



MASL

Maryland Association of School Librarians

School Library Media Centers...Bring Students and Information Together

Mary Gable

Assistant State Superintendent,
Academic Policy & Innovation
200 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Ms. Gable,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL) in regards to the implementation plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). We are submitting to you recommendations for the Maryland State Department of Education's consideration in support of school library media specialists and programs (see Attachment #1).

As you are aware, language supporting school libraries has been included in ESSA under Title I, Part A - Improving basic programs operated by state and local educational agencies; Title II, Part A - Supporting effective instruction; Title II, Part B, Subpart 1 - Literacy education for all, results for the nation (LEARN) and Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL); and Title IV, Part A - Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (Block Grants). MASL would like to see both language supporting and technical assistance provided to local educational agencies in the final ESSA plan that supports the continued development and maintenance of effective school library programs.

School library media specialists and school library media programs are needed now more than ever to enhance the ability of students and teachers to use resources in multiple formats to improve academic achievement, and support innovation and collaborative learning. As schools in Maryland embrace "digital" transition – moving away from traditional textbooks and other print resources, the school library media specialist's expertise in the use of devices and content is indispensable. They are assuming leadership roles by teaching staff and students to use technology to retrieve and manage information, curating digital resources; collaborating with teachers to personalize learning for individual students; assisting in the creation of new content; and leading professional learning communities. School library media specialist's skills in the

selection and evaluation of information and instructional materials are critical in providing appropriate resources to support the implementation of College and Career-Ready Standards with an emphasis on the use of open educational resources.

Support in promoting reading for personal and academic success continues to be an essential role of school library media specialists. Additionally, they are critical to helping students master the information literacy process to become independent learners, assisting them by sharing their expertise in the use of technology to retrieve and manage information, and providing much needed guidance with the creation of multimedia to demonstrate what they have learned. School library media specialists support students by providing instruction in digital citizenship, including the appropriate use of electronic resources, safety and security while online, and respect for intellectual property.

As technology advances, schools are becoming sophisticated participatory cultures where everyone becomes a teacher, learner, producer, and contributor -- and school and teaching as we know them are moving beyond traditional walls. School library media specialists are focused on developing "learning communities," in which students acquire positive habits that include study, the ability to persevere, and digital citizenship that promotes lifelong learning and the use of a vast array of current information resources.

It is our belief that the recommendations made in our supporting document will strengthen all our schools and positively impact student achievement, student's digital literacy skills, and provide a great foundation for our students to become college and career ready.

We look forward to hearing from you in regards to how we may provide more input to the external stakeholders committee as you move forward.

On behalf of the MASL Board,

Sincerely,


Melissa Grabill

President



Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL)
ESSA Guidance and State Plans for Implementation

Recommendations

Maryland School Library Media Specialists (School Librarians) Ensure Student Success

Title I, Part A – Improving basic programs operated by state and local educational agencies

ESSA includes new provisions that authorize – but do not require – school districts to include in their local plans how they will assist schools in developing effective school library programs to provide students an opportunity to develop digital literacy skills and improve academic achievement.

Recommendations:

As part of guidance to the LEAs, we request that the Maryland State Department of Education strongly encourage districts to include this critical information as part of their local plans and highlight the importance of developing and maintaining effective school library programs.

Additionally we request that school librarians have a place in statewide planning sessions dedicated to implementing federally-funded activities.

School library media specialists (School librarians) and access to effective school library programs, impact student achievement, digital literacy skills, and school climate/culture.

Title II, Part A - Supporting effective instruction

ESSA includes new provisions that authorize States, as well as school districts, to use grant and subgrant funds under Title II for “supporting the instructional services provided by effective school library programs.”

Recommendation:

As part of guidance to the LEAs, we request the Maryland State Department of Education highlight these provisions to make sure that school districts and personnel who develop and implement professional development activities are aware of the new uses of funds as they relate to libraries. Ensure districts are aware that Title II funds may now be used for professional development for school librarians.

An effective school library program is multi-age, multi-disciplinary, and encompassing of the variety of learning styles. School library media specialists collaborate with classroom teachers to design curriculum, instruct, and engage the learner with resources.

School library media specialists (School librarians) share their learning with other professionals when they attend conferences and workshops, applying the benefits of new techniques, strategies, and technologies to the entire district.

Title II, Part B, Subpart 1 - Literacy education for all, results for the nation (LEARN)/ Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL)

LEARN - This is a NEW PROGRAM under ESSA that provides support to states to develop, revise, or update comprehensive literacy instruction plans. States award competitive subgrants to districts for activities that focus on K-5 and 6-12. ESSA specifically authorizes school librarians to participate in required grant activities for both K-5 and 6-12. ESSA allows all local subgrants to be used to provide teachers and school librarians time to meet, plan, and collaborate on comprehensive literacy instruction.

Recommendations:

We request that the Maryland State Department of Education ensure librarians, administrators, instructional support professionals, and teachers are aware of these grants for comprehensive literacy instruction -- and should support, encourage, and assist, district, and school personnel in applying for grants and subgrants. Note: Any grant awarded to a school district under this program should provide professional development for school library media specialist (school librarians).

IAL - This is a new authorization of the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) Program, which was previously funded through appropriations, that provides dedicated funding to promote literacy programs in low income communities.

Note: This now provides a specific “line item” to help better secure funding in future years. ESSA Specifically authorizes funds to be used for developing and enhancing effective school library programs, to include funding for professional development, books, and up-to-date materials for high needs students. Fifty (50%) percent of funding for IAL for the 2016-17 grant cycle was set aside for school libraries.

Recommendation:

We request that the Maryland State Department of Education assist with identifying potential high needs districts that may be eligible for this program, and support efforts to communicate the positive effects of this funding.

School library media specialists (School librarians) are uniquely suited to lead the effort in applying for competitive grants because of their expertise and access to strong professional learning networks.

Title IV, Part A - Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (Block Grants)

ESSA authorizes a new program to provide Student Support and Academic Enrichment activities (commonly referred to as the “Block Grant” under ESSA) to help States and school districts target federal resources on

locally-designed priorities. Funds are allocated to States then districts based on their share of Title I, Part A funding (a formula based on poverty).

ESSA authorizes - but does not require - States to use funds to assist school districts in providing programs and activities that increase access to personalized, rigorous learning experiences supported by technology, including adequate “access to school libraries.”

ESSA also authorizes - but does not require - States to use funds to assist school districts in providing school librarians and other school personnel with the knowledge and skills to use technology effectively, including effective integration of technology, to improve instruction and student achievement.

In developing their local applications, school districts should consult with teachers, principals and other stakeholders, including “specialized instructional support personnel” which is defined under ESSA as specifically including school librarians.

In addition, ESSA requires that school districts conduct a “needs assessment” prior to receiving funds from the State (conducted every 3 years). The needs assessment should include access to personalized learning experiences (which may include access to school libraries).

Recommendations:

We request the Maryland State Department of Education highlight the ability for districts to use these funds to support programs and activities that increase access to personalized learning experiences, which may include professional development for school librarians and better access to school libraries for students.

As part of guidance to the LEAs, we request that the MSDE include direction that in developing their local applications, school districts should consult with teachers, principals and other stakeholders, including “specialized instructional support personnel” which is defined under ESSA as specifically including school librarians.

School library media specialists (School librarians) increase access to personalized, rigorous learning experiences supported by technology, allowing equitable resources for all students.