

Six Things to Do Right Now as Budget Decisions Are Being Made:



1. **Contact your union and make sure you receive every bit of help you deserve for the dues you pay.** If you are being replaced with an aide, find out if you can file a grievance. If you are being asked to work under conditions that may be dangerous to students (running a huge study hall with no aide, for example), find out how the union can help go to bat for you. Make sure your union knows what hits your program is taking and ask them what they can do to protect your job.
2. Contact the administrators in your building, the superintendent, any department head or lead teacher, and your school committee and provide them with a **clear, coherent, and unemotional description of exactly what cuts to your program WILL MEAN FOR STUDENTS!** What services or materials will no longer be available to them?
3. **If you are being asked to do more with less, don't do it.** Instead, respond with what you CAN do with less. If you are giving up your aide, then books won't get processed or circulation will decrease. If you are asked to cover two schools, then explain that each school will truly have a half-time program and describe what might happen. Do not be emotional. Instead, carefully explain what you CAN do. Explain also **WHAT THIS WILL MEAN FOR STUDENTS!**
4. **Compare the program you are being asked to run with the MSLA rubrics.** Send a letter or ask to present to school committee members to compare what our rubric advocates versus where your school ranks.
5. **Contact parent supporters.** Parents can make the case for you. Ask parents to contact decision makers (typically building administrators, superintendents, and school committee members) to tell them why libraries matter to them and to their children. One sensible idea is to ask parents to form a committee that can send email or set up a website to rally support.
6. **Also ask parents to contact the BESE and ask them to appoint someone with library experience to the DESE to put together a long-range plan for Massachusetts school library programs.** Until the state has a clear plan with provisions for staffing, collection development, and benchmarks or other standards, superintendents will have no clear reason to keep library programs over other programs.

If your program takes a hit, but you are still there in some capacity come September, be sure to start rallying for restoration:

- EVERY MONTH send your principal and other decision makers a memo outlining exactly what you did that month, and compare it to last year showing **HOW STUDENT NEEDS ARE NOT BEING MET** (e.g., circulation levels are reduced, fewer classes came to use the room, fewer materials were purchased, student book groups have been eliminated etc.)
- Continue to compare your program to the MSLA rubrics and present to school committee, school council, administrators, etc.
- Explain what you could/would do with greater funding and staffing
- Continue to rally parents and other community supporters! Set up a library support or advisory group that can help with fundraising for materials, lobbying for program restoration at the local level, and lobbying to help get the BESE to provide greater support for school libraries
- Be clear with volunteers that you want and need their support, but guard against having them "replace the missing piece." Administrators may see this as a cheap fix, but in the long-run parents cannot and should not run the library.
- There are resources available to you from your professional organizations:
 1. If you are facing a significant staffing or program cut, MSLA will send a letter to your Superintendent in protest. Do let us know, as we can use this anecdotal information when talking to decision makers at the state level.
 2. MSLA maintains a wiki with lots of pieces you can use to advocate to parents, teachers, administrators, and legislators. It includes articles, power point presentations, talking points, and more. Check it out at <http://mslaplanning.pbworks.com/>
 3. ALA also puts out a "crisis kit" that you can access with more ideas—lots of splendid stuff here so read it carefully: <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslproftools/toolkits/crisis.cfm>