



Does Every School in Your District Have a **SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAM?**

Massachusetts Has an Equity Problem

- The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has no standards in place for school library programs, nor is there any individual at the DESE charged with overseeing school library programs. Consequently, **school library programs vary greatly from one community to another, and even within the same community.**
- Massachusetts has no DESE-sanctioned standards for 21st century information literacy skills instruction.
- Almost half of Massachusetts' schools lack a credentialed school library teacher, even though studies demonstrate that a full-time school librarian clearly increases student achievement, regardless of the socio-economic or education levels of the community.
- Massachusetts ranks below the national average for spending on library materials, book collections, and circulation rates, according to a 2004 report on school libraries issued by the federal government.

Why Does Your Community Need Both School and Public Libraries?

- School and public libraries have different missions and both are essential for our students. The mission of the school library is to provide instruction to students, to collaborate with teachers to support the curriculum, and to develop a collection of curriculum-related materials and high-quality children's and young adult literature.
- The Massachusetts Library Association (MLA) and the Massachusetts School Library Association (MSLA) agree that school and public libraries share a common purpose, but with important differences. To read joint statements from these organizations, go to mslaplanning.pbwiki.com/Documents+and+Links

High-Quality School Library Programs Contribute to Student Achievement

- Studies conducted in 19 U.S. states and Ontario between 1999 and 2007 demonstrate a significant link between a strong school library program and student achievement.
- In all studies, achievement was measured using standardized test scores, and in most studies, achievement was highest in schools with full-time, certified library teachers.
- In Massachusetts, a study conducted at Simmons College in 2002 found that at each grade level, schools with library programs have higher MCAS scores regardless of demographics or socioeconomic factors.

School Library Programs Promote 21st Century Skills

- The Partnership for 21st Century Skills was initiated by the US Department of Education and the business community to define a powerful vision for 21st century education. Massachusetts has joined this organization as a P21 Leadership State. (www.21stcenturyskills.org)
- The Partnership is clear that in the 21st century, students need to know how to keep learning — and make effective and innovative use of what they know — throughout their lives. Essential 21st century learning and thinking skills include critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, collaboration skills, communication skills, and information and media literacy skills
- School library teachers are uniquely qualified to teach these skills. Library teachers help students to find and evaluate information from print and online sources, to use information ethically and safely, and to demonstrate their learning using a wide range of technologies. Library teachers work collaboratively with teachers to promote project-based learning, a proven method for teaching critical-thinking and problem-solving across the curriculum.

How Can YOU Help?

Legislators who support school library programs support student achievement and equity for all students in Massachusetts. You can help in the following ways:

- **Contact the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and ask them to charge to DESE to**
 - **designate an individual with school library expertise to oversee the state's school library programs**
 - **assess the current state of school library programs in every Massachusetts school district**
 - **develop state standards for school library programs, staffing and instruction**
 - **develop a long-range plan to ensure that every child in every school has equal access to a good school library and a certified library teacher**
- **Join the Library Legislative Caucus.**
- **Keep a careful eye on Governor Patrick's education reform initiatives to be sure that school library programs are included and supported.**

Learn More!

Additional information about Massachusetts School Library Programs is available at:

- The MSLA website: www.maschoollibraries.org
- MSLA 2008 Recommended PreK-12 Information Literacy Standards: maschoollibraries.org/content/view/470/231/
- MSLA Advocacy Initiatives: mslaplanning.pbwiki.com/
- American Library Association Advocacy for school libraries: <http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/advocacy/advocacyuniversity/additup/index.cfm>