

ROLES of the SCHOOL LIBRARIAN

EMPOWERING STUDENT LEARNING and SUCCESS

INFORMATIONAL BRIEF



NORTHEAST COMPREHENSIVE CENTER

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INTRODUCTION

The Northeast Comprehensive Center's 2011 informational brief [Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement](#) analyzed a collection of impact studies to examine relationships between school libraries and student achievement with respect to demographic data, technology, budgeting, staffing, professional development, and collaboration. Since that year, 6 [statewide school library impact studies](#) have been conducted in 5 states: Colorado (1), Kansas (1), Pennsylvania (1), South Carolina (2), and Washington (1). The Northeast Comprehensive Center also reviewed research conducted from 2011 through 2019 on a range of topics, including the evolving roles of school librarians; the transformation of the school library with growing digital demands of technology integration in teaching and learning, to the rise of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, 21st century learning skills for college and career readiness; and requirements for effective and evidence-based practices under more rigorous national and state legislation and learning standards. Across the studies included here, the primary indicators used to measure student academic achievement are standardized test scores in reading, math, and writing, and 4- to 5-year high school cohort graduation rates. (See the Appendix for the full reference list).

The integration of technology into curricula and emergence of new areas of practice for school librarians that promote equity and access, such as culturally responsive-sustaining education, are expanding the school librarian's influence beyond the school walls as they connect the school to the global community of learners. In its 2018 *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, the American Association of School Libraries (AASL) recognizes and defines 5 roles of school librarians that are crucial to the development and significance of effective school library programs: **Teacher, Leader, Instructional Partner, Information Specialist, and Program Administrator**.

At the request of the New York State Education Department, this brief will delve into these 5 roles of the school librarian by identifying key aspects of each role and discussing how school leaders can ensure they are making the best use of their librarians' expertise. Based on the findings and promising practices outlined in the research analyzed here, we will summarize some ways in which administrators can support professional learning and institutes of higher education can prepare school librarians to effectively take on these new roles.

SCHOOL LIBRARIAN AS TEACHER

The AASL states that, “As teacher the school librarian empowers learners to become critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information. The school librarian supports students’ success by guiding them to read for understanding, breadth, and pleasure; use information for defined and self-defined purposes; build on prior knowledge and construct new knowledge; embrace the world of information and all its formats; work with each other in successful collaborations for learning; constructively assess their own work and the work of their peers; [and] become their own best critics” (AASL 2018, 14).

A few takeaways from impact studies and research outlining promising practices:

- Developing students’ reading and comprehension skills through literacy instruction led by the school librarian and access to a wide range of grade, level, and age appropriate materials tailored to their interests improves student performance on statewide assessments and reinforces literacy development in and out of school.

In a study that examined the causal effects of school librarians and school libraries on public school student achievement in New York (Radlick & Stefl-Mabry, 2015), school librarians were found to have a positive, statistically significant impact on students’ performance in English language arts (ELA; Radlick & Stefl-Mabry, 2015, p. 17).

In a review of over 60 studies conducted across various states between 1990 and 2013, Gretes (2013) noted the following universal findings across these studies “schools with a well-equipped library (regarding collection size, range, and access to up-to-date materials), staffed by a full-time certified librarian and appropriate support staff (regarding the quality of instruction provided by the librarian and availability and access to the library and staff as learning resources) contribute significantly to gains in student learning” (Gretes, 2013, p. 5–17).

A study (Lance & Schwarz, 2012) examining the impact of school librarians and library resources on student performance in Pennsylvania found that students at schools with professionally qualified school librarians and comprehensively resourced school libraries have higher levels of academic achievement, as indicated by reading and writing scores on statewide assessments. This positive effect was found to have an even greater impact on achievement for students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, Black and Hispanic students.

A study that examined the relationship between a professionally certified school librarian in the school library and student performance, as indicated by Colorado Student Assessment Program reading scores, found that students at schools that either maintained or gained a certified school librarian during the period from 2005 to 2011 achieved higher reading scores and higher increases in reading scores over that period when compared to students at schools that did not have a certified school librarian in the school library (Lance & Hofschire, 2012).

- Collaborating with other educators to design and implement literacy instructional strategies enables the school librarian to have a sustained impact on students' literacy skills beginning with early learning.

A 2018 study (Reed & Oslund, 2018) focused on the reading comprehension leg of literacy, the one most often tied to librarians through AASL, Common Core, and other standards. The researchers used a mixed methods approach to analyze change in school librarians' knowledge of literacy instruction strategies and perception of the literacy instruction role before and after a 6-week professional development course administered online. They separated the participants into 2 cohorts, elementary and secondary level school librarians, to analyze any difference between the cohorts. The researchers found that in both cohorts, the instructional intervention produced a positive change in knowledge surrounding literacy instruction. They also found that it produced more positive perceptions of the librarian role as a literacy instructor in both cohorts. Finally, the researchers found that through increased knowledge of literacy instruction and its pragmatic role in their work, librarians were more inclined to see the literacy instruction leg of their work rather than just the traditional role of information literacy instructors (Reed & Oslund, 2018).

- Teaching students to develop research skills and encouraging them to access the school library collection and resources in different formats and for different purposes, the school librarian empowers students to engage in the inquiry process.

In the first phase of a study interested in how school libraries and school librarians contribute to student achievement in South Carolina, researchers analyzed student test scores on statewide assessments: the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) for elementary and middle school students and the High School Assessment Program (HSAP) for high school students (Lance, Schwarz, & Rodney, 2014). Student scores on PASS Writing included results on Content and Organization, and scores on PASS ELA included performance on subsidiary standards for Literary Text, Informational Text, and Research (Lance, Schwarz, & Rodney, 2014, p. 2). The study found that in schools where the school librarian spent the most time providing instruction (over 25 hours per week), "all students and several student cohorts- those of both genders, disabled students, and those eligible for paid meals were more likely to show strengths on PASS Writing standards, more likely to have exemplary results on ELA standards, and less likely to not meet ELA standards" (Lance, Schwarz, & Rodney, 2014, p. 18).

- Coteaching between school librarians and classroom teachers positively impacts student achievement by engaging students with rich and robust learning experiences.

A research study (Loertscher, 2014) examined the effect of classroom teachers and teacher-librarians (the term used by the author for school librarians) coteaching a unit of instruction on student performance. Study participants reported an average of 50% of students met or exceeded their highest expectations for a learning experience taught solely by the classroom teacher, but reported that an average of 70 to 100% of students met or exceeded the highest expectations for a learning experience cotaught by the classroom teacher and teacher-librarian (Loertscher, 2014, p. 10). These findings show that when teachers include school librarians' skills and knowledge of available learning resources to enrich learning experiences, the positive effects on student learning of the 2 roles coteaching is compounded.

- Adapting the school library space to meet a variety of purposes enables the school librarian to offer innovative programming that promotes creativity and learning.

In a survey of the characteristics of library programs and activities that promote student creativity and invention, Small (2014) concluded that the school library is the best location for fostering

innovating learning because school librarians can offer a different perspective and have more flexibility to accommodate experiential learning to students than classroom teachers. Small stated, “School librarians are less constrained than are other educators by the rigid curricula, standards, and tests found in many of today’s classrooms. In addition, school librarians have opportunities to collaborate with a variety of education professionals. School librarians often see their role as have an impact on all children, opening up their minds to not only what is but also what can be. As a result, school librarians can use library spaces to stimulate students’ curiosity and inquiry and to encourage and support learning autonomy, creativity, and feelings of competence and empowerment” (Small, 2014, p. 18).

SCHOOL LIBRARIAN AS LEADER

As a leader the school librarian is “a teacher and a learner who listens to and acts upon good ideas from peers, educators, and learners. Leadership also requires increased professional commitment and thorough knowledge of the challenges and opportunities facing the profession. By becoming an active member of the local and global learning community, the school librarian can build relationships with organizations and stakeholders to develop an effective school library program and advocate for student learning” (AASL 2018, 14).

In the AASL's position statement, *The Strategic Leadership Role of School Librarians*, the leadership role is described as follows: “The American Association of School Librarians supports the position that full-time certified school librarians provide effective leadership in areas of curriculum development, instructional design, technology integration, professional development, student advocacy, information literacy instruction, and collaboration. This is demonstrated by active involvement in and through school and district-level leadership teams, technology teams, strategic planning, literacy development, curriculum development, and initiatives that impact student achievement.”

A few takeaways from impact studies and research outlining promising practices:

- **Providing leadership in technology integration across discipline areas requires school librarians to apply their knowledge of the specific needs of the school population to ensure effective implementation of new technologies.**

By becoming a leader for technology use, the school librarian can explore ways to expand how technology can address the specific needs of their students (Ennis-Cole & Smith, 2011) and in doing so, can reinforce their authority over instructional technology and how to best adapt it for classroom teaching. If a student is unable to access a proven technological tool, with regard to mobility, hearing, or visual impairments, the school librarian must be able to quickly respond by altering the existing configuration of the school library so that there are no obstacles that prevent assistive technologies and devices from successfully supporting student learning.

- **Working with other educators and school administrators to develop curriculum materials makes the school librarian an integral member of the school's instructional design team.**

A 2012 research study (Kimmel, 2012) reexamined previous findings about the types of instructional planning activities in which school librarians were involved. The study found that school librarians' greatest contributions in collaborative instructional design and planning meetings with teachers was their ability to connect unit and lesson plan goals with resources that supported those objectives. These connections to learning objectives could include a variety of materials and activities across grade levels, such that, “Resources were defined broadly to include all kinds of print, technology, and community experts. The librarian also made connections with other grade

levels or with schoolwide events such as assemblies, author visits to the school, or a poetry day” (Kimmel, 2012, p. 11).

- Leading schoolwide initiatives allows the school librarian to oversee the successful implementation of innovative learning, in addition to supporting teachers and school administrators.

Leading schoolwide technology integration has been emphasized as a crucial opportunity for school librarians to establish their important leadership role (Johnston, 2012). Additionally, school librarians can also assert their leadership role in the school by leading early adoption of new innovations such as leading the implementation of digital textbooks in Florida following a legislative mandate (Kang, 2015). As early adopters, school librarians are best positioned to evaluate the usefulness and potential of new technologies and innovative programming for raising student achievement, and can assess whether their schools and student population stand to benefit from their implementation.

SCHOOL LIBRARIAN AS INSTRUCTIONAL PARTNER

As instructional partner, “The school librarian collaborates with classroom teachers to develop assignments that are matched to academic standards and include key critical-thinking skills, technology and information literacy skills, and core social skills and cultural competencies. The school librarian guides instructional design by working with the classroom teacher to establish learning objectives and goals, and by implementing assessment strategies before, during, and after assigned units of study. . . . Communication with classroom teachers and learners now takes place virtually, as well as face to face” (AASL 2018, 14).

Furthermore, the AASL defines this role in its position statement, *Instructional Role of the School Librarian*, “The school librarian plays a prominent role in instructing students, faculty, and administrators in a range of literacies, including information, digital, print, visual, and textual literacies. As leaders in literacy and technology, school librarians are perfectly positioned to instruct every student in the school community through both traditional and blended learning.”

A few takeaways from impact studies and research outlining promising practices:

- Collaborating with teachers to adapt existing curriculum materials to integrate technology and be more cross-disciplinary allows the school librarian to support students at all levels and with diverse learning needs.

Several studies have found that collaboration between school librarians and science teachers have facilitated greater student learning gains when the collaborative work involves the school librarian for their expertise in integrating technology (Green, Kennedy, Chassereau, & Schriver, 2013; Subramaniam, Ahn, Fleischmann, & Druin, 2012) and courses in the sciences, more broadly. Although some studies conducted (Subramaniam, Ahn, Greene, Druin, Fleischmann, & Walsh, 2013) focused on the critical role school librarians play in bridging learning across content areas through a crosswalk of the framework for K–12 science education and standards for the 21st century learner, others (Latham, Julien, Gross, & Witte, 2016) focused on how school librarians can specifically support student learning in science content areas through collaboration.

- Promoting the value of STEM education through library programming helps teachers to find resources to support students.

As highlighted in the study, school librarians play an important role as instructional partners and collaborate with classroom and STEM subject teachers to teach and integrate different literacy practices into the curriculum. School librarians also build connections between student information and research needs, curriculum content, learning outcomes, and information resources as they support the overall educational community in the school (Subramaniam et al., 2012).

- Leading and providing professional development aligned to learning standards and other initiatives that require new knowledge, such as introducing new technologies, can boost student learning in the classroom.

In a study that examined the contributions of school librarians to a blended professional learning community focused on preparing student teachers for technology-integrated lessons, school librarians were found to add the most value to the student teachers' education regarding technology management and their ability to make connections between the classroom and library resources, when compared to the contributions of the other educator roles in the blended professional learning community (Hunt & Luetkehans, 2013). The findings of this study reinforce the positive benefits of involving school librarians in interprofessional collaboration, and more specifically, relying on school librarians to support successful technology integration by teachers.

SCHOOL LIBRARIAN AS INFORMATION SPECIALIST

In the role of information specialist, “the school librarian uses technology tools to supplement school resources, assist in the creation of engaging learning tasks, connect the school with the global learning community, communicate with students and classroom teachers at any time, and provide [continuous]access to school library services. The school librarian introduces and models emerging technologies, as well as strategies for finding, assessing, and using information. He or she is a leader in software and hardware evaluation, establishing the processes for such evaluation to take place. . . . [The] school librarian must be versed in the theoretical grounding and practical application of [copyright and fair use] laws in order to teach the ethical use of information to the learning community” (AASL 2018, 14).

A few takeaways from impact studies and research outlining promising practices:

- Improving equitable access to learning with technology positively impacts student achievement.

Lance and Schwarz (2012) found that school libraries which offer a modern technological infrastructure that is accessible to all students positively impact student achievement based on evidence of higher test scores specifically for minority and disadvantaged students. Thus, having technological tools and designating the school library as the schools' primary hub for technology use are important to student learning, but ensuring that available technology is equitably accessible is what will allow these resources to have a positive effect on student achievement.

- Supporting teachers in integrating technology leads to improvements in student learning.

A 2013 mixed-methods case study (Green et al., 2013) conducted in Georgia focused on how to promote collaboration between classroom teachers, school librarians, and teacher education faculty in the interest of adopting new technologies into teaching and literacy strategies. The study stresses that school librarians are highly valuable members of the technology integration team, and teacher education programs must make it an imperative to “[develop] a true understanding of technological resources, not just as tools to use in the classroom, but as pedagogical resources that can enhance meaningful learning” (p. 405), which reasserts the underlying considerations for the [ALA's Tipsheet, Assistive Technology: What You Need to Know Library](#) with regard to effectively incorporating assistive technology to better serve library patrons with disabilities (Green et al., 2013).

- Providing students with resources to build their skills around online news helps them become better consumers of information.

An informal study (Will, 2016) aimed to identify how school librarians were adapting in their instructional role to meet different areas of 21st century learning for students concerning digital

literacy, media, and information consumption. The librarians interviewed in the study primarily discussed their role in teaching students “how to navigate and consume information online . . . and helping teachers embed those skills into their curriculum” (Will, 2016). Activities for these instructional and collaborative roles are prompted by librarians’ recognition of misinformation in the media affecting the research process and students’ difficulty navigating truth. Students may lack the ability to differentiate facts, such as a research study, from opinion, such as an op-ed, given that both are made readily accessible through the same channels of open-access internet and can appear comparable in purpose and authority in the eyes of the undiscerning young reader.

- **Connecting the school with the global community helps students engage in critical thinking, collaboration, and authentic, real-world problem solving.**

School librarians encourage students to become more deeply engaged in information seeking activities through new frameworks to guide student research and independent learning, given the multitude of sources and accelerated pace at which new information is created and made available through technology. One such framework presented by Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari (2012), called the Guided Inquiry Design process, supports school librarians in extending students’ inquiry learning around 8 phases: Open, Immerse, Explore, Identify, Gather, Create, Share, and Evaluate. Engaging students in an inquiry learning process enables them to build on the research process with skills that will support deeper understanding of new knowledge. In turn, students are better equipped to apply these inquiry skills more broadly as they transition beyond the parameters of K–12 education to meet the demands for information literacy in college and career settings. In a different study that examined the expectations of college assignments for first-year students across 15 private and public colleges and universities in Iowa (Donham, 2014), one recurrent theme was the application of information literacy skills, particularly for initiating the inquiry process, searching for and evaluating information sources, and processing information. This study highlights that in order to ensure students are adequately prepared for postsecondary education, a strong foundation and aptitude for engaging in inquiry is essential and can best be facilitated by school librarians.

- **Teaching ethical use of information ensures that students are able to generate their own insightful questions and are more motivated to be more inquisitive and discerning in the future.**

In a study that focused on Grade 4 students’ research skills in 8 high-poverty, rural schools in Iowa (Kreuger & Donham, 2013), researchers explored how more investment in school library professional staffing affected students’ critical literacy, ethical use of information, content learning, and understanding of the inquiry process. To do this, the study used evidence from both best-assessed students’ work and school librarians’ responses to surveys. The researchers discovered several crucial findings about the effects of staffing levels on student achievement, given that school library collaborative instruction was an emphasized guidance tool in the learning process: “Six (66%) student work samples in higher-staffed schools showed higher critical-literacy scores than those in the 5 lower-staffed schools, 6 (of 9) students in higher-staffed schools garnered higher scores in ethical use of information, [and] content learning in all but one school was mainly factual” (Kreuger & Donham, 2013, p. 18). Additionally, “students in 4 schools scored high in posing new inquiry questions . . . [demonstrating] that fourth graders are able to generate their own insightful questions that extend beyond fact-seeking,” which indicates that those students may become more motivated to be more inquisitive and discerning in the future (Kreuger & Donham, 2013, pp. 15–18).

SCHOOL LIBRARIAN AS PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

The AASL states that, “As program administrator, the school librarian ensures that all members of the learning community have access to resources that meet a variety of needs and interests. The implementation of a successful school library program requires the collaborative development of the program mission, strategic plan, and policies, as well as the effective management of staff, the program budget, and the physical and virtual spaces. To augment information resources available to the learning community, the school librarian works actively to form partnerships with stakeholders and sister organizations at local and global levels. The school librarian also addresses broader educational issues with other teachers in the building, at the district level, and at the professional association level” (AASL 2018, 15).

A few takeaways from impact studies and research outlining promising practices:

- Ensuring equitable access to the school library, collection, and resources can raise student achievement and are reinforced by the presence of a school librarian.

Krashen, Lee, and McQuillan (2012) conducted 3 multivariate analyses to confirm the significance of libraries for student achievement, specifically regarding student access to books and reading at home, in school, and public libraries. By replicating McQuillan's findings of 1992 NAEP scores (1998) with 2007 Grade 4 NAEP scores and controlling for poverty as a predictor of student achievement, the analyses found that across the multivariate studies, the library factor was a consistently strong predictor of student achievement on NAEP reading scores. The study concludes that, “providing more access to books can mitigate the effect of poverty on reading achievement,” which reaffirms previous findings (Krashen, Lee & McQuillan, 2012, p. 30). Similarly, a study that examined the effect of quality school library programs with a certified teacher-librarian (the term used by the author) on student achievement in Washington State schools (Coker, 2015), found that school libraries with certified teacher-librarians offered students greater access to quality collections, advanced technology, and online resources, in addition to offering a more accessible library to students overall.

- Supporting diverse student learning with a library collection that reflects the characteristics of the school community and collaborating with specialized educators are necessary for school librarians to best address students' needs.

A 2013 study (Subramaniam, Oxley, & Kodama, 2013) investigated how school library programs (SLPs) and specially trained school librarians empower students in schools that serve only students with a specific disability (SPED schools). The study found the following practices to promote inclusive school libraries: implementing flexible lending policies, providing physical and intellectual access in the library that is reflective of students' specific disabilities, employing adaptive technology that maximizes access to the library, and providing school librarians with professional development and professional networks to develop and support skills specific to their students' disabilities (Subramaniam et al., 2013). This study expands on the aspect of empowerment of students with disabilities by school librarians and their collaboration with specially trained figures

and recognizes that empowerment is often the difference between a student who does not develop the tools to succeed academically and one who does.

- Engaging all members of the school community in promoting the school library as a learning hub, the school librarian can build partnerships that facilitate learning interventions and enrichment opportunities.

Knapp (2013) conducted a study in elementary schools in which researchers orchestrated an intervention program wherein novice or struggling young readers were paired with literate adults, such as parents or volunteers, to read material and better their reading skills with their reading partner. The study was prompted by a school librarian concerned about low literacy rates at her school and reaching out to the program's creator, and it found that overall, students gained an average of 24.8 WPM in fluency between pre- and postintervention administrations of the DIBELS, and as a group exceeding the standardized expected gain of 18 WPM by 38% (Knapp, 2013). In 12 weeks of participation, students gained an average of 9.1 months of reading comprehension skills as well as observed literacy skills and showed a marked rise in overall reading enjoyment. Knapp's findings highlight the role that other members of the school community can play in supporting education interventions for struggling students and that they can have a significant impact on raising student learning gains, as measured by the DIBELS, when provided in a consistent manner that boosts positive learning practices.

Whittingham, Huffman, Christensen, and McAllister (2013) evaluated the impact of using audiobooks to assist struggling readers in a school library audiobook club by looking at the conditions for participation in a library-sponsored audiobook club, contact from a school librarian, and the use of audiobooks. The results of this study showed that certain tactics, in particular, the consistent presence and assistance from a school librarian, helped to increase the number of students achieving Proficient and Advanced Arkansas Reading Benchmark Exam scores, and received praise from students, teachers, and parents. The widely collaborative foundation of the techniques described in the study work to strengthen the bond between school stakeholders such as families, students, educators, school librarians, community partners, and the like, and the process of student learning. The study shows that creating a wide and far-reaching support system for struggling readers, the goal of improving child and student literacy becomes a community effort.

CHALLENGES

All these studies show how impactful school librarians can be on student achievement through innovative educational intervention programs they create and provide, especially if an intervention brings together classmates and community members alike with the goal of improving the learning process. However, several studies also highlight the challenges that school librarians face in being able to do more within the school community.

- **Increasing Librarian/Teacher Collaborations for Greater Student Learning Gains.**

Collaboration between school librarians and teachers is a key element to successful implementation of new interventions that require school librarian leadership because of their cross-disciplinary impact (Everhart, Mardis, & Johnston, 2011; Kang & Everhart, 2014; Subramaniam et. al, 2012; Varlejs, Stec, & Kwon, 2014), or innovative learning materials that require school librarians to take on an instructional role in teaching educators, administrators, and students about and how to use new technologies (Green, Jones, & Burke, 2017; Johnston, 2012; Will, 2016).

Several studies have found that collaboration between school librarians and science teachers have facilitated greater student learning gains when the collaborative work involves the school librarian for their expertise in integrating technology (Green, Kennedy, Chassereau, & Schriver, 2013; Subramaniam, Ahn, Fleischmann, & Druin, 2012) and courses in the sciences, more broadly. Whereas some studies (Subramaniam, Ahn, Greene, Druin, Fleischmann, & Walsh, 2013) focused on the critical role school librarians play in bridging learning across content areas through a crosswalk of the Framework for K–12 Science Education and Standards for the 21st Century Learner, others (Latham, Julien, Gross, & Witte, 2016) focus on how school librarians can specifically support student learning in science content areas through collaboration.

- **Expanding Professional Development**

Professional development for school librarians should be expanded to focus more on school librarian leadership and teaching and learning.

The Lilead Survey, a nationwide study surveying school district library supervisors, was motivated by the lack of information available about professional development specifically for school librarian supervisors, but also for school librarians and school library staff, and pointed out that the information that is available shows a limited scope in that it primarily focuses on how technology can help school librarians in isolated schools and districts access professional development and connect with other school librarians through professional learning networks to share knowledge and best practices (Weeks, Carlson, DiScala, Barlow, Massey, et al., 2017, p. 5). The researchers found that of the 166 survey respondents, whereas 75% of the school district library supervisors surveyed reported having support staff, at least half of the respondents indicated having one to 4 additional professional staff members (Weeks, Carlson, DiScala, Barlow, Massey, et al., 2017, p. 8). The study also found that the supervisors surveyed reported a need for professional development around leadership and teaching and learning with the highest frequency. This is important because it indicates an unmet need for district-level supervisor roles that will have direct bearing on their effectiveness in performing tasks related to their leadership and teaching and learning roles with the school librarians in their district or region.

- **Clarifying School Librarian Roles in Support of Student Learning**
Administrators and teachers must be well informed about the different ways in which school librarians can support learning.

A 2014 review of the results from the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment argued that underprivileged, poor students tend to use the resources of school libraries more heavily and more frequently, given that they have fewer at-home resources than students from wealthy families, and though the results are not astronomically different, there is a notable effect on student test scores when school libraries are higher staffed and given adequate funding. Adkins wrote, "hierarchical regression indicates that school libraries and, more specifically, school library adequacy, as defined by the principal's perception of adequate staffing and materials, account for a small but significant portion of students' test performance variance . . . direct implication of this research is that school libraries have the capacity to better serve poor students but will need the support of policy and decision makers before such a change happens" (Adkins, 2014, p. 1).

Karen Nourse Reed and Mohammed A. Albakry conducted a study in 2017 that explored how school librarians received the issues raised by ESSA being signed into federal law in December 2015. ESSA greatly impacts school libraries for its "defined funding of K-12 school libraries," for which it has been extremely well-received by lawmakers, the media, and the public alike; however, this study looks specifically to small-town public school librarians' perceptions of the issues raised because "the ramifications for these libraries extend far beyond explicit funding measures as details of the legislation have emerged and states have begun interpreting the language of ESSA for their constituents." The study found that the increasing issue for school librarians adopting ESSA, as it is currently written, is primarily based on the language of the legislation because it is ambiguous and leaves room for interpretation around implementing certain very specific instructional standards for school librarians. For example, school librarians are referred to in the ESSA legislation as "part of the literacy instruction team," placing them in a far more collaborative position than previously constructed, which is part of a larger issue of needing to clarify the "ambiguity [that] exists regarding the definition of their work responsibilities," which if the states were to "clarify librarian workload through the explicit designation of librarian instructional standards," then school librarians would be better encouraged to construct team-oriented literacy initiatives and other school staff (teachers and principals, for example) would better understand the importance of school librarians. In the case that this does not occur, and states do not include further clarification, the authors of the study also suggest that school librarians would benefit from seizing the opportunities that ESSA provides to become more secure in their "designation as members of the literacy instruction team" and begin increasing advocacy to emphasize the importance of the library (Reed & Albakry, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Given the vast range of research that has emerged over the past decade, we chose to organize the information around the 5 roles of the school librarian as outlined by the AASL. The school librarians' contributions, whether direct or indirect, are consistently shown to be of positive value to not only students and teachers, but the wider school community. The rapid pace of technology and automation are valid concerns regarding how they alter the dynamics of early childhood through postsecondary learning and expectations for the changing trends in employment opportunities. However, the underlying skills for inquiry and cross-disciplinary literacy that school libraries aim to cultivate and support in how teachers can more effectively teach students and how students can more effectively learn will still be necessary even when their application to future tasks may be different.

Therefore, it is important to consider the sustainability of school libraries for the success of all students in New York as well as across the country for generations to come, because school libraries and the role of school librarians have and will continue to evolve to meet the conditions of the world and time in which they exist. By taking certain measures, outlined throughout this report, the State and administrators within school buildings can improve this existing infrastructure for learning and in shaping the greater role of the school library within the community as a resource for all learners and uses.

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