

Testimony offered to House Education Committee on School Libraries  
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Lancaster County.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today about how school libraries and school librarians can help school districts in Pennsylvania become Future Ready in order to provide personalized, research-based digital learning strategies so that all students can achieve their full potential.

As a district Department Supervisor for Libraries, it is my responsibility to help achieve the vision and goals of the school district. With adequate staffing and resources, school librarians are the most equipped members of our teaching staff to provide collaborative learning experiences, programs and spaces in order to prepare our students to be Future Ready. School libraries are the bridge to the gap between access and opportunity for all learners in our schools. The school librarian in a school sees students from whatever age they enter a school building until they leave that building to the next level or graduate to be career or college ready. Students know their librarian and grow with them. The school librarians are the one educator that knows our students at every grade level as a reader, an explorer, a thinker, a tinkerer, a collaborator, a digital citizen and a learner.

There are reasons why ESSA now includes new provisions that authorize school districts to include developing effective school library programs in their local plans. There are reasons why Hempfield School District continues to support our school library program and expects it to continually transform so that we are an essential component in preparing our students for an ever-changing future.

Reason 1 - All students in Pennsylvania deserve to have the opportunities that Hempfield students have – access to an effective school library program. As the department supervisor, I continue to evaluate and ensure that Hempfield has an effective school library program. This requires not only print and digital resources for students which meet their individual reading abilities, flexible spaces that promote the 4 C's of creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking but adequate staffing of certified, professional school librarians.

Reason 2 - Effective school library programs are essential for transforming schools in many ways. First, certified school librarians are teachers who partner with other educators in a school to design and implement evidence-based curricula and assessments. They integrate elements of deeper learning, critical thinking, information literacy, digital citizenship, creativity, innovation and the active use of technology while facilitating students to become independent learners engaging in solving real-world problems. The effective school library program supports 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, K-12, with a high level of expertise from certified librarians, that cuts across all content areas in which students have the opportunity to learn how to locate, access and evaluate information while also developing a culture of reading.

Reason 3 - School librarians are the experts that select, integrate, organize and share the print and digital resources that can truly transform teaching and learning in a school district. They are the curators of the plethora of tools and resources and understand how to leverage the needs of the school community with the resources available. School librarians are the one educator in a school building that knows the reading needs of all students and can use their expertise to ensure that there are resources

available for our struggling readers, our ELL readers and our readers who are at or above grade level. They also make sure that the library collection reflects the interest levels of our students. We know that students need text and resources that engage and interest them. “By providing access to an array of well-managed resources, school libraries enable academic knowledge to be linked to deeper, personalized learning. The expanded learning environment of the school library ensures the unique interests and needs of individual students are met. In this way, effective school library programs prepare students for college, career, and community” (AASL, 2016).

Reason 4 - Certified school librarians are able to facilitate and design flexible spaces that encourage students to become life-long learners and promote inquiry, creativity and collaboration. The school library space is the space that equals the playing field for all our students. By providing equitable access to connectivity, digital devices, information resources and services that can support a school district’s strategic vision to inspire students to be contributing citizens in a global society. In my district, our school libraries circulate devices, computers and WiFi hotspots and give access to students to makerspaces with robots, Legos and other STEM activities regardless of their background or what courses they are taking. Students learn by exploring, tinkering, creating, collaborating and communicating in a variety of digital and non-digital ways. All students have access to all resources and devices.

Finally, Reason 5 - Certified school librarians in my district are leaders who provide professional development in not only print and digital tools, but also how to develop and implement instructional strategies that promote personalized learning and build a culture of inquiry in our schools. Our school librarians model for other teachers

what it looks like to have a flexible, engaged environment that serves all students. As my Director of Curriculum Drue Feilmeier has stated, “the certified school librarians in our district are currently the most equipped to promote and model the paradigm of thinking about the future forward learning needs of our students.”

In closing, I would love to tell you that after seventeen years as the Library Department Supervisor that I have been able to reach the benchmarks of the perfect school library program. But the reality is that the needs of our students are constantly changing. The reality is that the mission and vision of our school district has changed. Our Comprehensive Plan for 2015-2018 is not the same as the Comprehensive Plan we submitted for 2012-2015. What I can tell you is that the Hempfield School Library program has been an integral, essential vehicle that has impacted the district’s ability to achieve the goals of our Comprehensive Plan in the past, in the present and for the future. Our district continues to invest in our school library program because the impact that we have on every student, every day is an investment in developing future ready schools for future ready students.

Respectfully submitted,  
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## References

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