**ESSA Talking Points for MSLA members**

**Standards**

1. Informational and digital literacy are important components of both the 2011 Massachusetts English Language (ELA) Frameworks and the 2016 Massachusetts Digital Literacy and Computer Science (DLCS) Frameworks. School librarians are trained to teach exactly these literacies. For example, an analysis of the ELA and DCLS Frameworks for grades K-5 demonstrates numerous standards that school librarians directly teach. These can be seen here: <http://bit.ly/MAk5lib>

2. School librarians are also charged with providing, managing and curating resources aligned to the school curriculum. The Appendices to the ELA Frameworks state that students need:

* Regular experiences reading complex texts that tie to key curriculum areas
* Adequate numbers of titles on a topic or theme to develop a knowledge base and investigate that topic or theme for a sustained period
* Engaging and challenging books for independent reading, using standards such as the American Library Association book awards, to ensure the selection of high quality texts; new high-quality materials for students should be acquired as they are published

3. School librarians are trained to evaluate and select books and other reading materials for students. In addition to being experts in children’s literature, school librarians have a broad understanding of curriculum topics and can curate a collection to ensure that there is a collection of print and digital books and articles available to students to support these initiatives in a sensible way that supports comprehensive learning experiences.

4. Most schools are also looking to provide materials to support the learning of students identified as English Language Learners and students with learning disabilities. School librarians are experts in identifying print, digital, and audiovisual materials to support these students in all curriculum areas.

5. Students are increasingly working with digital tools and resources, as reflected in the DLCS standards. For example, in the middle school grades, strands taught in the library, whether through direct instruction or in the context of research projects, include Safety and Security, Ethics and Laws, Interpersonal and Societal Impact, Digital Tools, Collaboration and Communication and Research. School librarians are also experts in selecting, curating and training students and teachers to use digital resources. For example, school librarians are charged with teaching students to access, use and cite the excellent online databases available through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners: <http://bit.ly/MAdatabases> School librarians throughout the state are also working with the Massachusetts Library System to provide access and training for a robust collection of e-books available to schools at an affordable rate through the Commonwealth e-book collection: <http://guides.masslibsystem.org/cec/home/1>

6. While Massachusetts currently does not have specific standards for school library programs, the ELA and DLCS standards make clear the advantages for students who are in districts with professional school librarians. School librarians in the Commonwealth currently look to standards developed by the American Association for School Librarians (AASL): <http://bit.ly/L4LAASL> The AASL *Standards for the Twenty-First Century Learner* have been crosswalked to the ELA Common Core Frameworks, and charge school librarians with teaching skills, dispositions, ethical responsibilities, and self-assessment strategies to ensure information and digital literacy.

**Accountability**

1. Massachusetts’ Frameworks for District Accountability and Assistance classifies school and districts on a five-level scale, with the highest performing in Level 1, and the lowest in level 5 (PPI- Performance and Progress Index). Schools classified into level 4 and 5 are schools not meeting their own performance targets, and are not narrowing the proficiency gap in Massachusetts. A majority of these schools tend to be urban schools; urban schools in Massachusetts trend towards not having a certified school library media specialist, and often do not have library media centers at all for students. (DESE, *Framework for District Accountability and Assistance*, August 2012)

2. School librarians are in position to help schools in Massachusetts reduce proficiency gaps by providing personalized learning environments, offering equitable access to resources and ensuring a well-rounded education for every student. School librarians play an integral part in two of the major accountability indicators designated under ESSA; Proficiency in reading and math and English Language proficiency.

3. The presence of an effective school library program staffed by school library media specialists should be considered a key “differentiator” between more successful and less successful schools. Effective school libraries have proven to boost student achievement.

4. Provisions to Title I of ESSA should include access essential library resources; especially in schools of high-need, provide personalized learning support that leads to increased student engagement and achievement and access to current, high-quality print and digital resources appropriate to their reading level.

5. Studies have shown that having a certified school library media specialist positively impacts student achievement. School librarians are licensed educators leading in print and digital literacy instruction, the latest technology instructional practices, and each buildings’ curriculum. School librarians use Student Learning Objectives to show student growth and partner with teachers to provide targeted instruction to help propel the lowest (and highest) achieving students by working in collaboration with teachers and providing resources that target these students.

6. By investing in school libraries, students have improved test scores. Moreover, school

libraries bridge the income achievement gap by providing equal access to resources for learning, including broadband.

7. The job description of today’s school librarian has been redefined. School librarians are now the specialists that both train our teachers and instruct our students how to master a global digital world.

8. Also, for the first time, English language proficiency for English learners is integrated into the system by which all schools and districts are held accountable. There are dozens of studies that show students with access to a strong school library program are more likely to succeed academically than students who without that access, even when adjusted for other factors like poverty and language barriers.

9. As you are developing your budgets under this new significant Act, please remember the importance of funding a certified school librarian in each and every school. A school librarian’s business has always been helping students learn how to learn.

**School improvement**

1. MSLA asks DESE to not merely allow--but to expect--school librarians to serve in the role of professional development provider.

2. School librarians are uniquely positioned to provide school-wide (or district-wide) support in the form of professional development. When we have adequate staff to perform clerical tasks as well as funding to provide relevant print and electronic resources, school librarians have the tools to serve the school community at the highest professional level. This means serving as school-wide resources for both students and faculty--even families. School librarians can serve in this manner because we are

* In sync with the goals and mission of the entire school community
* familiar with curriculum in broad subject areas
* Accustomed to working with students at all grade levels and all abilities
* Routinely collaborate

3. Our school librarian community wants to highlight a 2013 report from the National Center for Literacy Education (NCLE), which shows that when school librarians are highly involved leaders, they play a critical role in their schools through consistent and sustained collaboration with other educators. With adequate support, school librarians can provide school-wide professional development in areas such as these:

* digital literacy
* Media literacy
* web-based tools
* primary sources
* academic integrity (digital research manual, avoiding plagiarism, citing sources)
* databases
* inquiry-based learning
* Makerspaces
* Project based learning
* instructional technology
* grant writing
* building a reading culture

4. Collaboration among faculty and high quality professional development both play vital roles in the school improvement process. Family collaboration in districts also needs to be dedicated and approachable. School libraries are a unique place on each campus to facilitate this collaboration, but the collaborations will go better with proper librarians staffing it. When collaborating with families and communities, districts should use a system-wide approach to serving families that might include:

* Author events
* ESL and ELL parents
* Pre-K and school readiness
* Tools for parents to encourage reading
* Internet access after hours
* Film screenings about digital citizenship
* Parent-child book discussions for elementary
* Other family programming
* Connection to public library programs
* Speaker series (ex. STEM/career speakers)
* Family Tech nights
* Cultural and civic enrichment activities tied to school curriculum (ex “Poetry Out Loud”; “Open Mic Night,” Global Education student showcases, “cultural cookbook” night mock election night parties!)
* Summer reading programs
* Placing school librarians on any parent/staff advisory groups to better facilitate family coordination
* Diversity related events (ex. Cultural cookbook night)
* Connecting with community resources/programs
* Safety/Wellness programming

5. Consider the evidence-based recommendation in School Libraries work. In this 2016 study, many states demonstrated how effective school library programs and licensed school librarians support academic achievement through higher reading levels and higher test scores. This is achieved by collaborative planning between teachers and school library media specialists. School librarians teaching information and digital literacy skills to students and providing professional development to staff also leads to higher test scores.

6. Effective school librarians act as the conduit for vital professional learning communities in their schools. School librarians collaborate on high-quality instruction with teachers from all curricular areas, resulting in professional development that impacts every student. Certified school librarians bridge digital and socioeconomic divides by partnering to increase teacher capacity for equitable, personalized learning environments including a wide variety of technology, resources, media and personal connections.

**Whole Child/Equity/Access**

1. Massachusetts school librarians are focused on the development of the Whole Child. Massachusetts School Library Association would like to emphasize the essential role that school librarians play in the development of students’ physical, social, and emotional well-being. Study after study has shown that having a certified school librarian positively impacts student achievement across a wide range of indicators, in fact, twenty one different state studies confirm school librarians support student achievement. Test scores go up by upwards of 35% for students with access to school libraries and librarians. When spending time in libraries rise, so do reading scores.

2. Beyond data points, it is important to recognize and support that school librarians are a safe person in a safe place in the school community for our students. The school library itself is often a refuge for students. The school library should be recognized in the state ESSA Plan for what it is: the largest classroom in the school, and the one place that allows children to explore interests, problem solve, build information literacy skills, and complete school as college, career, and community ready individuals. Libraries are not static book repositories but carefully curated collections that house not just books, but opportunity for kids to exercise independence, find validation of their experiences in the pages of book, learn empathy by reading about others’ lives and experiences different than their own, and just get lost in a story of their choice.

3. The Massachusetts School Library Association is highlighting that school librarians are poised to help propel all students by providing individualized resources that address the unique learning styles and resource needs to enhance achievement and wellbeing. The current climate does not guarantee that all students will have access to a school library as it is dependent on the socio-economic status of the town that the student lives in. All students, regardless of income should have equitable access to a school library.

4. Librarians are equipped to help students navigate digital media and become socially responsible users of information in our fast- paced world. Licensed school librarians help to foster an appreciation of literature, and a love of reading in our students. To help comprehensively address the academic and socio-emotional life of the child, school librarians across the state recommend that school librarians and effective library programs be considered integral to educating the whole child.

5. Effective school library programs are a vital part of a well-rounded education. School librarians increase access to personalized, rigorous learning experiences supported by technology, allowing equitable access and resources for all students. Digital literacy skills are essential for success as students move into the workforce that requires effective use of technology, and so strong libraries are of tremendous value, not only for students, but also for business and the community.

6. Properly funded effective school libraries can immediately help struggling schools and districts level the ‘reading field’ with their better funded peers. In 2004, Stephen Krashen reported, “...For children of poverty, libraries are typically the only source of reading materials.” How can we justify affording only some of our students, often in wealthier districts, the benefits and successes that school libraries and librarians bring with them?