for the right of every student to receive the services provided by a certified school librarian.



In June 2021, Washington, D.C., school librarians staged a read-in on the steps of the building that houses the mayor's office to advocate for a school librarian in every public school. In early August 2021, the Washington, D.C., council passed a budget amendment that would guarantee a certified school librarian in every public school building.

Teacher Librarian Division, Arizona Library Association

Judi Moreillon

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Background: Arizona ranks near the bottom in every possible measure of school librarianship, as indicated in the Arizona School Librarian Data from the SLIDE Research Data, which compares all fifty states along various criteria (Lance and Kachel 2021).

In 2020 members of the Teacher Librarian Division (TLD) of the Arizona Library Association (AzLA) had a unique opportunity to take action with Arizona education associations and advocacy groups. Proposition 208, a citizens' initiative with the goal of increasing funding for public education, will generate funds from a state income tax surcharge. The majority of this permanent funding stream would be used to recruit and hire classroom

Criterion	Ranking
State-Level Ratio of School Librarian (SL Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) per School	46
Student to SL FTE Ratio	46
Teacher to SL FTE Ratio	44
District Ratio of SL FTEs per School	47
% of Districts with Any Librarians	47
States with the Largest % of No School Librarians	46

Table 1. Arizona school librarian data from the SLIDE research data.

teachers, counselors, nurses, school librarians, and social workers. TLD members helped collect signatures to add the proposition to the ballot.

Strategy: Once the proposition was on the state ballot, TLD leadership lobbied the AzLA Board to officially support Proposition 208. The AzLA president, TLD leadership, and John Chrastka, executive director of EveryLibrary, met with Prop. 208 leaders to express interest in a partnership to increase ballot box support. Every-

Library, a nonprofit organization dedicated to library advocacy, created a "Pledge to Vote Yes" webpage (www.saveschoollibrarians.org/yeson208), TLD members participated in phone banking, and voters passed the proposition in November 2020. Since then, Prop. 208 has survived a number of lawsuits challenging its legality.

What We Learned: The political forces in Arizona that seek to continue to underfund public education are strong. On party-line

Michigan Association

Kathy Lester

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Background: Michigan educational laws do not include school library staffing requirements. As such, as education budgets were reduced and accreditation requirements were relaxed in the early 2000s, Michigan school districts began to cut their certified school librarian positions. The number of certified school librarians in Michigan dwindled by 70 percent (from 1,429 to 429) between 2004–2005 and 2016–2017. Michigan ranks 47th (48th when including Washington, D.C.) in the nation in the ratio of students to certified school librarians (Lance and Kachel 2021).

Strategy: In 2013, the Michigan Association for Media in Education (MAME) began strong advocacy efforts to get support from the Michigan legislature for equity of access to effective school libraries. This advocacy work involved reaching out to legislators, building partnerships with other organizations, and working with the Michigan Department of Education. The first set of school library bills were introduced in 2018. The bills have been reintroduced twice as legislation sessions ended and legislators left office due to term limits. The latest versions of the bills (HB 4663, HB 4664, and HB 4665) were introduced in April 2021. The bills would require every school building have a school library staffed by a certified school librarian and have the library staffed when the certified school librarian is not present.

What We Learned: Michigan is a “local control” state, which means each school board makes decisions on how best to meet the needs of students with its state funding. In addition, there is strong opposition to unfunded mandates. Thus, it has been difficult



Judi Moreillon, in front of the Kirk-Bear Canyon Library, collecting signatures in support of adding Proposition 208 to the ballot.

votes, the legislature passed three bills in June 2021 that would undermine the intent of Prop. 208: SB: 1828 Flat Tax; SB: 1827 Tax Cap; and SB: 1783: Prop. 208 Attack. These proposed bills would cut taxes, leading to millions of dollars in lost revenue for the state that will directly impact the amount of funding made available to schools (Moreillon 2021).

Although Arizona school librarians understood that the health of school librarianship was tied to the overall health of public education, we have gone to the mat for K–12 students and educators. We know we can accomplish more when we work with other public education organizations and advocates. We also know we must raise awareness and invite the support of our academic, public, and special librarian colleagues to address the critical school librarian gap in the Arizona library ecosystem.

Next Steps: School librarians in Arizona are signing and circulating petitions to put referenda on the November 2022 ballot to ask voters whether they want to rescind the three tax cut bills. TLD presented data from the SLIDE study to the AzLA Board and solicited their support to sign referenda petitions. When signatures are collected and verified and these measures are placed on the November 2022 ballot, TLD members again will take action alongside our colleagues and advocates to help rescind these cuts that undermine public education funding and ensure a more positive future for K–12 students and educators, including school librarians, in our state.



Judi Moreillon is the TLD co-chair and current chapter delegate to AASL. She's on Twitter @CactusWoman.

for Media in Education

to get full legislative support for the school library bills. To address the funding issue, MAME has been advocating for grant funding to encourage school districts to hire certified school librarians.

Partnerships are important. MAME collaborates with the Michigan Education Association, the Michigan Reading Association, the Michigan Library Association, EveryLibrary, and others. This work has helped to educate stakeholders on the key role of the certified school librarian in the school community. The relationship and involvement with the Michigan Department of Education has also been important in strengthening guidelines (which are not requirements) and distributing information to school districts.

Advocacy is not a short-term project. It needs to be a regular part of the work of all school librarians and all state school library organizations. We often remind ourselves of the five Ps of advocacy: present, prepared, polite, positive, and persistent.

MAME members Kathy Lester, Katherine Pfeiffer, and Lisa Brakel in Lansing to meet with legislators in November 2019.



MAME graphic used in advocacy publications

Next Steps: MAME is pushing for a legislative hearing on the current school library bills this fall. We are also working to advocate for funding for school libraries/librarians. As part of this work, we will continue to build partnerships and work with the Michigan Department of Education.

Although the school library bills have not yet become law, there has been a slight increase in the number of certified school librarians in Michigan beginning in 2018–2019. We believe that this small success is due to the publicity around the bills and the work with MAME's partner organizations including the Michigan Department of Education.



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Nebraska School Librarians Association

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Background: On April 22, 2021, the Nebraska School Librarians Association (NSLA) was made aware of a draft of state rules up for public review relating to accreditation. In the current state rule, at least one half-time certified school librarian is required per school system for accreditation, with additional staffing requirements based on individual building populations. The proposed rules removed the population-based staffing requirements while keeping the half-time certified school librarian per system. This change would mean that a school system of 53,000 students and one of 185 students would have the same staffing requirements.

Strategy: NSLA's strategy was two-fold. First, we sought to understand why the staffing requirements by population were removed. Conversations with a representative from the Nebraska Department of Education took place via Zoom and e-mail throughout the draft review process. By understanding the motivation, NSLA was able to address questions and concerns. Second, NSLA sought to inform school librarians and their stakeholders of this proposed change. Before doing so, members of the NSLA Board sought guidance from ALA and AASL. AASL leadership met with NSLA leadership to discuss possible strategies including what information to share, who to share



The “Nebraska Needs Librarians” shirt was designed a few years before the proposed changes to the state rule and has become a helpful advocacy tool. It was inspired by the “America Needs Librarians” shirts sold by Raygun and was created with their permission as the NSLA shirts were sold at cost.

One of the images created to show the potential inequity of staffing in Nebraska if specific requirements were removed from the state accreditation rule.



it with (state leadership, stakeholders, and media), and how to share it most effectively. NSLA then shared detailed information about the proposed rules and how it could affect Nebraska students through its website, listserv, and social media channels that folks could share out with others. In addition, a representative from NSLA sent press releases to media outlets across the state targeting online, print, TV, and radio. As a result, the issue was featured in several print and online news articles, a TV news segment, and a couple of podcasts.

What We Learned: We learned that you are never really “safe.” If your state has a rule in place requiring school librarians as part of every school, that rule can be changed. As such, advocacy and outreach can never stop. While many supporters were outraged and sent in direct feedback through the review system and contacted members of the Nebraska Department of Education and state board of education when they learned about the possible removal of staffing requirements from the state rule, we realized key decision makers were unsure of what a modern school librarian does every day to support their school community. In addition to making advocacy a priority within our own schools/districts, we learned how

important it is for advocacy to reach those with the power to enact change at the state level. We also learned how important it is to be connected to other associations in our state that support teachers and education as they may reach folks we do not.

Next Steps: On August 10, 2021, we learned that the second draft of state rules is being delayed to afford more time for overall discussion. The rules cover more than just school librarian staffing, though we did hear that the volume of responses received about school librarian staffing made that section a priority for review. NSLA, the state-level Future Ready Librarians Committee, and other stakeholders will continue to work with the state department of education throughout the second draft process. Based on preliminary conversations, we are hopeful that school librarian staffing requirements by population will be included in a way that works best for all involved.



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New Jersey Assoc

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Background: School librarians, parents, and teachers have been alarmed by cuts to school library positions since 2008. New Jersey is participating in the national SLIDE study (Lance and Kachel 2021), and preliminary data currently shows that up to one in five of New Jersey school districts do not have a certified school librarian. The New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) was surprised when one school district's board of education completely removed the position of school librarian in all schools in March 2021.

Strategy: NJASL established an advocacy team to help communicate with districts that are eliminating positions. The advocacy team attends ongoing meetings with legislators, the New Jersey Department of Education, the New Jersey State Board of Education, the New Jersey Parents/Teachers Association, Computer Science for New Jersey, and the New Jersey Principal and Supervisor Association, as well as other New Jersey stakeholders. Various templates, infographics, and slideshows have been created to highlight the role of school librarians and to address position loss. School librarians and advocates were asked to write to both the Quality Single-Accountability Continuum, a branch under the department of education that monitors and evaluates public school districts, and the New Jersey Department of Education to request changes to standard language that would support better staffing requirements. Language changes would state that school librarians are “available in each school building” versus “each school district.”

iation of School Librarians

NJASL has also joined forces with EveryLibrary to help build support for school library positions and preserve library space. Members of the NJASL Advocacy Team have met with legislators throughout the year to advocate for certified school librarian positions and were able to gain bipartisan support for two legislative bills. NJ A 248/S 3464 requires instruction on information literacy in the curriculum for students in grades K–12. NJ S 1586 requires certain ratios of school librarians to students in public schools. NJASL also worked closely with New Jersey Education Association representatives to learn more about navigating the legislative environment successfully after attending a NJEA conference session in February 2021 for folks interested in learning more about policy. Connections made during that session led to several articles published this past year, including two articles on politico.com, “Lawmakers, School Librarians Say Now Is the Time to Teach Information Literacy” and “‘Vital’ School Librarian Positions Disappearing, State Board of Education Told,” and another in

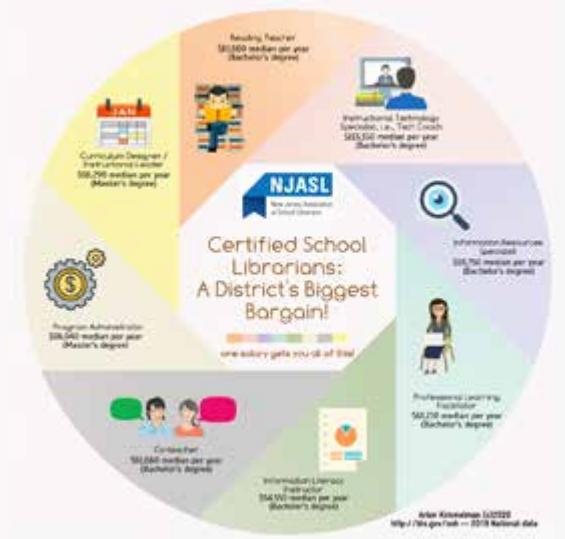
NJASL Board Members met with NJ legislators to discuss a disturbing trend in NJ schools: districts cutting school librarians.



NJ Spotlight, a local independent news source, “School Libraries Help Students Recover from Pandemic.”

In addition, NJASL developed a statewide school librarian job description to share with administration, stakeholders, and school districts.

What We Learned: We learned that every school interprets educational code language differently, which means staffing is not consistent across the state. Multiple school librarians reported that they may be titled in position but not working in the role of a librarian. Also, some school districts maintain compliance by having librarians cover several schools as current language requires only one school librarian “per district.” For example, in one district a school librarian serves six high schools for more than 10,000 students. This is an equity issue. Every student should receive the same opportunities, but do not. One urban school district has no librarians for more than 7,000 students, whereas an affluent neighboring district employs twenty-one school librarians for nineteen schools. We also found when discussing the position with stakeholders and legislative consultants, most were not familiar with the scope of what a librarian does and the impact they have on students.



NJASL infographic used in advocacy materials about the bargain provided by hiring a certified school librarian.

Next Steps: Moving forward, NJASL will continue to strengthen relationships with stakeholders, including developing partnerships with Computer Science for New Jersey to meet curriculum standards for K–8 grade. We will support school librarians in our state by creating an advocacy toolkit for members and developing workshops to offer advocacy-focused professional development. We will continue to advocate by attending and presenting at annual conferences aimed at various stakeholders, writing op-eds for local, state, and national news outlets, and continuing to work with EveryLibrary to collect data from elected officials and gain sponsorships for the two legislative bills.



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Pennsylvania School Librarians Association

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Background: The Pennsylvania School Librarians Association (PSLA) created a standing advocacy committee five years ago. This committee works with the association's operations committee to conduct an annual self-reported staffing survey of Pennsylvania school librarians. In addition to overseeing the staffing survey, the committee also creates training sessions for school librarians and meets regularly to discuss proposed legislation requiring a certified school librarian in each public school. In May 2021 House bill 1168, "One Certified Librarian per Public School," was introduced. It would require every public school employ at least one professional certified school librarian. The bill has bipartisan support and is awaiting action in the House Education Committee. PSLA has worked closely with the representative who introduced the bill. PSLA members are encouraged to contact their local legislators and invite them to visit their school libraries. Throughout this process, we have found that legislators are wowed by the impact school librarians make on their students. The hope is that with enough cosponsors, the bill will move out of the education committee and be brought to the full House

floor for a vote. We look at this as a marathon and not a sprint. Each year we gain more exposure, resulting in more co-sponsors for the bill.

A companion bill in the Senate is collecting cosponsors before it will be formally introduced. We are working on introducing a bill to codify a current state department of education regulation that requires every school district have at least one certified school librarian. The education department does not enforce this policy and as of the 2020–2021 school year, there were forty-eight public school districts in the state without a single school librarian, impacting nearly 90,000 students.

Strategy: The PSLA Advocacy Committee implemented a strategy to train school librarians on ways to engage with their legislators to promote the importance of school librarians and urge legislators to support the House and Senate bills. We hold a variety of training sessions throughout the year in person at our annual conference and virtually to help school librarians gain the confidence to schedule an appointment with a legislator. We also provide those school librarians with infographics and talking points to take with them to these meetings. Another strategy we put in place involves support for school librarians who have been notified that their

position may be eliminated. The PSLA website has a page dedicated to school librarians who may be in jeopardy of losing their position. This page features the "PSLA Position Statement in Response to School Library Program Cuts," along with a checklist to follow when positions are in jeopardy of being eliminated. The advocacy committee's co-chair also is available to consult with school librarians to create a strategy.

Over the last few years, we have forged two vital partnerships. First, PSLA works with Quantum Communications, a Pennsylvania-based public relations firm, to assist us in building relationships with our state's lawmakers. Second, PSLA has a strong relationship with EveryLibrary, a national political action committee for libraries. Together with Quantum Communications and EveryLibrary, we conducted a candidate survey for those running for state legislative positions. The candidate survey was a paper survey mailed to all legislative candidates. The survey used a Likert scale to gauge the candidate's feelings on and knowledge of school libraries. It also provides background information on Pennsylvania's education guidelines regarding school libraries and what academic standards school librarians teach. One question asked if legislators have visited a school library and encouraged them to do so to see the valuable teaching that happens in school libraries every day. The results from the survey are featured on our association's webpage. With these survey results we were able to measure the support for school librarians from elected officials and those running for the legislature.



Pennsylvania school librarians joining arms in support of school libraries at the March 2019 Annual PSLA conference.

What We Learned: We've learned that developing relationships with other organizations that support educators and students in our state is vital to our success in equitable staffing of school librarians for all schools. We have also found that crafting a shared message from stakeholders is needed. As such, we will be hosting a stakeholder meeting this year to continue building these partnerships.

Next Steps: We are currently working with EveryLibrary on another candidate survey for the upcoming school board elections. Our goal is to ask the opinion of school board candidates in the forty-eight school districts without a school librarian about their opinions and thoughts on school libraries. Similar to the state legislative candidate survey, this will allow us to measure the support for Pennsylvania school librarians from any new school board members. This survey was mailed through the postal service and e-mailed to school board candidates. Both mailings provided a QR code that took candidates to the online survey. The results from this survey are published on the PSLA "Take Action" legislation webpage along with the results from the legislative survey results. We also plan to continue our work with school librarians in any way they need, whether it is advocacy training or help fighting for a position. Additionally, we encourage members to invite their local legislators to visit school libraries to further showcase the positive impact school librarians make on students every day.



Laura Ward is the PSLA President and past advocacy committee co-chair. She's on Twitter @snarkybookgal

Where Do We Go from Here?

There is much to learn from the challenges faced by each of these states. Advocacy is never ending. Laws and rules, even once they are established, can change. There will always be new staff members, lawmakers, board members, parents, and community members who may not be aware of the vital services provided by a modern-day certified school librarian. A continued effort to connect with all stakeholders, but especially those with influence over staffing regulations, is paramount to succeed in not only making sure there is a school librarian in every building but in keeping them there doing the work they are meant to be doing.

Most state association boards are made up of volunteer members that rotate in and out frequently, making it difficult to maintain momentum or to even know where to start or continue advocacy work. Prioritizing an advocacy committee that keeps records and members for longer time periods could strengthen advocacy efforts as the association wouldn't need to start from scratch with each change in board leadership. Equally important are the relationships the association builds with other state-level organizations that support students and teachers as well as with partners at the national level. School librarians cannot be the only voices heard in the call to regulate staffing. Fellow educators, students, parents, and community members must make some noise as well as they are the ones who benefit from the services of a certified school librarian and who would also lose if those services are lost.

As educators, our first priority is always students. Until decision makers really and truly understand what students will lose without an adequately staffed certified school librarian in every building, the struggle to meet our students' needs will continue. If anything, the stories

from these five state associations show that as information professionals trained in advocacy, school librarians are more than well equipped to work together and in conjunction with allies to champion change. The struggle will continue, but we can learn from and support each other as we fight for our students' right to a quality education that includes the benefits of a certified school librarian.

**Note: For updates on these state chapters' efforts visit the Knowledge Quest website.*

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REINVENTING READING IN A PANDEMIC

School Librarians in Metro
Nashville Harness Creativity to
Support Student Literacy

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As school librarians we are continually innovating, yet there is nothing like a pandemic to push us past our limits and demand we re-envision reading to bridge the gap between access and opportunity for our learners. While attending the *School Library Journal* Virtual Summit in the fall of 2020, Marlon Styles, superintendent of Middletown City School District in Ohio, said something so simple, yet so important as we search for ways to continue providing continuity of services. He said, "Creativity is free." That resonated deeply with me as a new district-level leader of school librarians trying to find solutions for our libraries in the face of COVID-19. If we were willing to be creative, to think far outside the box, to not limit ourselves by sticking to tradition, then we had the power to invent solutions to the barriers to book access brought on by the pandemic. In short, it was time to break the rules.

To understand how we re-envisioned reading in Nashville, it is important to rewind and share our story. Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) is the second largest school district in Tennessee. With 159 schools, 79,651 students, and 126 languages spoken, our student population is incredibly diverse, not only culturally but also socio-economically. MNPS shifted to virtual learning in late March 2020 on the heels of devastating tornadoes that ripped through the community on March 3, which abruptly caused the closure of schools.

The early days of the pandemic were spent searching for hope amidst the devastation experienced by our community as we cleaned up and re-built with the shadow of COVID-19 looming. Our focus was on supporting families' most basic needs and virtual learning took shape. With the district not yet one to one, we were not immedi-

ately prepared to shift to a virtual learning format. Our physical school library spaces were shuttered and print books were not permitted to be circulated for the remainder of the school year. With the start of the 2020–2021 school year, we had to restore and increase access.

MNPS started the 2020–2021 school year virtually. Middle and high schools would continue virtually through February 2021. Elementary schools phased to hybrid learning in October 2020 but returned to virtual learning in December, and once again returned to in-person in February. Our team of 130 school librarians were not only thinking about how to provide equitable services to their students and school communities, but together we also

were thinking about how to provide equitable services across the district. It was important that we not operate in our own silos, in our own parts of town, as 159 different schools, but that we share a common vision as one district for equitable library services with our new normal.

Leveraging Partnerships

A powerful source of literacy support in Nashville is our partnership with Nashville Public Library's Limitless Libraries program. Through Limitless Libraries, every student and staff member has a Nashville Public Library card, which provides access to two million additional items. Students and staff can request items through our shared catalog, which are couriered to schools. Tra-



Data from the 2020–2021 school year for Metro Nashville Public Schools.

ditionally, students in third through twelfth grades could request items, but due to the pandemic, we broke our first rule and expanded this to also include Kindergarten through second grade. It was important that all students have access to items from the public library. School librarians distributed Limitless Libraries requests through weekly curbside pickups, and families had the option to return items to the school or to the nearest public library branch. Our public libraries were closed to patrons during this time, so between their curbside events and our school library curbside events, this provided additional opportunities for families to get books.

Yet, we quickly learned that curbside is great in theory, but not all families could take advantage of curbside offerings due to work schedules and the lack of transportation. Despite our efforts to partner with school district transportation, which was being utilized to deliver meals to students, we were unable to create a bookmobile system. We have recently learned a solution is in the works! Limitless Libraries will have a bookmobile on the road in 2023.



Collage of curbside social media posts from several MNPS school libraries.

This beautiful partnership is truly an asset in strengthening literacy in Nashville.

Community partnerships are always important, but tapping even further into their power helped us re-invent reading. Because our district was now one-to-one but school buildings were closed, families and students needed a way to get IT support. Tech help centers were established around the district, which created an opportunity for us to share books. We partnered with Book 'Em, a Nashville non-profit that collects and distributes new and gently used books for children ages 0–18, and held two book giveaways at the tech help centers in September and November. Everyone who visited the tech centers had the opportunity to select books for themselves or for young readers in their lives.

Our school librarians, who were still working virtually at the time, volunteered at the tech centers for the book giveaways. They loved seeing students in person for the first time in months! It was an opportunity to not only support student literacy, but also to check in on their well-being during such a challenging time. Our giveaways even got the attention of a local news outlet who stopped by a tech help site and interviewed one of our volunteers.

Alex Green Elementary
School's curbside station.

Another community partner, Ride for Reading, which collects, sorts, and delivers books via bicycle to children in Title I schools and low-income communities, partnered with several schools for book giveaways. While they were unable to bike to schools and interact with students, they delivered books to the schools for distribution by school staff. Vanderbilt University Athletics, the athletic department at Vanderbilt, created "Sunday Stories" for our students in which a student athlete reads a book via Instagram on Sundays. Both Ride for Reading and Vanderbilt Athletics took the initiative to find creative ways to meet students' literacy needs.

Nashville Reads, Nashville's annual city-wide read sponsored by the Nashville Public Library, organized a virtual author visit with Yuyi Morales to discuss *Dreamers*, which was our 2020 city-wide read that was postponed until 2021 due to the tornadoes and the pandemic. Lipscomb University along with Humanities TN, Tennessee's affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, helped provide copies of the book to our school libraries, with extra copies that librarians could use for giveaways. Our community partners got creative and found innovative ways to support our students' literacy needs. While we enjoy participating in Nashville Reads annually, to make Nashville Reads happen in 2021, we had



The enthusiastic spirit of all our community partners was a welcome source of comfort during such a difficult school year.

to work together to find a virtual solution to connect thousands of students and citizens for our culminating celebration with Yuyi Morales. The enthusiastic spirit of all our community partners was a welcome source of comfort during such a difficult school year.

Book Deliveries

When school librarians are passionate about connecting students with books, their willingness to be creative is endless. While it was not the expectation, many school librarians dropped off book requests to students on their doorsteps. School librarian Alison Brooks and library clerk Cat Brooks of Apollo Middle School created a way for students to use their positive behavior points to request book deliveries. They ran the “Polar Book Express Delivery” close to winter break. With a minivan decked in holiday style, the Apollo Middle library team set off to spread joy and cheer by delivering books to students to enjoy over the long winter break.

Amanda Tucker-Dye, previously of McKissack Middle who is now at Meigs Middle, surprised students with goody bags for their efforts in reading and reviewing books. Alice

School librarian Amber Groves made a poster for the book giveaway.



Above: MNPS librarians Amber Groves and Mary Davis greet students during the September 2020 book giveaway at a district tech help center.

Below: Copies of the Nashville city-wide read Dreamers are bagged and sent to schools to use for book giveaways in conjunction with a virtual author visit with Yuyi Morales.

When school librarians are passionate about connecting students with books, their willingness to be creative is endless.

Russell of Crieve Hall Elementary left notes for students about their book selections. Students picked up their books at curbside along with a handwritten note from their beloved school librarian, a thoughtful way to personalize the curbside experience and show students that their school librarian loves to know what the students are reading.

With virtual learning, these organic moments and opportunities to talk with students about books and to

celebrate students for reading were hard to come by, so school librarians looked for ways to create excitement around reading. As we faced closed school libraries, our library services team worked with principals to create a schedule to open the school library for a day or provide curbside pick-up so that students could check out books. If it was within our power to control and manage, then it was fair game.

Making Use of Tech Tools

Without the ability to see students in person, school librarians leveraged all available tech tools and platforms to reach students. Book talks, book trailers, mini movies, virtual story times, virtual author visits, virtual book clubs, and a virtual battle of the books were implemented to continue to support sharing the love of books. Readers' advisory took place via video con-

ferencing via Microsoft Teams chat, e-mail, Microsoft Forms, Schoology messaging, and more.

Emmie Stuart of Percy Priest Elementary created a Microsoft Form with genre suggestions for her K–2 students to use with their families to request books. This was a wonderful way to support our youngest readers who had not had an opportunity to learn to use the catalog yet, much less know how to place a hold on a book.

During hybrid learning, school librarian Christa Adams of Creswell Middle School created displays of books with QR codes that students scanned to place holds on books of interest. Christa delivered their requests to their classrooms.

School librarians became pros at video tutorials, creating asynchronous content on how to check out print and digital resources; use Beanstack, our



Apollo Middle School librarian Alison Brooks and library clerk Cat Brooks set out to deliver student book requests.



Amanda Tucker-Dye surprises students with goody bags for writing book reviews.

Crieve Hall School librarian Alice Russell leaves notes to her students on the books they requested for curbside pickup.

Percy Priest School librarian Emmie Stuart created a form for families to use to request library books during virtual learning.



Creswell Middle School librarian Christa Adams creates a display of books with QR codes students can scan to place a hold on those they want to read.

reading tracker app; pick up books curbside; and navigate our digital resources. Social media became more widely used to help spread information about the library, books, and other school-related information.

School librarians recognized their role in providing support to students and families outside of reading and school-related activities. They used their platforms to share information about accessing necessities like food and medical help. School libraries are the heart of the school community, and the pandemic has proved their important function as a hub for literacy, learning, and information.

Policy Changes

Changes to circulation policies were necessary. In the past, we may have had the luxury of agonizing over changes to circulation policies; however, that did not happen this time! Changes needed to be swift. Due dates were extended and overdue notices were waived as students needed additional time with books. Even though students and families could return items to the school or to any public library branch nearest them, returning items promptly could still be a matter of inconvenience and low priority with everything else families were facing. As a district, we waived all lost book fees from March 1, 2020, to the end of the 2020–2021 school year. The Nashville Public Library followed suit in eliminating lost book fines, which was a tremendous benefit to our students and families. With all the chaos in the world, the last thing we wanted to add to the plates of our families was worry over how to pay for a lost book.

The total cost of books lost during this time was significant but in the long run, it was not important to our goal of developing lifelong readers and users of information. We would rather lose books than readers.

Conclusion

As we linger in this space of in-person and virtual learning again this school year, we continue to rely on our resourcefulness, ingenuity, and willingness to try new things and let go of ways that no longer serve our students. Following the March 2020 tornadoes, #NashvilleStrong emerged as a reminder about the never-ending strength of our community, and during the pandemic this hashtag held true as we reinvented how to provide access to books to our students.

For Nashville, this was a time to leverage our community partnerships even more, to work together more to create consistent and equitable services in the face of non-traditional learning, to teach ourselves new technologies and to try new social media platforms to reach our students where they are, and to be willing to bring the books out into the community, beyond the confines of the library walls, in whatever way we could. We will keep rising to the occasion by re-inventing reading and adopting what we have learned into our best practices.

We continue to make curbside available upon request, as students sometimes have to shift to virtual learning due to being quarantined. This may become a permanent best practice to support students whether they are in or out of school. We continue to explore book access in the school building in response to student movement being limited due to a surge of COVID-19 cases. School librarians have created a mobile mini-library to take to classrooms. School librarians continue to create content that can

be shared asynchronously, and they leverage virtual conferencing to provide office hours to support students. Hume-Fogg High School librarian Amanda Smithfield held virtual office hours to support seniors with MLA citations on the night before their research papers were due. Amidst the increased flexibility, we have more tools now, and we're not afraid to use them.

Most importantly, we learned that it is okay to break the rules. No matter what the future holds, as school librarians we must harness our creativity and adapt to the current learning environment so that we continue serving students. We keep brainstorming solutions and chipping away at barriers. And, who knows, maybe one day we'll get our very own bookmobile.

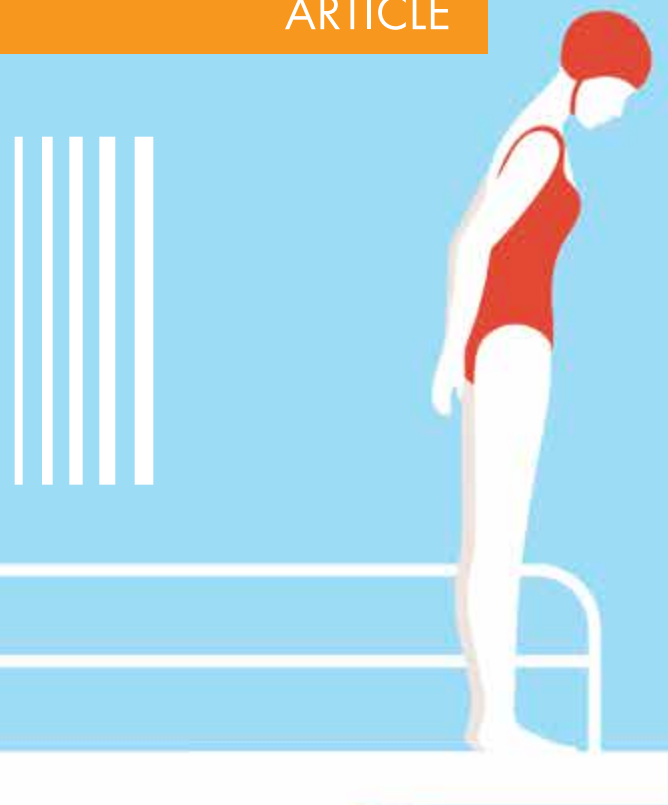


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DIVING INTO SCHOOL LIBRARIANSHIP DURING THE PANDEMIC

March 2020 kicked off a period of unprecedented change and new experiences for all of us, but for one group of school librarians, the months to follow would be incredibly unique. Imagine (or remember, if this was also your story!) embarking on an exciting new job as a school librarian...and beginning this journey between March 2020 and March 2021.

Below three elementary school librarians share their experiences as brand-new school librarians, seeing everything with new eyes at the exact moment in time when the school library profession (and indeed, the K–12 educational system) was busy reinventing, reimaging, and reconsidering every best practice. By drawing upon their creativity and the strong foundations of what a school librarian does and what a school library should be, these school librarians were able to create supportive library spaces for their students. Under incredibly challenging circumstances, they taught fundamental research and reading skills and did what school librarians do best—analyze, adapt, and move forward.

Building a Community of Learners

Kris Fedeli of C. Paul Barnhart Elementary School in Waldorf, Maryland, seized upon serendipity, personal interests, and a willingness to find any possible way to build a community of learners during the 2020–2021 school year to bring the perennially popular topic of learning about insects to her library classes.

My students and I delved into nonfiction books and online encyclopedias due to a chance encounter with a bright-green chrysalis on the screen of my home one Saturday morning. I gently pried the chrysalis off, took it inside, took pictures beside a ruler,

UNDER INCREDIBLY CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY TAUGHT FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH AND READING SKILLS AND DID WHAT SCHOOL LIBRARIANS DO BEST—ANALYZE, ADAPT, AND MOVE FORWARD.

and then gently placed it in my butterfly cage and took it to school.

I decided to document the progress of the chrysalis on the library website, allowing students to track changes even though I saw them only once a week. At the time I was scheduled to see only pre-Kindergarten through second-grade students. For two weeks I took pictures daily and posted them on the website to document the changes, including my observations of the changes. I added links to fiction and nonfiction e-books, as well as database articles for students interested in delving deeper into caterpillars and butterflies.

My original lesson plans for the next few weeks involved sharing Maryland's Black Eyed Susan Award nominees, but those plans were pushed back to allow for an impromptu butterfly unit starting with a real chrysalis, observing the changes as we waited for it to hatch. We read fiction and nonfiction books, comparing and contrasting the two types of texts. I shared e-books that offered clear, vibrant pictures that we zoomed in on to closely inspect the photographs, as well as text features that offered additional tidbits of information about the butterfly. While reading the nonfiction e-books I introduced text features, sharing with students how facts are presented using a multitude of vehicles. During our second week of the Great Green Chrysalis project, I had the kids make predictions about whether it was a moth or a

butterfly and what kind of moth/butterfly it was.

I also used this time to introduce the digital encyclopedia PebbleGo, which we used to answer the question "Do moths form a chrysalis?" (Yes, they do, but they are called cocoons). We also looked up butterflies on PebbleGo and explored the three different types of species. By this time over a week had passed since the caterpillar had created its chrysalis and the color had changed from green to clear, allowing us to see the developing butterfly inside. We read through the life cycles of the three different butterflies after looking at the various pictures of the chrysalides, and we finally determined that a monarch butterfly would hatch from the chrysalis.

Two weeks had passed since I had found the chrysalis, and the husk of the chrysalis was so clear we could see the color of the wings through it, so I decided to take it home with me over the weekend. I hoped that I could take a video of the hatching and share it with all the kids. One beautiful fall Saturday morning I was up just in time to take a video of the butterfly hatching. It took about an hour for the wings to dry, and I took short videos to show the progress. My final video of that morning showed me releasing it onto a tree to start its migration south. I shared

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this video on the library webpage. I took multiple pictures daily and posted them on the library website with observations of the changes, in addition to the videos of the hatching butterfly.

During the second week of our chrysalis research with the early elementary grades I organized to drop into third through fifth grades, which were not in my schedule at the time. My fifteen minutes of fame with those grades started with a short introduction of myself and then I shared the already changing chrysalis. I shared pictures from the week before when it was bright green but was becoming transparent, and they were able to spot black and orange stripes with white dots. I invited them to ask questions and offer observations about the chrysalis, and then I challenged them to find out what kind of butterfly the chrysalis turned into. I shared the PebbleGO resource, showing them how to log in and search for resources, and told them they could e-mail me with their guess along with a link to the page where they found their information. I had about sixty responses. For those that were incorrect I directed them to look again. For those that correctly deduced that it was a monarch, I created a little “Great Job on Your Research Skills” card and mailed that

IT WAS MY PERSONAL EXCITEMENT AND INTEREST IN INSECTS THAT BROUGHT A VIRTUAL LIBRARY CLASS TO LIFE. BY SHARING WHAT I LOVE WITH THE STUDENTS, THEY IN TURN WERE INTRIGUED AND INSPIRED TO DO RESEARCH AND JOIN ME ON THIS JOURNEY.

along with a bookmark to them. In early May my assistant shared a live Brood X cicada he had just caught. This prompted a similar version of the butterfly lesson with the pre-Kindergarteners, third-, and fourth-graders I had at the time.

What made this so exciting for the kids was connecting a concrete object to reading and research, not to mention sharing my crazy excitement for insects with my students. It was my personal excitement and interest in insects that brought a virtual library class to life. By sharing what I love with the students, they in turn were intrigued and inspired to do research and join me on this journey.

Creating an Engaging and Supportive Library Space

In a similar vein, Allison Dunn of Emerson Elementary School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, who started her position in March 2021, only a few weeks before her district shifted from remote to hybrid instruction, cycled through becoming a remote and then hybrid school librarian with incredible speed, while pursuing goals of creating an engaging and supportive library space and learning environment.

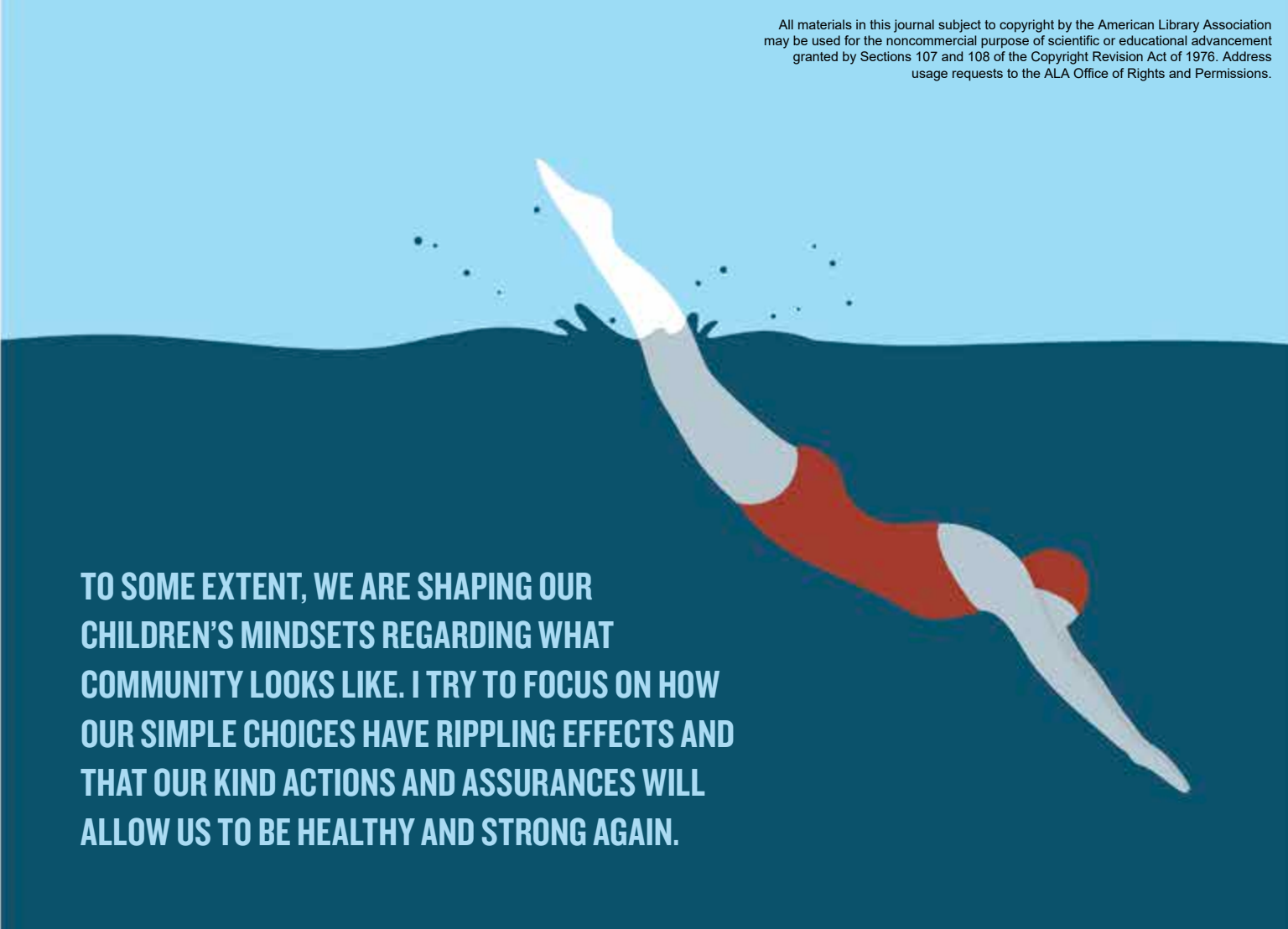
I was hired in late March of 2021, just as schools were welcoming back students into a hybrid format.

I inherited a school library that had been used for storage during COVID and needed its spring cleaning badly. I discarded much and found new places for all my teaching supplies, keeping the hybrid model in mind. To this end, I created a classroom space within our library and placed a desk near the white board, much like it was a student. Disinfectant spray and wipes and hand sanitizer also sat on that table for quick access. On my first day, after watching a first-grader pull his mask down so he could lay the red pencil sharpener squarely in his mouth, I realized the need to sanitize went deeper than I expected.

I RELIED HEAVILY ON MY SEVENTEEN YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE TO FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH SUCH A BROADCAST, BUT I ADMIT THAT IT WAS A LOT OF EYES ON ME AS I WAS LEARNING MY NEW ENVIRONMENT.

I was building new routines, systems, and procedures in my new environment—figuring it all out as I went—but with the broad eyes of the internet watching each step. Although teachers are used to speaking in front of audiences all day, there was something foreign and uncomfortable about having my computer monitor display my students, each in his/her own box—layered with family and community members tucked away in the background. It was a uniquely different audience. It piped in with questions at unexpected times. Sometimes one saw more sofas, walls, refrigerators, bedroom furniture than faces; parents could “poke in” to get immediate feedback at inopportune times. Though it looked nothing like a student, it could behave as an entire class when presented to; its eyes and ears were listening and often trying to keep up, but it couldn’t receive support the way our in-person kids could, and one could feel its occasional frustration and exasperation thinly veiled behind the screen.

Staff members who chose to keep their Google Meets live while I taught got to see how I worked with their classes and how I met my challenges; family members and friends at home got a real-time close look at what takes place in our school library. I relied heavily on my seventeen years of teaching experience to feel comfortable with such a broadcast, but I admit that it was a lot of eyes on me as I was learning my new environment.



TO SOME EXTENT, WE ARE SHAPING OUR CHILDREN'S MINDSETS REGARDING WHAT COMMUNITY LOOKS LIKE. I TRY TO FOCUS ON HOW OUR SIMPLE CHOICES HAVE RIPPLING EFFECTS AND THAT OUR KIND ACTIONS AND ASSURANCES WILL ALLOW US TO BE HEALTHY AND STRONG AGAIN.

Had I known our community longer, I am sure these virtual interactions would have been welcomed after a year in isolation, but I always felt like a newcomer and introduced myself at the start of every session in case someone new was logged in. Though I had competed with YouTube as a high school English teacher in the past, this level of divided attention with other media was more challenging. I had no idea how to win the attention of the students at home with all the distractions they had available, while also providing the one-on-one, hands-on assistance asked of me by those students who sat before me.

Over the seven short weeks of school, it became clearer and clearer to me that I was leaving the kids at home behind. We all were. I rarely looked to the computer for an answer to my question or to see how a student was engaging with our

activities. It isn't natural to look towards a computer for a reaction to a story or to check on its growth as a result from an activity well done. It always felt like I was trying to uphold a valuable conversation—as with a good friend—while also taking an important phone call. In truth, I grew more convinced that it wasn't possible to reach two separate audiences simultaneously. I believe kids at home saw that too. I watched as many kids retreated even further than they had already.

That said, hybrid also meant smaller class sizes and gave me more time to think deeply about how our school library ought to be organized. I got a good feel for what I could (and could not) accomplish in our 45-minute blocks. By May, our school library got a full makeover that has certainly supported our efforts to put a strong library together this fall.

To empower kids to keep their masks on, I prepared a unit on superheroes and compared our masks to capes. For many students, returning to school this fall required them to summon their courage. I reminded my patrons often that their daily choices can save lives. Building a strong community looks different during a pandemic. To some extent, we are shaping our children's mindsets regarding what community looks like. I try to focus on how our simple choices have rippling effects and that our kind actions and assurances will allow us to be healthy and strong again. Indeed, could there be a better place to learn the elemental aspects of how to build a strong community than in our school libraries, where character building lessons and simple, profound truths are written plainly and illustrated beautifully? May these lessons pave the foundation for our post-pandemic world.

SINCE THE STUDENTS COULDN'T COME INTO THE LIBRARY I TRIED BRINGING THE SAFETY OF THE LIBRARY TO THEM BY ALLOWING THEM TO SOCIALIZE AND SHARE AT THE BEGINNING OF EVERY LIBRARY CLASS. GIVING KIDS THAT TIME HELPED BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH EVERYONE AND MADE THE KIDS MORE COMFORTABLE DURING LIBRARY CLASS.



Establishing the Essential Components of a School Library

Finally, Margaret Kennelly of Indian Head Elementary in Indian Head, Maryland, came to her school library from the public library world and was able to leverage that experience to help her drill down to the essential components of what she wanted her school library to have.

Last year was a new learning experience on multiple fronts for everyone in my school community. I was fresh out of grad school with only some public library experience and student teaching experience and joining a school that had not had a school librarian the year before. It was a bit of a challenge trying to bring the ideology of safe spaces and reader access to the digital world, while coming to terms with the fact that no, we weren't allowed to check out physical books to students. So, after a few Zoom lessons of just relationship building and talking with the wonderful educators at my school, I sat down and wrote out what the school library should do for students and then prioritized.

First, a safe space while online. While I had been taught plenty about creating a safe space in library school and got to see what a great community looks like through the public library, the digital world required the best of both worlds in a different space. Since the students couldn't come into the library I tried bringing the safety of the library to them by allowing them to socialize and share at the beginning of every library class. Giving kids that time helped build relationships with everyone and made the kids more comfortable during library class. However, it worked only for students who showed up to class. I just had to hope that the news and online resources helped those who didn't.

Second, access to books. Our district uses Synergy, so the school library got its own little website where I put links to Destiny Discover, Storyline Online, Beanstack, the public library, and a few other useful links. The best method of communication with students was during library classes, where I made sure to show them how to use Destiny

I MADE SURE STUDENTS WERE ABLE TO LISTEN TO A FUN AND EDUCATIONAL STORY, USUALLY RELYING ON OUR STATE BOOK AWARD NOMINEES OR THEME OF THE MONTH TO SHOW DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES. THIS WAY STUDENTS GOT TO READ AT LEAST ONE BOOK A WEEK.

and helped students with questions on how to use the platform. This ensured classes were still able to find the books they wanted to read and check them out. Some students got it right away, while others needed more time, which I didn't have. I partially solved this problem by sending multiple e-mails with instructions about how to use and find books. I also included this information in the newsletters I sent out (along with color-in bookmarks) in student material bags. The newsletters also helped inform parents about these resources so they could in turn help their child to use them.

Twitter was also useful in promoting our Beanstack challenges and winners of the library raffle for those who completed a challenge, drawing more readers in with the possibility of public acknowledgment. Since I didn't get to see grades 3 through 5 I created an optional book club and popped into some of their reading classes to introduce digital books, which offered some access. I also made sure to promote the public library events and resources to families, since I knew that the public library could provide more access.

Third, read-alouds. Read-alouds were one of my favorite things to do when I worked in a public library, and they're a great way to engage and educate students (and plan lessons!). I made sure students were able to listen to a fun and educational story, usually

relying on our state book award nominees or theme of the month to show diverse perspectives. This way students got to read at least one book a week. It also enabled me to more easily create a theme and activity for each lesson, like Fry Bread for November and Native American Heritage month. Even if a student treated library time as an audiobook, I at least could make sure the stories were told.

I am extremely thankful for my previous educational and job experiences for teaching me about these priorities, so that I could do my best to provide them last year. I now can take those original lessons and



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Schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She received the 2020 Excellence in Student Achievement Award from the New Mexico School Boards Association. Rachel was the member guide for the 2017–2018 ALA Emerging Leaders cohort that created the toolkit "Defending Intellectual Freedom: LGBTQ Materials in School Libraries." She was a panelist for the Junior Library Guild for the July 16, 2020, webinar "Innovation in Uncertainty: Back to School" and the May 20, 2020, webinar "Innovation in Uncertainty: How Librarians Step Up, Support Students, and Find Solutions." She was also a co-presenter for the June 20, 2020, online presentation "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: The School Library and Me in the Global Learning Community" to the AASL Affiliate Assembly. She was the guest editor for the January/February 2020 issue of Knowledge Quest. She is a member of AASL and is a member of the Knowledge Quest Editorial Board.

hopefully delve deeper into the worlds of books this year, with more hands-on lessons and student engagement.

All three of these brave new school librarians joined the profession at an immensely challenging time, but clearly remain undaunted by the challenges of either last year or this one. Instead, they dug deep and thought hard about what they wanted their libraries to give students—research, engagement, reading, safe spaces, and more—and figured out how to teach those lessons, last year and now.



Kris Fedeli (she/her) is the librarian at C. Paul Barnhart Elementary School in Waldorf, Maryland.



Allison Dunn is the teacher-librarian at Emerson Elementary in Albuquerque, New Mexico. For seventeen years,

Allison taught 9th- and 10th-grade English and ESL grades 9–12 at Eldorado High School. She also taught special education to support nonverbal students during the period of remote learning brought on by the pandemic. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and a Golden Apple Award Recipient.



Margaret Kennelly (she/her) is the media specialist at Indian Head Elementary School in Indian Head, Maryland.

She is a member of AASL.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR ADMINISTRATOR'S PRIORITIES FOR THE SCHOOL LIBRARY?

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School librarians today are in a pivotal position to be leaders in schools due to dramatic changes in information technology, educational landscapes, and concerns over equitable access to information, resources, and instruction. When we lead, student outcomes improve, and equitable access to information, resources, and instruction increase. It is essential school librarians understand and demonstrate how they impact the school culture, implement school and district goals, and form positive relationships within the school community. However, some school librarians have difficulty understanding the connection between advocacy, leadership, and acting in a leadership role. More worrisome is the frightening decline in the number of school library positions around the country (Lance and Kachel 2021).

We believe if administrators understood the school librarian's roles and responsibilities and school librarians were meeting administrators' needs then there would be fewer positions eliminated. In the SLIDE Perspectives Report Keith Curry Lance and Debra Kachel state: "If school librarians (regardless of job title) are to have a long-term future in U.S. public education, the school library community needs to better understand the perceptions, values, and priorities of those who make staffing decisions" (2021, 83). As school librarians, we need to work with our entire school community, especially our administrators, to share our personal and professional perceptions, priorities, and values as leaders in our schools.

To better understand the relationship between administrators' priorities for school librarians and their grasp of our *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* (AASL 2018a), we examined statements from

school administrators discussing school librarians during an AASL Town Hall meeting (AASL 2020). Our goal was to better understand administrators' priorities for the school librarian's roles and responsibilities.

Research Background

The AASL School Leader Collaborative (Collaborative) was the central focus of AASL President Kathryn Roots Lewis's presidential initiative. The initiative was sponsored by AASL in collaboration with OverDrive Education

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with the goal of forging new understandings of and avenues for disseminating "the profound impact school librarians and school administrators wield as they work together to impact all learners" (ALAnews 2019). AASL members nominated administrators who had advocated for school librarian-ship in their districts. Three school superintendents and four school principals were selected to join the collaborative. Members of the collaborative were featured speakers for the AASL Town Hall on

November 18, 2020. A transcript of the town hall was the primary source of data for this study.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how collaborative members' understandings of the *National School Library Standards* connected to their advocacy for the school librarian's roles and responsibilities. We wanted to determine these administrators' understandings of what school librarian leaders do in their practice. We also wanted to see which of the AASL Standards the administrators noted during the discussion.

Did these administrators mention the five roles of school librarians as instruction partners, information specialists, leaders, teachers, and program administrators (AASL 2018a)? And finally, how did this video specifically support the leader role of school librarians?

Methodology

For this study, we used both qualitative and quantitative content analysis as our research methods. This allowed us to gather data from multiple perspectives and provided robust and useful results that helped answer our research questions. Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts in the contexts of their use.

We developed the coding scheme based on the research questions, the five roles, and the six Shared Foundations from the AASL Standards. We analyzed the video and then met to discuss themes, key concepts, and patterns that emerged throughout the data. We achieved a 75 percent interrater reliability, which supported the validity of our findings (Harland, Moreillon, and Cellucci In press).

Question #	Question
Q1	What does teaching look like for your school librarians during the pandemic?
Q2	How are school librarians and students interacting during the pandemic?
Q3	What can school librarians do in the future to remind administrators that we foster exploration for students?
Q4	How can a school librarian convince a reluctant administrator to appreciate their librarians?
Q5	How did your librarian open up the channel in the first place so that you became such a supporter of school librarians and school libraries?
Q6	What can we do to help Joe Biden and whoever he chooses to lead the department of education to include librarians in their education initiatives?
Q7	In what ways are your librarians collaborating with classroom educators to address learning loss during this pandemic and how do you help make that collaboration an expectation?
Q8	How have you encouraged leadership among your school librarians? What have you done to help them build those skills they need to be better leaders in their buildings?

Table 1. Eight questions asked during the town hall.

Category	Indicator	Frequency	Quotes
Leader	Takes Action (responds to challenges and opportunities to increase effectiveness)	25/32	The librarian... "was in all the PLC meetings at the beginning of the year, helping teachers realize how the resources in the library and the technology that we've had can be beneficial to them."
Collaborate	Collaboration with Principal/Connection to School Vision	14/32	When the principal first started his job his librarian asked "'what do you want me to focus on?' And so she presented herself as someone who is going to act on whatever initiative I had before we even knew each other."
Explore	Leader, Change-Maker, Thought-Leader	15/32	"She [the librarian] is an influencer. So like all the librarians in our district they're leaders. They influenced me, the teachers, students, the parents. And I think that title [school librarian] needs to go along with leaders."

Table 2. Cross-question themes.

Research Findings

The following findings are based on an analysis of the transcript of the video recording of the town hall. This virtual meeting included school librarians, AASL hosts, and six members of the collaborative. In response to eight questions (see table 1), the collaborative members shared their perspectives about the roles and responsibilities of school librarians during pandemic learning conditions. They also suggested how school librarians could work alongside administrators through the pandemic and into the future.

Table 2 summarizes the findings organized by the three themes that emerged most frequently. The table is organized by category, indicator from the coding matrix, the frequency of comments in that particular category based on the number of times the collaborative members addressed that particular category (out of thirty-two quotes during the town hall), and sample quotes that further indicate their perspectives on school librarian's roles and responsibilities. The indicators cited in the tables were noted by three or more collaborative members.

Take Action

The most noteworthy theme from the findings is that these administrators expected school librarians to take action in response to challenges and opportunities to increase effectiveness. Out of the thirty-two quotes by administrators in the town hall meeting video transcript, twenty-five of them mentioned this leadership role for school librarians. One of the administrators said: "Our librarians haven't been waiting for people to tell them what to do. They've been saying, 'Okay here's the problem we need to solve and then here's how we're going to make it

happen.'" School leaders, including librarians, were forced to respond to unique challenges throughout the pandemic. These administrators repeatedly emphasized that a school librarian's willingness to take action without direction leads to increased opportunities for all. They were not asking school librarians to work harder; they were asking them to do what they could to change a circumstance by identifying the ways they could lead improvements in specific situations.

Collaborate

The administrators also expected school librarians to collaborate with principals to connect the school libraries with the school's mission, vision, and goals. Out of the thirty-two quotes by administrators, fourteen of them were coded within the Collaborate Shared Foundation. The administrators asked school librarians to share solutions with principals in response to school and district-wide initiatives and to let them know about the AASL Standards because they can serve as a foundation for the work schools are doing, especially surrounding literacy, equity, diversity, and inclusion. One of the administrators said, "Share the AASL Standards and make sure that your principal knows what they are. If principals see how those standards connect with the larger scope of what's really important to us as leaders they're going to buy in."

Explore

The leadership, change-maker category of the Explore Shared Foundation was also found in the video. This finding is connected to taking action and collaborating with principals on a shared mission. Out of the thirty-two quotes by administrators, fifteen of them mentioned aspects of this Shared Foundation by describing how they expected their

school librarians to serve as influencers, especially in the areas of inclusivity and equity, and to monitor and respond to benchmark data, specifically around literacy skills. One of the administrators stated: "As a leader, it's really important that we make sure that we're tapping into every voice to make sure that we're thinking about everybody and there's an inclusivity that's important and librarians bring that."

These administrators know that we have a unique voice, so we need to step up to the table and speak on behalf of all learners and educators. Collaborative members highlighted the school librarian's unique role as one of the only educators in the school who understands what classroom educators are teaching and students are learning across content areas and grade levels. School librarians are curriculum experts and collaborative partners in instruction and academic support. This schoolwide impact necessitates that school librarians communicate with the principal about how the school library touches everyone and extends learning through additional access to information and resources.

Implications for Practice

Collaboration

School librarians collaborating with principals to meet the goals, mission, and vision of the school appeared in answers to five of the questions. These administrators noted the value of school librarians and principals working closely together to find solutions to challenges. One principal said, "Coming to us and letting us know what you can provide in these times is really helpful." This quote illustrates the need for school librarians to take the first step in reaching out to the school principal while also sharing solutions to problems faced by the entire school.

Continuing these conversations will lead to an increased understanding of what the school librarian and library offer and how school librarians are collaboratively contributing to the school's goals. One of the administrators said, "You're the rocks that we need to move with connecting to the school goals and saying, 'This is how I can contribute to making these goals actualized.'" These administrators are looking for their school librarians to not only connect what is happening in the library to the school goals but also to clearly explain how they are independently and collaboratively meeting the school's outcome targets.

If school librarians are teaching students and supporting classroom educators through equitable access to information and diverse resources and collaboratively designed and implemented projects, their reputation will grow. School librarians who actively participate in professional learning communities, examine student benchmark data, and collaborate with other educators to integrate needed skills across disciplines become valuable members of the academic program. Additionally, when they share current innovations with administrators and educators alike, school librarians serve as leaders. Keeping those communication, relationship, and collaboration channels open will be important long into the future.

Leadership

The school librarian's leadership role was reinforced throughout the findings. During the town hall, indicators related to acting as a leader and change-maker emerged in responses to five out of the eight questions asked; this clearly shows a repetition of the theme. The words *lead*, *leader*, and *leadership* were spoken by collaborative members thirty

times throughout the hour-long meeting.

One administrator stated, "Becoming an instructor and becoming an academic leader in the building is what I would encourage." Another administrator shared, "I think it's important to have those direct conversations and to present it in a way that this is an opportunity for us to be different and better." With a focus on solutions and improvement, these administrators encouraged school librarians to intentionally take action and serve as change agents for the entire school community through communication and collaborative instruction.

These administrators described their school librarian leaders as influencers and connectors throughout the town hall. School librarians, before and during the pandemic, were leading through instructional collaboration across content areas and grade levels. They influenced the school when they provided professional development for the staff, communicated intentionally beyond the school community, and designed initiatives that impacted all learners.

Conclusion for Practitioners

As practitioners, this research gives us much to reflect on regarding the importance of developing a strong, collaborative relationship with the building principal. It has long been said that the way to understand the needs of the school is to know what keeps the principal up at night.

Here are some ideas to get started:

Meet regularly with your principal during the school year, strive for monthly but realize that this may not be possible initially. Bring ideas, student evidence, and successful collaborative work that shows how your contributions are critical to

achieving school and district goals. If you haven't already done so, share the AASL administrator one pager "Your School Library in the Learning Community" (2018b) to begin the conversation about the AASL Standards.

Develop data sheets that quickly show the value of collaborative activities with other educators; city or town entities such as the public library (i.e., youth and family services, social service groups); and grant applications from educational groups, cultural councils, library boards.

If you're not already a part of a district initiative, leadership team, school or district committee(s), **discuss with your principal how to become a valuable asset to the school and community by representing the unique perspective of a school librarian.**

Listen wholeheartedly to the concerns of staff, other educators, and the administration and brainstorm with others ways that you and the school library can be part of a solution to these issues and challenges.

Continue to learn the most-current educational and school library practice, lead professional development in these areas, and create ways to collaborate with these skills.

As school librarians, we know the importance of working directly with administrators to clearly articulate how the school library can play an important role in solving the challenges that exist within the school. Through thoughtful and intentional trust-building and leadership, the school librarian must take action. The time is now.



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Massachusetts. She was awarded the 2020 Peggy Hallisey Leadership Award from the Massachusetts School Library Association. She also was named a 2019 Mover and Shaker in *Library Journal*. She coauthored the School Library Research article “Take Action: A Content Analysis of Administrators’ Understanding of and Advocacy for the Roles and Responsibilities of School Librarians.” She also coauthored the “Leadership” chapter in *Core Values in School Librarianship* (ABC-CLIO 2021). She authored the “Share with Mental Wellness Curriculum” chapter in *Include* (ALA Editions 2021) and “Collaborating to Help Teens with Mental Health Issues” chapter in *Radical Collaborations for Learning: School Librarians as Change Agents* (ABC-CLIO 2020). She wrote “Full Voice. Building an Empathetic Research Community” in March 2020, “Full Voice. Underserved Populations: We Have the Power to Imagine Better” in February 2020, and “Full Voice. Mindfulness through a Trauma-Sensitive Lens” in January 2020 for *School Library Connection*. She is a member of AASL and was a 2020–2021 director-at-large for the AASL Board of Directors.

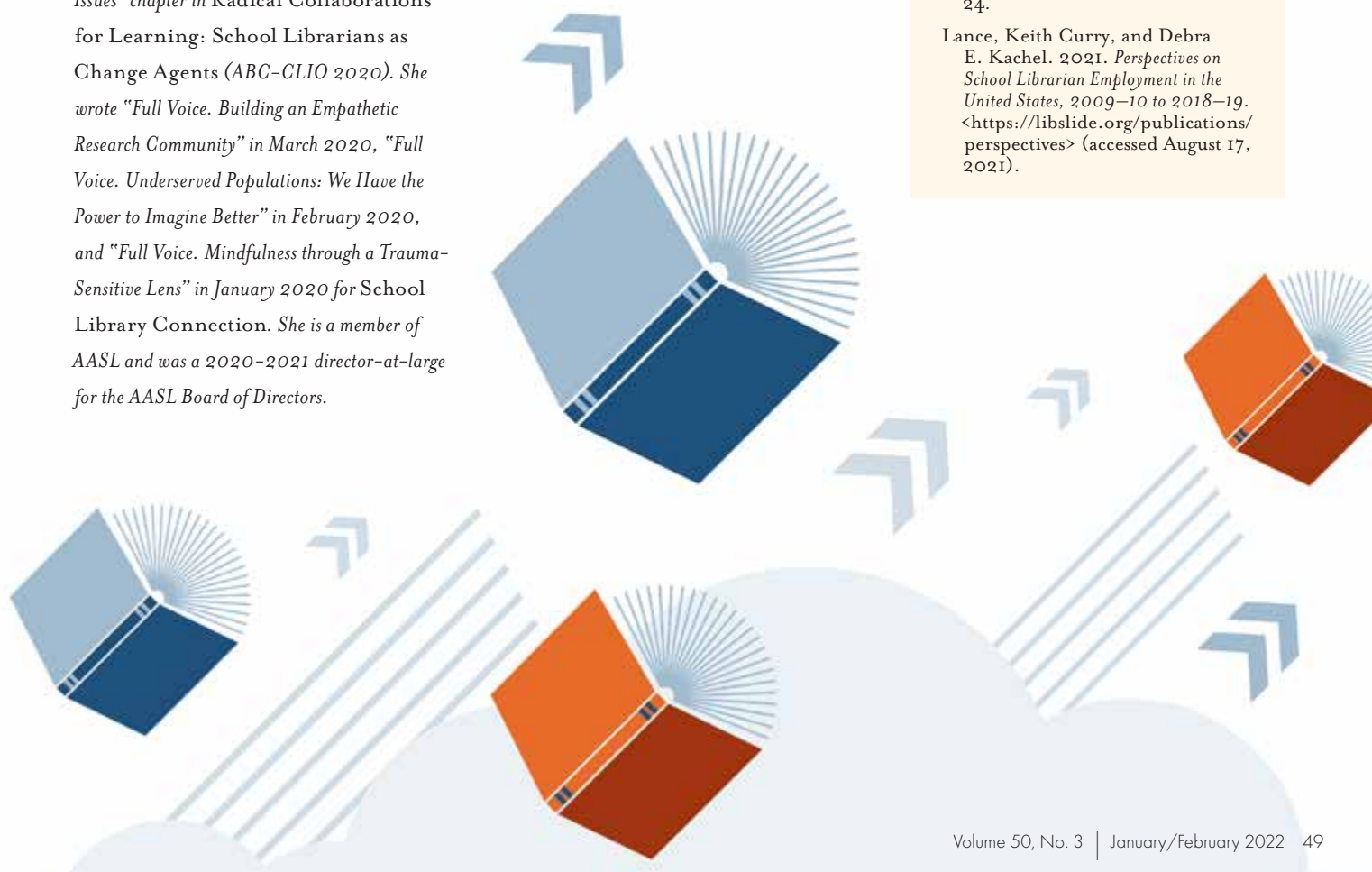


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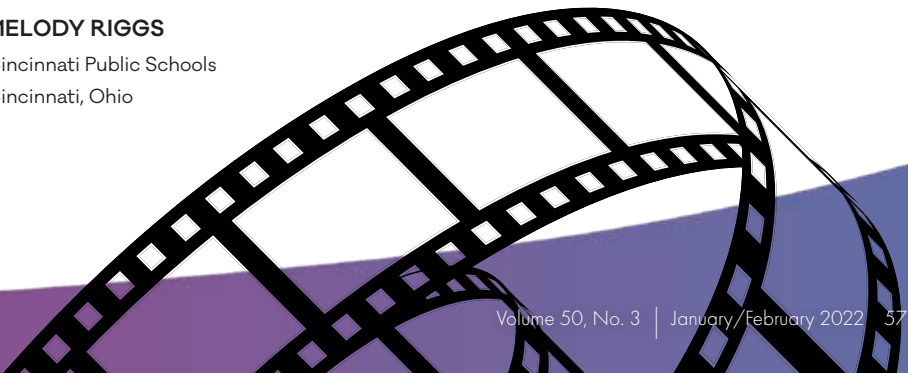
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Examining the School Librarian's Role in New Teacher Resilience

Rita Reinsel Soulen

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There are times when we need to step out of our library comfort zone to advocate for practices that improve the whole school climate. As a practicing school librarian and a NxtWave scholar, I was thrilled to be offered the opportunity to study mentoring of new teachers by school librarians.

My field study was selected for a grant under the AASL CLASS II initiative to systemically develop and test a model of caring for new teachers through collaboration in authentic school settings, then determine how this research could translate into practice (Soulen 2020). As a continuation of this field study, I also surveyed the school librarians who served as mentors to examine their role in enabling collaboration (Soulen 2021).

Background

First-year teachers face many challenges as they enter the profession. From my own experience, I know that new teachers are eager to form partnerships, which often become collaborative relationships that last for years. The AASL Standards recommend school librarians get to know colleagues as people before attempting to convince them to collaborate, building trust and leading to long-lasting professional relationships (2018). School librarians are in a unique position to build resilience

in new teachers through mentoring to improve performance while at the same time raising employee well-being (Seligman 2011).

In my field study, fifteen school librarians agreed to help twenty-six new teachers develop resilience by engaging, empowering, partnering, and co-teaching with the teachers. After the field study, I asked the librarians to complete a survey to examine their perceptions of the interventions for new teachers.

Examples of interventions from the field study included visiting the teacher's classroom for a quick needs assessment, sharing some social time over a soda or hot chocolate, sending a virtual greeting card, providing informational resources, offering library programming for the teacher's classes, letting administrators know about the teacher's successes, partnering to plan instruction, co-teaching, and shared assessment.

Findings from the Survey

Responses indicated the school librarians' overwhelming support of providing interventions for new teacher resilience. The survey responses demonstrated that 93 percent of librarians felt:

- new teachers need to be resilient, so school librarians need to provide interventions to promote resilience.
- school librarians are uniquely situated to mentor new teachers as a precursor to collaboration.
- greater resilience in new teachers leads to reduced burnout and increased retention.
- both mentoring and collaboration are expected roles for school librarians.
- the interventions were appropriate and effectively implemented.

All school librarians agreed that the interventions contributed to increased new teacher resilience, decreased burnout, and increased retention. They also found that their own mentoring and collaboration skills improved as a result of the field study.

Eighty-seven percent of school librarians responded that there were just enough interventions in the model (two activities per week for sixteen weeks). Sixty percent felt that four months of interventions was enough time to affect new teacher resilience.

All school librarians agreed that the interventions contributed to increased new teacher resilience, decreased burnout, and increased retention. They also found that their own mentoring and collaboration skills improved as a result of the field study.

Open-ended responses provided more information about barriers and enablers for mentoring and collaboration. As you can see from the responses below, time and scheduling were common barriers, while dispositions to engage in mentoring and collaboration were important enablers.

The barriers to mentoring and collaboration included:

- New teachers were overburdened and overwhelmed
- Fixed schedules, duty schedules, and planning and resource times made coordination difficult
- School library was closed for testing/school librarians were used as test administrators and proctors
- In school libraries with a part-time assistant, clerical duties left little time to collaborate
- School announced inclement weather days

The school librarians also identified additional duties that may have negatively influenced their abilities to mentor and collaborate, including:

- Supervising afterschool library time

This mentoring of new teachers by school librarians can be a first step to explore pathways to foster collaboration.

- Club sponsor
- Fundraising
- PTA liaison
- Volunteer coordinator
- Grade-level chair
- Department chair
- Homebound instructor
- Technology go-to
- Training new testing chair
- Tutor
- Code facilitator
- Student remediation

The school librarians described enablers for mentoring and collaboration as:

- Willingness of new teachers to participate
- Full support of administration
- Desire to participate and make the program work
- Flexible schedule
- Location of new teachers' classrooms
- Hybrid electronic and face-to-face communication
- Well-outlined model with easy-to-follow examples
- Lots of space in school library for class visits

Implications for Practice

Over the years school librarians have moved from working with teachers in the selection and use of materials to partnering to plan and carry out library programming. Through these partnerships, school librarians can boost resilience in new teachers and build their professional skills. The school librarians surveyed in this study agreed that this model of caring for new teachers provides practical interventions that can transform the working lives of our teacher colleagues. This mentoring of new teachers by school librarians can be a first step to explore pathways to foster collaboration.

Developing teacher resilience has been linked to reduced burnout and increased retention (Johnson et al. 2016), which may result in better student achievement. Teaching resilient strategies and mindsets through professional development for new teachers builds a collaborative school climate, which can benefit all students and teachers in the school.

Quality mentoring and collaboration require time, a highly valued resource in schools.

Quality mentoring and collaboration require time, a highly valued resource in schools. District and school administrators interested in building an infrastructure of such support should establish flexible scheduling and reduce noninstructional duties for school librarians in order to target collaborative practice. School librarians should prioritize activities that promote a collaborative school environment and provide support for those new to the profession.

The Collaborate Shared Foundation from the AASL Standards recognizes the importance of practices that enable long-term collaborative relationships (2018). Highly qualified school librarians can influence the school ecology to engage, empower, partner, and co-teach as best practice. By connecting personally and professionally to teachers in their first years, school librarians can contribute to a school community that encourages collaboration and creates an optimal learning environment for students.

School librarians have a voice and insight into new teacher resilience. We need to act as leaders to advocate for school and district policies that support mentoring and collaborative practices. Exercise your voice to be a leader in your school and district.

By connecting personally and professionally to teachers in their first years, school librarians can contribute to a school community that encourages collaboration and creates an optimal learning environment for students.

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Carolina. She coauthored "Students' Frequency of Access to School Library Materials in Transformative Times" for the August 2021 issue of the *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* and "Diverse Literature for All: A Research-Practice Partnership to Strengthen Collection Development" for the April 2021 issue of *Teacher Librarian*. She also authored the 2021 School Library Research article "Enabling Collaboration through Mentorship: Examining the Role of the School Librarian." Dr. Soulen is a member of AASL and serves on the Knowledge Quest Editorial Board.



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The virtual landscape has shown us that by working together and building relationships we can bring books and the love of reading to students with more opportunities for collaboration than ever before.

Connecting Authors to Young Readers

USING THE VIRTUAL LANDSCAPE TO BRING NEW, DIVERSE, AND INCLUSIVE BOOKS INTO YOUR SCHOOLS

Payal Doshi

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Like most of us, I spent the better part of the pandemic trying to will it away. When I signed the book deal for my middle-grade fantasy debut *Rea and the Blood of the Nectar* in January 2020, I was over the moon. It had taken me upwards of a decade to call myself a “published author.” I won’t lie: I lived on the hope that by mid-2021, the pandemic would largely be behind us, and my debut would have the bells and whistles of a “beforetime,” in-person book launch with family visiting for the big day and lots of celebrations.

But by the time June 2021 arrived, we remained knee-deep in the pandemic. Most events were virtual. My family from India couldn’t fly down. My husband, my three-year-old daughter, and I were the only ones present for my book launch. I felt defeated. I had waited a long time for this.

I’d been doom-scrolling when I chanced upon a quote from Wanda Sykes: “When life gives you lemons don’t make lemonade, make pink lemonade. Be unique.”

It was my *a-ha!* moment. Living through a pandemic meant we

physically couldn’t meet each other, but we could virtually “see” everybody! It was time to make my pink lemonade.

The benefit of debuting in year two of the virtual climate was that publishers, bookstores, librarians, teachers, and young readers had gotten used to Zoom calls, Google Meets, and ring lighting. As our world revolved around the internet more than ever before, physical boundaries blurred, bringing authors closer to readers, booksellers, and educators.

So, for my book launch, I partnered with my local bookstore who hosted a virtual “In Conversation” event on Zoom with me and an author from a different state. The event was free and open to all. Voila! I had family and friends tuning in from all parts of the U.S. and the world—India, Italy, Canada, and Australia!

But I wondered, “What happens next?” For debut books, most of our patronage is friends and family. How was I going to get my book into the hands of young readers? How was an educator going to discover my book with schools and libraries being closed?

Taking a deep breath, I dove head-first into the virtual waters. If I wanted to get my book into the hands of more readers, I had to step out of my comfort zone and build relationships with gatekeepers and educators, understand the nuances of virtual school visits, and learn the ropes of making an effective presentation to keep screen weary 8- to 13-year-olds interested.

As my first step, I became active on Instagram and Twitter. It’s where the children’s book community is most active. Every Monday on Twitter at 9 p.m. EST, I participated in #MGBookChat, a chat where authors of middle-grade books and teachers and librarians congregate virtually to discuss new releases, ways to include diverse and inclusive books in classrooms, methods to captivate the interest of reluctant readers. The topics of discussion are wonderful and endless.

After the chat, I’d often receive direct messages asking me to set up virtual visits with their students, or I’d send messages asking if educators were interested in a virtual author visit for their students. Most of those educators I asked said yes! Mind you, my book had just released, and most kids had not yet heard about it.



As author visit requests trickled in, I researched how to create engaging presentations, focusing on my journey to become an author and giving students a behind-the-scenes look into the book production process from manuscript to final copy.

The presentations were a hit, but I still felt one major element missing—student engagement. Keeping in mind the interactive features—polls, chat, raise hand—on platforms such

as Zoom and Google Meet, I incorporated interactive exercises to stimulate student participation.

My most-popular exercises were getting students to come up with their own plot idea by using a few simple steps and then creating a character profile together with a class. The result: No more lolling heads or bodies slumped in chairs; instead an engaged class that had learned a vital tool in creating well-rounded characters!

Kids would come up to the camera saying they couldn't wait to read my book, and those that had read it asked when the sequel would be out!

To teachers and librarians: Authors are eager to connect with young readers. If there's a book that's perfect for your students, reach out to the author. When searching for new, diverse, and inclusive books, a quick and effective way is to look up hashtags on Twitter such as #MGBookChat, #the21ders, #Bookallies, and #Bookposse, to name a few. You'll find a plethora of books across genres from novels-in-verse to historical fiction, contemporary, nonfiction, and fantasy books to add to your collection.

Educators can also discover authors and their books from free conferences like Middle Ground Book Fest on YouTube, or they can create a Flipgrid account and invite authors to make videos for their students to watch. Subscriptions to middle-grade blogs and websites such as Kidlitsix.com, a six-minute weekly show inspiring kids to explore the exciting world of reading and participating in programs like #KidsNeedMentors where authors get paired with classrooms to create deeper and more meaningful connection with students, are fantastic resources too.

The virtual landscape has shown us that by working together and building relationships we can bring books and the love of reading to students with more opportunities for collaboration than ever before.

So, when life gives you lemons, I say, don't make lemonade, make pink lemonade garnished with sprigs of lavender and fresh mint!

I'll leave you with a few tips for creating an engaging presentation:

- Use bright backgrounds. I use Canva to create my presentation slides—they are versatile and customizable. Once I'm done, I drop the images into a PowerPoint presentation.
- Use a lot of pictures.
- Make your presentation personal.
- Include at least one interactive exercise that can be "played."
- Leave room for questions at the end.
- Arrange for a tech-test before the presentation to iron out any technical glitches.

Let's be creative and get collaborating!

Payal Doshi has a Master's in Creative Writing (Fiction) from The New School, New York. Having lived in the U.K. and U.S., she noticed a lack of Indian protagonists in global children's fiction and one day wrote the opening paragraph to what would become her first children's novel. Born and raised in Mumbai, India, she currently resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota. When she isn't writing or spending time with her family, you can find her nose deep in a book with a cup of coffee or daydreaming of fantasy realms to send her characters off into. *Rea and the Blood of the Nectar*, the first book in *The Chronicles of Astranthia* series, is her debut middle-grade novel. For more information, visit www.payaldoshiauthor.com, or follow her on Instagram @payaldoshiauthor and on Twitter @payaldwrites.

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Knowledge Quest, Publication No. 483-860, is published five times per year by the American Association of School Librarians, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611-2795. Annual subscription price, \$50. Printed in U.S.A. with periodical class postage paid at (Illinois). As a nonprofit organization authorized to mail at special rates (DMM Section 424.12 only), the purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding twelve months.

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