

# ALA American Library Association

May 29, 2018

Fredrika Smith, Ph.D., Superintendent  
Board of Education Members  
Monroe District Schools  
200 E. Fremont  
Monroe, WA 98272

Dear Dr. Smith, President Cheesman, and Board Members:

With its promise of preparing students for the challenges of a global society, the Monroe Commitment establishes a concise vision to inform the district's work. Critical to meeting those challenges is students' ability to navigate a vast and constantly shifting world of information to achieve success in school, the workplace and society. And so we were dismayed to learn that the district proposes to cut its school librarians, the very information professionals who prepare students for this endeavor.

We recognize that district leaders must examine how programs impact student learning. As Presidents of the American Library Association and American Association of School Librarians, we have reviewed years of research and visited scores of schools to see what works firsthand. More than 60 studies from across the country show that student achievement is higher—from grades to reading scores, and from digital proficiency to graduation rates—in schools with a professionally-staffed library.<sup>1</sup> In one such study from Washington state, researchers also found that students have increased access to both digital resources and digital literacy instruction in schools with certified school librarians.<sup>2</sup>

These findings are not a coincidence. National School Library Standards<sup>3</sup> present an intentional framework upon which a full continuum of literacies and competencies are built. Moreover, with those standards as a guiding force, school librarians have been at the forefront of technology integration in schools: incorporating it into their own teaching; curating a wealth of resources for in a variety of formats; showcasing new tools for formal and informal exploration; and leading professional development for their colleagues. School librarians embed information literacy across grade levels and content areas for authentic, personalized learning experiences.

The data alone, however, do not reflect the full promise of students in Monroe schools, nor the full value of an effective school library.<sup>4</sup> As the Picket Fence Group has shown so eloquently, school libraries reflect the hopes and aspirations of a community, fostering a culture of literacy, inquiry, and lifelong learning. School librarians know their school's learning objectives and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.baltimorelibraryproject.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/09/Library-Impact-Studies.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://wala.memberclicks.net/assets/WLMA/Advocacy/wslitreport\\_final%20revised7\\_14\\_15.pdf](https://wala.memberclicks.net/assets/WLMA/Advocacy/wslitreport_final%20revised7_14_15.pdf)

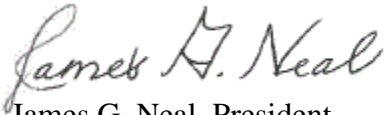
<sup>3</sup> <https://standards.aasl.org/framework/>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/positionstatements/AASL\\_Position%20Statement\\_Effective\\_SLP\\_2016-06-25.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/positionstatements/AASL_Position%20Statement_Effective_SLP_2016-06-25.pdf)

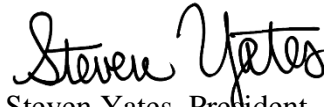
students' unique needs and interests. They ensure equitable access to resources and they connect students, parents, and staff with critical community partners including the public library, cultural institutions, and local agencies.

Removing certificated librarians is not an enhancement to the school library. In fact, it is in direct conflict with Monroe School District's embrace of "the reality that every student must graduate ready for college, career and life." We, too, acknowledge that reality and urge you to retain your onsite, certified school librarians so that Monroe students have the resources they need to realize the district's vision and their own full potential.

Sincerely,



James G. Neal, President  
American Library Association



Steven Yates, President  
American Association of School Librarians

cc: Craig Seasholes, President, Washington Library Association