



May 15, 2009

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to you as President of the Massachusetts School Library Association and a National Board certified library teacher, one of very few in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I have worked as a classroom teacher and school librarian, have certification as a technology integration teacher and trained as an administrator in Massachusetts. I have served in public office as a library trustee, school committee member and I am a Massachusetts taxpayer and parent of three grown children, all graduates of the public school system. All of these experiences have contributed to my broad vision of a 21st century education that integrates critical thinking and high standards for excellence. I understand assessment, the value of high-stakes testing, small class sizes and of the difficult financial decisions you face in your district.

Please take a moment to think about my message. Simply stated, I am asking you not to dilute your school library program by cutting certified school library teachers. Massachusetts was the fourth state to join the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, yet Massachusetts continues to rank at the bottom of the nation in providing good school library programs with certified staff in our schools. I do not believe this is what you *want*: I believe this is because collectively we do not have the vision of what good school libraries look like in action. Today's modern school library, also known as the Learning Commons, when staffed by a skilled library teacher, provides the essential resources and 21st century skills required for success in today's workplace. While the Partnership calls out for students with ICT (Information, Communication, Technology) skills, educational leaders frequently look to cut budgets via the school library, an area that **consistently provides the absolute best bang for your buck**. School libraries and library teachers provide the building blocks for creativity, collaboration, and ICT skills for the *entire school* community. Good library teachers do not simply provide print and electronic resources and administer the library. We are highly qualified teachers skilled in using informational technologies, databases, and social networks. In a well-organized facility, the school's curriculum is integrated with cutting edge national standards for learning, technology use and ethics. The library teacher is one of the few employees in the school that collaborates on all subjects, works with every student and can provide professional staff development on ICT skills and 21st century ethical use of information. Project-based learning, differentiation, STEM skills, access and use of information, ethics should all be taught collaboratively in a modern school library program. **Across the nation, research has consistently proven that good school libraries improve student achievement across all socio-economic lines.**

Information is powerful! When you are faced with your health decisions, you refer to professionals most informed about your condition. In order to keep you, our stakeholders informed, the Massachusetts School Library Association is publishing new *Standards for Information Literacy*, which is based on the American Association of School Librarians *Standards for the 21st Century Learner* and is also aligned with the *Massachusetts Recommended Technology Standards*. These documents will be available to you at your conference October 28, 2009 at Gillette Stadium. In addition, MSLA is revising the existing rubrics for you to use when assessing your own school library program. All of these documents will assist you in determining if your schools are ready for real 21st century learning. In the meantime, you can refer to the most current documents at the maschoollibraries.org website. Please check back often and feel free to contact me at any time with questions you may have in your decision-making or for any additional information you may need.

Respectfully,

Sandy Kelly LMS, NBCT
President, Massachusetts School Library Association