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illinois school library media association

### **ISBE Accountability Work Group - Prepared Remarks for 29 August 2016 Meeting**

Illinois School Library Media Association (ISLMA) has an important and necessary role as a stakeholder organization in supporting ISBE's ESSA plan development. The work school librarians do impacts every student and faculty member in a school. Research shows that an effective school library program boosts reading test scores. School librarians co-teach and collaborate with faculty across content areas, increasing the effectiveness of classroom instruction. School librarians model effective evaluation and use of information for both students and teachers. Because of their multi-faceted roles, school librarians are engaged and invested stakeholders in the accountability system ISBE is developing for Illinois.

ISLMA thanks the Accountability Task Force for its recognition of the role that school library programs play in student academic success. We appreciate now being formally included in the work of the Task Force as a stakeholder organization.

#### **3.1 School Accountability Measures**

“Academic Indicators and School Climate”

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 librarians for their significant and sustained work supporting in student achievement.

Likewise, effective school library programs materially contribute to a welcoming, productive, supportive school climate. And it is not just an empty room. Effective school library programs are underrecognized ways to address “school climate”. They provide a safe haven for students with different learning styles and modalities. The school library, with a library at its core, will help ISBE achieve its accountability goals. We sit at the intersection of between student behavior, social/emotional learning, school culture, and academic success

At its most basic, ISLMA believes and understands that an effective school library program is more than just the room, and that a school climate that encourages the development of the whole child needs to have the right number of school librarians on staff and engaged as holistically across the curriculum and able to focus on all students and student groups. We believe that particular focus should be paid in the accountability system on an appropriate student to librarian ratio to fulfill this outcome. Furthermore, we believe in the equity of access and opportunity for each and every child in Illinois to be served by a licensed Library Information Specialist.

### 3.2 A Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools, (sub) ii “uniform statewide exit criteria”

An additional exit criteria for the statewide multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) that Illinois should look at is an evaluation of the Library Media program in ISLMA’s *Linking for Learning* guidelines. First passed by the General Assembly in 1993 and updated every 5 years, these guidelines include the current and robust standards by which all Illinois school libraries can and should measure themselves. Colorado State Library and RSL Research Group fellow Keith Curry Lance has studied in numerous states, including Illinois, Colorado, and South Carolina and found that effective library media programs make powerful learners. 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.

### 3.3 A Allocation of School Improvement Resources

#### *Statewide Support Liaison - recommendation 5 on page 27 of the draft report*

ISLMA recommends that ISBE, as a component of its MTSS approach, dedicate a “*statewide support liaison*” who is specifically focused on identifying and applying for grant programs that improve, enhance, or extend effective school library programs, and likewise focus on identifying and applying for grant opportunities that empower school librarians with professional development and continuing education to better serve students, other faculty and staff, and school leadership.

#### *School Review Team - recommendation 5 on page 27 of the draft report*

ISLMA’s commitment to the integrity and outcomes of the school improvement process extends to our willingness to act as qualified and recognized library experts on *school review teams*. ISLMA thanks ISBE for considering an approach that integrates peer-to-peer support and looks forward to participating in this “Networked set of educators from peer schools and districts” for future success.

#### *“Develop the state funding formula ... for comprehensive or targeted supports”*

ISLMA recommends that the state formula for allotment of funds to schools identified for comprehensive support and correction include effective school libraries, and that ISBE specifically seek to access and utilize federal funds to support student achievement through provision in IAL(Innovative Approaches to Literacy) and LEARN that improve staffing, programs, collections, and instructional support services in those schools.

ISLMA recommends that ISBE utilize and implement the student support services provided by effective school library programs across all schools and districts, but with particular attention to underperforming schools. ISLMA knows from our evidence-based program guidelines and standards-based rubrics in *Linking for Learning* that students effective and efficient lifelong users and creators of ideas and information. ISLMA recommends that ISBE fully utilize federal grant sources like the LEARN Act grants, particularly Innovative Approaches to Literacy grants. These federal grant programs target high-needs schools through their school library programs. ISLMA encourages ISBE to fund literacy, ELL, digital literacy, and technology programs through the school library and with a school librarian as an effective way to directly address the achievement gap.

ISLMA also recommends that ISBE fully access and utilize Title IV, Part A funding available to effective school library programs through the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants

Program (SSAEG), the new flexible block grant program established in ESSA designed to allocate funding to nearly all school districts. SSAEG would allow ISBE to invest in academic and technology programs and services through effective school library programs. As a non-competitive grant program, SSAEG funding could kick-start library programs in otherwise at-risk schools.

It should be noted that IAL funding is currently underutilized by schools and districts across Illinois. LEARN Act and SSAEG monies are new programs that libraries and librarians should access under ESSA. This further underscores the need for a library-specific statewide liaison for grantmaking.

### **3.3 D Periodic Resource Allocation Review**

As a component of ISBE's multi-tiered system of support, ISLMA recommends that in the 'planning year', one of the audit criteria be based on our Linking for Learning guidelines to evaluate the effectiveness of school library programs.

ISBE's "periodic resource allocation review" should include a specific review of grant funding sources that support and encourage effective school library programs and the instructional support services provided by school librarians.

ISBE should be aware now and in the future that school library programs are uniquely eligible grant funding through multiple channels to address various gaps in literacy, technology, college and career readiness, and teacher quality.

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