

Position Statement on School Library Scheduling

POSITION:

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) supports the position that a responsive school library is fully integrated into the educational program so that learners, families, educators, and school librarians become partners in learning. This integration strengthens the teaching process to ensure learners are active participants who guide and continually assess their own learning. Open access to a quality school library is essential for learners to develop the vital skills necessary to analyze, evaluate, interpret, and communicate information and ideas in a variety of formats. Inquiry skills are taught and learned within the context of the curriculum and may occur in the classroom, the library, or in a virtual environment with 24/7 accessibility to a wide range of resources, technologies, and services.

The fundamental elements of a responsive school library that enable the school librarian to act quickly and effectively to meet the curricular needs of educators and learners are:

- “flexible, open, unrestricted, and equitable access” (AASL 2018, 56) to the school library and resources on an as-needed basis
- opportunity for school librarians to collaborate as full instructional partners who co-plan, co-teach, and co-assess with classroom educators
- 24/7 access to digital school library resources

The fully integrated library philosophy is best achieved through an open schedule that encourages school librarians to collaborate as full partners with classroom educators to design, implement, assess, and evaluate inquiry lessons. This practice cultivates high-level educational experiences for learners and is the catalyst that makes the integrated library work. The educator brings to the planning process knowledge of subject content and pedagogy. The school librarian also contributes a broad knowledge of pedagogy, as well as culturally relevant and diverse resources, and current and emerging technologies to meet the inquiry and instructional needs of all learners. As instructional partners, the classroom educator and school librarian are able to provide differentiated and adaptable learning experiences to meet the requirements of the curriculum.

An open schedule is responsive to the learning community’s needs and provides equitable and flexible access to the school library’s learning resources and spaces. “Scheduling of classes should allow flexible, open, unrestricted, and equitable access” (AASL 2018, 56) on an as-needed basis to facilitate just-in-time research, training, and utilization of technology with instruction from the school librarian and the content-area educator. The practice of scheduling classes in the school library on a set schedule to provide educator release or preparation time inhibits best practice by limiting collaboration and co-teaching opportunities between the school librarian and classroom educator. Learners and educators must be able to visit the school library in person or virtually when needed to collaborate with the school librarian and other learners and educators, use information sources and learning tools, and read for pleasure.

The responsibility for an open, flexible library schedule that is responsive to the learning community’s needs must be shared by the entire school community: the local educational agency, district administration, principal, school librarian, educators, the school library support staff, parents, and learners.

The LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY endorses the philosophy that the school library is fully integrated into the district's educational program and ensures that responsive scheduling for libraries is maintained in all buildings and at all levels through district-level policies.

The DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION supports the philosophy of responsive scheduling and ensures appropriate staffing levels so that all educators, including the school librarian, can fulfill their professional responsibilities.

The PRINCIPAL creates the appropriate climate within the school by understanding and advocating the benefits of responsive scheduling to the faculty, by monitoring scheduling, and by maintaining appropriate staffing levels, funding, and joint planning time for classroom educators and school librarians.

The CLASSROOM EDUCATOR and the SCHOOL LIBRARIAN work collaboratively to provide differentiated and adaptable educational experiences for learners of all abilities. The collaborative lessons meet curricular requirements and library learning standards through relevant and engaging educational experiences that promote positive use of instructional time.

The SCHOOL LIBRARY SUPPORT STAFF works to maintain daily operations as overseen by the school librarian to allow time and flexibility for the school librarian and educators to collaborate to provide learners with excellent educational experiences.

The PARENTS advocate for a school library that provides learners with access 24/7. They promote the use of responsive scheduling so their children are able to come to the school library throughout the day to use information sources, read for pleasure, and collaborate with the school librarian, other learners, and educators.

The LEARNERS stress the need for anytime access to their school library to assist them in completing their academic pursuits and exploring their personal interests.

BACKGROUND:

The AASL Scheduling Position Statement Task Force was asked to review the "Position Statement of Flexible Scheduling" that was adopted 09/2011 and last revised 06/2014. The task force was asked to consider the language from the AASL *National School Library Standards* (2018) by reviewing a shift in language from specifically noting "flexible scheduling" to a more inclusive statement that reflects this language from the *National School Library Standards*: "ensure that learners and educators have access to the school library and to qualified professional staff throughout the school day" (p. 174). This position statement is critical for school librarians desiring to fully achieve a collaborative and integrated school library philosophy. The updated statement also considers the impact access has in an expanding school library environment. Outlined in this statement are key responsibilities shared by the entire school community that are vital to school library scheduling success. In addition, the task force was requested to align and edit the position statement to support and reflect the *National School Library Standards* and National School Library of the Year rubric. A consistent scheduling statement is important for members to articulate best practices for the school library.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Flexible access:** The school library's "collection is physically and intellectually accessible" at the point of need for the learner "and other community users" (AASL 2018, 100). This includes access to the school library's print and digital collection before, during, and after school and 24/7 access to digital resources.
- **Integrated library philosophy:** The instructional work of the school librarian, delivered through collaboration and coteaching with classroom teachers, is an essential and integral part of all classroom curriculum.

- **Local educational agency:** Local governing body that has the authority to create, implement, and enforce educational policy.
- **Collaboration:** Working with a member of the teaching team to plan, implement, and evaluate a specialized instructional plan (AASL 2018, 274).
- **Co-teaching:** Two or more educators working together with learners, sharing the planning, organization, delivery, and assessment of instruction, as well as physical space (Bacharach, Heck, and Dahlberg 2010).
- **Responsive:** A condition or disposition that enables the school librarian to act quickly and effectively to meet the curricular needs of educators and learners while also having latitude to provide school library services that change at point of need (Hale 2018, Hale 2019).
- **Responsive scheduling:** Classes must be flexibly scheduled to visit the school library on an as-needed basis to facilitate just-in-time research, training, and use of technology with the guidance of the librarian, who is the information-search specialist and the teacher who is the subject specialist (Hale 2018, Hale 2019).
- **Open access:** Free, unrestricted availability of the school library.

REFERENCES:

- American Association of School Librarians. 2018. *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*. Chicago: ALA.
- Bacharach, Nancy, Teresa Washut Heck, and Kathryn Dahlberg. 2010. "Changing the Face of Student Teaching Through Co-Teaching." *Action in Teacher Education* 32 (1): 3–14.
- Hale, Sarah. 2018. E-mail message to Ann Martin. December 14.
- Hale, Sarah. 2019. E-mail message to Ann Martin. January 4.

RECOMMENDED READING LIST:

- Lance, Keith Curry, and Debra E. Kachel. 2018. "Why School Librarians Matter: What Years of Research Tell Us." *Phi Delta Kappan* 99 (7): 15–20.

DISCLAIMER:

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) assumes no responsibility for the practices or recommendations of any member or other professional, or for the policies and procedures of any program. School librarians function within the limitations of licensure/certification, state board of education policies, and/or institution, district, or school policy.

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