



October 26, 2016

Dear Superintendent,

We're writing to you today because of your continued support of school libraries and librarians. In spring 2017, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (AK DEED) will submit its plans for implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). For the first time in over 20 years, effective school library programs are mentioned in the federal law:

- **Title IA** authorizes funding to assist schools in developing “effective school library programs,” provide supplemental funding for librarian and paraprofessional wages, and the purchase library books and supplies.
- **Title IIA** supports professional development, which includes instructional support provided by effective school library programs.
- **Title IIB** is a new competitive grant to enhance literacy for K-12; school librarians are authorized to participate in grant activities and can be an important member of the school or district literacy team.
- **Title IVA** authorizes funding for increased access to student support and academic enrichment, which can be used to fund physical and virtual technology in school libraries.

As you may know, effective school library programs transform education and lifelong learning as students build the digital literacy and critical thinking skills necessary for career, college, and community. Effective school library programs provide opportunities for extended inquiry and ethical, competent engagement in today's information society, empowering students to thrive and contribute to their local and global communities. If properly prepared and supported, school librarians are well positioned to be at the leading edge of the digital transformation of learning. Research indicates effective school library programs improve outcomes for students in schools with<sup>1</sup>:

- A full-time, state-certified librarian
- Regular collaboration between librarians and teachers as well as librarians and students
- Adequate funding for recent and relevant resources
- Access to professional development and networking opportunities

This is why the Alaska Association of School Librarians (AkASL) is working with library leaders and education partners from across the state, as well as leadership from the American Library Association and the American Association for School Librarians, to ensure that AK DEED plans for implementation include the essential resource of school librarians.



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Unfortunately, Alaskan school library programs are often understaffed, underfunded, and underequipped. In many cases, where certified librarians are in schools, they are unable to carry out their professional duties because of additional assignments and lack of resources.

**With your help, we will 1) include the role of the school librarian in this plan and 2) encourage districts to invest federal funds in improving their school library programs in ESSA titles I, II, and IV.**

The ESSA implementation recommendations drafted by the Alaska Association of School Librarians will help ensure equity of access to resources and allow schools to invest federal funds in quality school library program improvements. It is also vital that school district personnel be made aware of the new provisions under ESSA to develop and implement effective school library programming through provisions in Title I-A, Title II-A, II-B and Title IV-A<sup>2</sup>.

As you and your representatives participate in this process, please include effective school library programs in your discussions regarding Title I, Title II, and Title IV monies.

Sincerely,

Executive Board, Alaska Association of School Librarians

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<sup>1</sup> Gretes, Frances. 2013. School Library Impact Studies: A Review of Findings and Guide to Sources. Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. <http://www.baltimorelibraryproject.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/09/Library-Impact-Studies.pdf> (accessed May 25, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> "Opportunities for School Librarians." American Library Association Washington Office.