



# School Librarians and ESSA

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## INTRODUCTION

The Every Student Succeeds Act includes provisions that specifically support school libraries, school librarians, and the role they play in academic achievement, literacy, and digital citizenship. More than 60 studies in two dozen states show that the “levels of library funding, staffing levels, collection size and range, and the instructional role of the librarian all have a direct impact on student achievement” (Gretes). Children who experience effective school library programs in the K-12 environment perform better in school and are better equipped for college, career, and community (Kachel).

Every school in NH deserves an effective school library program and a certified school librarian as a fundamental component of college, career, and community readiness. School librarians collaborate and co-teach with teachers to design, deliver, and assess information and communications technology literacy instruction. They work with all members of the learning community – students, teachers, staff and administration – to promote the pursuit of personal interest, critical thinking, and knowledge-building through the inquiry and research process. For many students, the school library is their first, and sometimes only, opportunity to access a collection of books and resources carefully selected to appeal to their interests and programming designed to promote and develop an intrinsic and life-long love of reading. “Research consistently shows that when children have access to good libraries with plenty of good books and with adequate staffing, they read more, and thus do better on reading tests. For children of poverty, libraries are typically the only possible source of reading material” (Krashen).

In order to achieve and be successful in a global knowledge-based economy, students and teachers require a wide variety of print and digital with embedded expertise which are essential elements of a contemporary, innovative, and flexible library learning environment. Within these environments, physical and virtual, school librarians demonstrate their proficiency as specialized instructional support staff through the skillful practice of curating digital content, introducing useful technology tools, and instructing all learners on digital literacy skills.

Effective school librarians play a large role in expanding competency-based learning in their schools through collaboration and co-instruction, by providing tools and resources to teachers, and by curating information for classes. Schools moving towards expanding competency-based learning need to work closely with their school librarians. According to a new report by the National Center for Literacy Education:

- School librarians are highly involved leaders in their professional learning communities inside and outside of school.
- School librarians play a critical role in building a school’s capacity.
- Collaboration with classroom teachers is among the most important types of literacy support that school librarians provide.
- School librarians not only participate in but also deliver professional development to their peers and to educators and staff in their schools.

Additionally, school librarians’ participation in learning networks and professional associations provides them with opportunities to improve and then share their knowledge as experienced professional development providers for schools and districts. They are uniquely qualified to see the benefits and potentials of new and emerging techniques, strategies, and technologies to address achievement of school and district learning goals.

The NH Department of Education has developed five advisory committees to work on policy recommendations for the state ESSA implementation plan. NHSLMA sent a letter to Dr. Virginia Barry, Commissioner of Education for NH, requesting representation on these advisories. This resulted in NHSLMA receiving representation on some of the advisories, and NHSLMA has created action steps with policy recommendations for all five advisory committees.

## Accountability Task Force

Regarding NH's implementation of ESSA in area of the state **Accountability Task Force**, NHLSMA makes the following **policy recommendations**:

- State and local agencies **encourage and support strong information literacy and digital literacy skills as college and career readiness indicators.**
  - Action step: Adopt and implement a statewide information fluency curriculum that is aligned with the NH P-12 Common Core Learning Standards;
  - Action step: Adopt the language "College, Career, and Community Readiness" as descriptors for the indicators.
  - Action step: Utilize certified school librarians to provide instruction on these skills in collaboration with content-area teachers.
  - Action step: Adopt the definition of "effective school library" provided by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA).
  - Action step: Adopt and implement teacher created PACE assessments for elementary grades and the SAT from grade 8 through grade 12 to allow educators to set a baseline for each student's level of college and career readiness, and monitor progress at each grade level. Use information literacy and other subscores to focus interventions to help learners develop college and career readiness skills.
  - Action step: Develop a plan for monitoring how long students stay in college.
  - Action step: The plan for Title II, Part A and Part B provide for the use of:
    - local grants to provide high quality professional development opportunities for school librarians.
    - local grants to provide time for teachers and school librarians to meet to plan comprehensive literacy instruction.
    - provide dedicated funding that may be used for developing and enhancing effective school library programs in high need schools – including providing professional development, books and up-to-date materials.
  - Action step: The plan for Title IV, Part A, provide for grants to local school districts to identify and address technology readiness needs including:
    - professional development for school librarians to develop the knowledge and skills to use technology effectively to improve instruction and student achievement.
  - Action step: The plan for Title IV, Part A, provide for a grant to fund a State Education School Library Consultant to support schools with:
    - the implementation of an effective school library program.
    - the statewide information fluency curriculum
    - professional development in comprehensive literacy instruction.
  - Outcomes: Increased success on college and career readiness tests (SAT, AP, IB, ASVAB, Firefighter Exams, etc.)
- State and local agencies **encourage and support schools in developing effective school libraries staffed by certified school librarians who will play a leadership role in expanding competency-based learning and alternative assessments:**
  - Action step: Adopt the definition of "effective school library" provided by the American Association

- of School Librarians (AASL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA).
- Action step: Assist and advise schools in transforming traditional library spaces into learning centers that equip students with the academic skills they need to succeed.
- Action Step: Identify effective school library programs across the state to use as best exemplars for other schools.
- Action step: Utilize Title funding for high need schools to improve their library programs so they can provide equal resources to students.
- Action step: Encourage administrators to work with their school librarians to facilitate increased student engagement and success with college readiness and credentialing program opportunities.
- Action step: Advise schools to support effective school librarians who will assist in the development and implementation of teacher generated [Performance Assessment of Competency Education \(PACE\) assessments](#).
- Action step: Work with institutes of higher education to support innovative programs to fill the critical shortage of school librarians to work with districts in need.
- Action step: The plan for Title II, Part B provide for the use of:
  - local grants to provide high quality professional development opportunities for school librarians.
  - local grants to provide time for teachers and school librarians to meet to plan comprehensive literacy instruction.
  - provide dedicated funding that may be used for developing and enhancing effective school library programs in high need schools – including providing professional development, books and up-to-date materials.
- Action step: The plan for Title IV, Part A, provide for grants to local school districts to identify and address technology readiness needs including:
  - professional development for school librarians to develop the knowledge and skills to use technology effectively to improve instruction and student achievement.

#### Outcomes:

- Increased success on state summative assessments.
- Increased reading scores and closing of the achievement gap.
- Increased participation on credentialing programs.

## Comprehensive School Support and Improvement

Regarding NH's implementation of ESSA in area of **Comprehensive School Support and Improvement**, the NH School Library Media Association (NHSLMA) makes the following **policy recommendation**:

State and local agencies **support and encourage effective school library programs as support systems for schools.**

- Action Step: Fund a State Education School Library Consultant to support schools with the implementation of an effective school library program by using a Title IV, Part A grant.
- Action step: Adopt the definition of "effective school library" provided by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA).
- Action Step: Identify effective school library programs across the state to use as best exemplars for other schools.
- Action Step: Require a certified librarian for every school in NH.
- Action Step: Provide high quality professional development opportunities, particularly on the topics of collaboration, professional learning communities, co-teaching, and technology integration.
- Action Step: Provide funds for developing and enhancing school library programs in high need schools for materials and professional development.
- Action Step: Create structures and resources for creating spaces to support different learning modalities.

- Action Step: Assist and advise schools on the use of evidence-based practice methods to collect, interpret and use data from research to improve practice in school libraries
- Action Step: Promote active participation in school-wide analysis of student performance data to promote achievement
- Action Step: Use data and information to evaluate and communicate how effective school library programs meet the needs of diverse P-12 student communities.

Outcomes:

- Increased student achievement on state summative assessments.
- Increased staff collaboration and teaming opportunities that improve student learning.
- Increased continuity and consistency among all school libraries in NH so that students who move from one school to another have the same access to and experience of effective library programs.
- Increased quality of instruction and equity for all students.
- Decreased student achievement gap.

## Early Childhood

Regarding NH's implementation of ESSA in area of **Early Childhood**, the NH School Library Media Association (NHSLMA) makes the following **policy recommendation**:

State and local agencies encourage and support effective school library programs in order to:

- Action Step: Acknowledge that the the educational achievement gap begins early and can impact a student's later academic and life success.
- Action Step: Capitalize on the school librarian's connections to engage with public librarians in order to provide joint professional learning opportunities with early childhood educators to help equip elementary school teams with knowledge and skills drawn from lessons of the early learning system.
- Action step: Utilize Title funding for high need schools to improve their library programs so they can provide equal resources to students.
- Action Step: Require a certified librarian for every school in NH.
- Action Step: Utilize Title funding to provide literacy resources.
- Action Step: Utilize school librarian as professional development leaders for staff
  - regarding parent and family engagement strategies to help ensure that families are actively engaged in their child's education
  - regarding early learning best practices, materials and resources

Outcomes:

- Decreased educational achievement gap for students entering school.
- Provided students with a seamless transition from early learning settings to elementary school setting.
- Increased student confidence, success in learning and achievement on assessments.
- Improved teacher preparedness to meet the needs of early childhood age students
- Increased parental involvement in student education.
- Utilized and strengthen the aggregate knowledge of school staff and early childhood educators to provide the highest quality of services and instruction to young students

## Educator Equity and Support

Regarding NH's implementation of ESSA in area of **Educator Equity and Support**, the NH School Library Media Association (NHSLMA) makes the following **policy recommendation**:

State and local agencies encourage and support effective school library programs that assure educator equity and support.

- Action Step: Acknowledge the definition of “effective school library” provided by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA).
- Action Step: Support innovative programs and practices to fill the critical shortage of school librarians in NH.
- Action Step: Encourage educator preparation programs to address the collaborative relationship between administrators, teachers and school librarians and provide significant opportunities to develop competencies in this area.
- Action Step: Ensure that, in addition to NH certification requirements for educators, that school librarians hold a master’s degree or equivalent from a program that combines academic and professional preparation in library and information science, education, and technology.
- Action Step: Require a certified school librarian for every NH school.
- Action Step: Include in the NH state plan for Title II, Part B provision for the use of:
  - High quality professional development opportunities for school librarians.
  - Time for teachers and school librarians to meet to plan comprehensive literacy instruction.
  - Effective school library program development and enhancement in high-need schools by providing professional development, books, up-to-date materials, and other resources.
- Action Step: Include in the NH state plan for Title IV, Part A, provision for grants to local school districts to identify and address technology readiness needs including:
  - Professional development for school librarians to develop the knowledge and skills to use technology effectively to improve instruction and student achievement.

**Outcomes:**

- The candidate pool of highly qualified school librarian positions is sufficient and the position of Library Media Specialist is removed from the NH Department of Education’s Critical Shortage List.
- School librarian preparation program completers are well-prepared for successful entry into New Hampshire K-12 schools.
- Educator and administrator preparation program completers are prepared to collaborate with school librarians in the development of effective school library programs that address student achievement.
- School librarian preparation program completers participate and persist in the profession and attrition rates for beginning practitioners are reduced.
- School librarian preparation and in-service professional development aligns with performance competencies and standards.
- Preparation program completers are well-prepared for successful entry into New Hampshire K-12 schools.
- Student performance on reading and literacy assessments is improved.

## English Language Learners

Regarding NH’s implementation of ESSA in area of **English Language Learners**, the NH School Library Media Association (NHSLMA) makes the following **policy recommendation**:

State and local agencies encourage and support effective school library programs that support english language learners by:

- Action Step: Recognize that school librarians are instrumental in implementing and sustaining high-quality language instruction/educational programs targeted at English-language learners (ELL) and play a key

instructional role in successful schools.

- Action Step: Capitalize on and utilize the role of school librarian as professional development leaders who are experts at identifying, recommending, and providing resources, support and professional development opportunities to all staff members to help meet the learning needs of the ELL population so that they can obtain skills needed.
- Action Step: Assist and encourage school librarians as they strengthen their connection with public librarian to help meet the needs of ELL students and their families of diverse ages, income levels, and ethnicities.
- Action Step: Recognize that school librarians are responsible for providing students with access to modern materials, facilities, technology, and books that support literacy experiences and practices which will benefit ELL students.
- Action Step: Integrate school librarians into the school teams that support and provide comprehensive and high-quality literacy instruction, literacy plans access to technology, and support digital literacy development
- Action Step: Integrate school librarians as leaders in literacy and technology, who are perfectly positioned to instruct every student, including ELL, in the school community through both traditional and blended learning.

#### **Outcomes:**

- Increased ELL student success in overall confidence, learning and assessments
- Increased reading scores and closing of the achievement gap.
- Increased/Improved teacher preparedness to meet the needs of ELL
- Strengthened and expanded the resources in the school and local community for ELL students and their families
- Allowed ELL students to utilize tools so that they may reach their potential as 21st century learners
- Utilized and strengthen the aggregate knowledge of school staff to provide the highest quality of services and instruction to ELL students
- Assisted in acquiring grants for developing and enhancing effective school library programs and materials

## Conclusion

ESSA is the first piece of federal education legislation in over 50 years to provide revenue for school libraries to enhance services and resources. The importance of school libraries is finally being recognized in the educational system. As we move forward, we highlight that the definition of “specialized instructional support personnel” in ESSA is now updated to include “school librarians.” This language gives lead agencies direction to spend funds for school library media programs.

The recommendations that NHSLMA is making to the NH DOE ensure that students have equitable access to resources and materials and that NH school library programs adhere to AASL’s definition of an effective school library program. Furthermore, NHSLMA recommends that school librarians have access to funds for resources, materials, and professional development to prepare students for college, career, and community.

School librarians have always stressed the importance of equity for all students and have offered diverse resources that meet all learners’ needs. Their shared vision includes high academic standards that promotes collaborative high-quality instruction that also provides for personalized learning. ESSA has acknowledged the importance of school librarians and library programs by including them in the legislation. Now is the time for librarians and library associations to have their voices heard. NHSLMA is striving to represent its stakeholders by providing solutions at the state and local levels.

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