

# ***School Libraries matter—they should matter for every student!***

Effective School Libraries focus on accessing and evaluating information, providing digital training and experiences, and developing a culture of reading (1). The Digital Literacy and Computer Science standards recently adopted by DESE require all students to have strong information literacy skills (2). DESE also recently cited the need for strong print literacy skills for all students beginning in the early grades, as well as building technology capacity for all students (3, 4, 5).

## **School libraries matter! But not all students have what they need:**

The Special Commission on School Library Services in Massachusetts submitted *The Massachusetts School Library Study: Equity and Access for Students in the Commonwealth* to the Legislature in February 2018. The Commission, which included educators, librarians, legislators, and members of the business community found that **Massachusetts public school students do not have equity when it comes to their school library programs.**

### **If school libraries matter:**

- ***Every student should have a school librarian, BUT:***
  - One in five schools have no licensed school librarian
  - The majority of school libraries have no support staff, so librarians are performing clerical work, when they could be teaching students
  - Fewer than half of Massachusetts school districts have a library or technology director to oversee their programs
  - There is no one at DESE charged with overseeing school library programs and no regular data regarding the number of schools with licensed school librarians in Massachusetts public schools is collected
- ***Every student should have access to a school library, BUT***
  - Libraries in many districts are frequently closed, significantly more often in urban districts, often to provide testing spaces or due to lack of staff
  - Many schools have “fixed schedule” programs where students can access the library just once a week, not when they need research materials or a new book to read
- ***Every student should have access to information digital resources and technology, BUT:***
  - Urban school districts have significantly less access to information technology compared to rural and suburban districts
  - Many districts have limited access to computers in the school library and poor internet access, and this is more common in urban and rural districts
- ***Every student should have equitable funding for library programs and materials, BUT:***
  - Budgets and funding sources for school library programs and materials vary widely throughout the Commonwealth, but overall, funding is not adequate in most districts to provide newer print or digital resources or technology
  - The Massachusetts Library System provides a number of subsidized resources for school libraries, but many school libraries do not take advantage of these resources; for example,

one-third of schools do not use state-funded electronic resources, and only 30% of school participate in the Commonwealth e-book program

- **Every student should have access to library instruction and help, BUT:**
  - Instruction in school library programs is widely inconsistent across the Commonwealth, with wide variation in the number of classes taught in each school, the grade levels taught, and the ability of school librarians to collaborate with teachers to plan research and literacy projects
  - In some districts, librarians report covering multiple schools, managing study halls, having space closed for testing, and numerous other factors that interfere with their ability to teach

### ***What does every student need? The Special Commission on School Library Services in Massachusetts recommends:***

- **Improved access to school libraries and school librarians**
  - Every school needs a school library and a certified school librarian
  - DESE needs a School Library Curriculum Specialist to ensure equity in every school and to support a culture of inquiry in schools that sustains inquiry, and resource-based learning, collaborative teaching, and the integration of digital technology to improve access for all students
- **Improved access to information resources in school libraries**
  - Every school needs adequate infrastructure and devices, as well as print and electronic resources, to develop digital literacy, efficacy and safety
- **Improved access to information technology**
  - School librarians need continuing and high-quality professional development to deliver high quality, relevant instruction and help to students, teachers and administrators
  - All students need improved access to internet and digital devices in school libraries
  - All students need school library staffing that ensures adequate access to information technology
- **Improved access to library instruction and help**
  - All students need access to the best instructional practices in their school libraries
- **Improved access to funding**
  - All students need guidelines for budget allocation and expenditure to support these recommendations

**For more information:** *The Massachusetts School Library Study: Equity and Access for Students in the Commonwealth* is available online at: <https://mblc.state.ma.us/school-libraries-study/>

---

1. American Association of School Libraries. 2016. "Definition for Effective School Library Program." *Knowledge Quest* 45(1): 4-5. 2. Gretes, Frances. 2013.

6. 2016 Massachusetts Digital Literacy and Computer Science (DLCS) Curriculum Framework. <<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/dlcs.pdf>> (accessed July 31, 2017).

3. American Library Association. 2015. "P.L. 114-95, The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 Conference Agreement to Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Opportunities for School Librarians"  
<[http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/esea/AL`A-ESS A\\_Library\\_Opportunities.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/esea/AL`A-ESS A_Library_Opportunities.pdf)>  
(accessed July 31, 2017).
4. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2017.  
"Massachusetts Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act."  
<<https://ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/macsa2017.pdf>> (accessed July 31, 2017).
5. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2017. English Language Arts and Literacy Framework. <[www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06.pdf)> (accessed September 8, 2017)
6. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2016.

