



illinois school library media association

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## ISLMA Policy Points for ISBE Stakeholder Listening Tour

### Accountability

As ISBE considers ways to implement an accountability system that acknowledges meaningful differences between schools and addresses the success of all students as well as sub-groups of students, we encourage you to adopt accountability policies and processes that utilize effective school library programs and school librarians as drivers for success. An effective school library program provides instruction designed to maximize student growth and progress, student academic achievement, and student progress in **English language proficiency**. Effective school library programs help close student performance gaps and increase post-secondary readiness. ISBE's goals of increasing graduation rates by providing comprehensive and rigorous instructional support across all grade levels and content areas should acknowledge and integrate school libraries and *licensed librarians* for their significant and sustained work supporting in student achievement.

### Standards

As ISBE considers how to create, implement, and measure challenging academic standards, we want to remind you that *licensed school librarians* are trained specifically to help students achieve the stated actions and goals of Illinois Learning Standards. Licensed school librarians teach research and evaluation skills every day. Only a centralized, curriculum-aligned school library program with an extensive range of print and nonprint materials can provide the differentiated and diverse reading and listening environment necessary to achieve the Illinois Learning Standards. Classroom libraries do not meet the depth nor breadth nor variety of informational texts required by the Illinois Learning Standards. We urge ISBE to fully utilize federal Title monies like the Innovate Approaches to Literacy grant to help high needs schools fully realize the academic gains of an effective school library program, and Title funds allow our school librarian colleagues to help implement challenging academic standards across the curriculum.

### Assessment

As ISBE considers ways to design and implement high-quality student academic assessments in reading or language arts, and science, the school librarian community in Illinois urges you to consider the evidence-based recommendations in *School Libraries Work* (2016). In this 2016 study, many states, including Illinois, demonstrate how effective school library programs and licensed school librarians support student academic achievement in higher reading levels and higher test scores. This is achieved through collaborative planning between teachers and licensed school librarians. School librarians teaching information and digital literacy skills to students and providing professional development to staff also leads to higher student test scores. School librarians are often the earliest adopters of STEM focused teaching and learning, and can be excellent partners with schools and districts as they develop their technology literacy plans. We recommend that ISBE utilize federal Title IV Part A funds to assist LEAs in providing school librarians with the resources they need to help our students use technology, to improve instruction, and student achievement.

## **School Improvement**

As ISBE considers strategies for school improvement, the school librarian community wants to highlight a 2013 report from the National Center for Literacy Education (NCLE) shows that when school librarians are highly involved leaders, they play a critical role in their schools through consistent and sustained collaboration with other educators. Significant new Title funding is becoming available through ESSA that would, if applied for and put to work by ISBE and LEAs, allow licensed librarians to focus on school improvement not only through direct student contact but also through professional development for all faculty members on information literacy and resources, instructional technology, and more. Collaboration among faculty and high quality professional development both play vital roles in the school improvement process. We recommend that ISBE adopt school improvement policies that recognize and support school librarians in our roles as teachers, co-teachers, and providers of instructional support for content area teachers.

## **Whole Child**

Like all educators in Illinois, school librarians are concerned with the development of the Whole Child. As ISBE considers policies and funding formulas across the wide spectrum of ESSA Implementation, we'd like to remind you that:

- School Libraries promote and encourage well rounded, collaborative, lifelong learners.
- The Library is the largest classroom in the school allowing children to explore interests, problem solve, and build information literacy skills.
- Licensed School librarians provide a wide variety of programs for students to participate.
- Licensed School Librarians are trained to select high quality materials and literature that support student interest as well as Common Core.
- Librarians are equipped to help students navigate digital media and become socially responsible users of information in our fast-paced world.
- Licensed school librarians help to foster an appreciation of literature, and a love of reading in our students.

To help comprehensively address the academic and socio-emotional life of the child, school librarians across the state recommend that ISBE include the Illinois School Library Media Associations 'Linking for Learning' standards formally in the state ESSA Plan. Linking for Learning was first passed by the General Assembly in 1993 and is updated every 5 years. These guidelines include the current and robust standards by which all Illinois school libraries can and should measure themselves. ISLMA is in the process of conducting our next scheduled comprehensive review and update of Linking for Learning to be published in 2017. We encourage ISBE to integrate these standards for school libraries into the MTSS approach.

## **Funding Formula**

School librarians across the state ask that ISBE looks at new and extended sources of federal money - in addition to state and local funds - to help our school librarians realize these goals. In particular, we encourage ISBE to bundle up and apply for federal programs like Innovative Approaches to Literacy for high needs schools. New Title II and Title IV monies are available for library programs and our ESSA Plan should specifically encourage investments in academic and technology programs and services through effective school library programs. New Title monies are also available for school librarians for Continuing Education and Professional Development. Please know that the school librarian community is an interested, invested, and eager partner in this project for years to come.