

The Critical Need for and Responsibilities of District-Level School Library Supervisors

POSITION:

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) believes that a qualified, district-level school library supervisor is a fundamental component of college, career, and community readiness for students in PreK–12 education. By providing leadership, vision, and support, the school library supervisor collaborates with district- and building-level administrators, school librarians, and dedicated support staff to create and sustain effective school libraries. The school library supervisor facilitates high-quality curricular development and delivery through equitable access to diverse print and digital materials, dynamic physical and virtual learning environments, development of multiple literacies, and the creation of participatory learning and guided inquiry experiences for the district and school community.

The district-level school library supervisor:

- Formulates, oversees, and administers, in collaboration with district stakeholders, a progressive district-wide school library vision in alignment with the district’s mission, goals, objectives, and strategic plan.
- Advocates for equity in both human and financial resources to strategically support the learning community’s needs.
- Leads school librarians in implementing the *National School Library Standards* to support learners and educators at all levels.
- Guides and promotes adherence to policies and procedures regarding intellectual property, privacy, and digital citizenship in accordance with the district’s code of ethics.
- Provides exemplary professional development to foster innovation in school libraries and classrooms using various technologies, instructional strategies, and research-based methods.
- Evaluates the effectiveness of school librarians and school libraries in partnership with administrators.
- Promotes dialogue on the school library’s impact by collecting and sharing data and evidence of practice.
- Guides district-level curation of resources and the acquisition of high-quality materials that are diverse and inclusive, current, and relevant.

BACKGROUND:

District-level school library supervisors are essential in the implementation of effective school libraries. In the first data reported nationwide since the 1970s, studies identified supervisors as having significant responsibilities in leadership, personnel, teaching and learning, facilities, technology, finances, and professional development for their school districts and school libraries (DiScala et al. 2019; Weeks et al. 2017). These responsibilities are echoed throughout the AASL *National School Library Standards* as the supervisor “develops an effective plan and process for providing school libraries that support the philosophy, goals, and objectives of the school district” (2018b, 174). This position statement provides guidance for school district leaders and administrators in the necessity and justification for placing qualified individuals in the district administration to supervise and coordinate school libraries and services to achieve the district’s mission.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Appropriate Staffing for School Libraries:** “Every learner in every school...should have access to an updated school library with a full-time, certified school librarian” (AASL 2019).
- **District-Level School Library Supervisor:** A member of the district-level administrative team, with school library certification or experience, who is responsible for supervising and coordinating district- and building-level school libraries.
- **Effective School Libraries:** “An effective school library has a certified school librarian at the helm, provides personalized learning environments, and offers equitable access to resources to ensure a well-rounded education for every student” (AASL 2018a).

REFERENCES:

American Association of School Librarians (AASL). 2018a. “AASL Position Statement on Effective School Libraries.”

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AASL. 2018b. *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*. Chicago: American Library Association.

AASL. 2019. “AASL Position Statement on Appropriate Staffing for School Libraries.”

http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/advocacy/statements/docs/AASL_Appropriate_Staffing.pdf (accessed Feb. 18, 2021).

DiScala, J., A. C. Weeks, and C. Kodama. 2019. “The School District Library Supervisor and the National School Library Standards.” *Knowledge Quest* 47 (5): 64–71.

Weeks, A. C., J. DiScala, D. L. Barlow, S. A. Massey, C. Kodama, R. Hall, K. Jarrell, L. Jacobs, A. Moses, and R. Follman. 2017. “The Lilead Survey: A National Study of District-Level Library Supervisors: Roles, Responsibilities, Challenges, and Professional Development Needs.” *School Library Research* 20.

http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/vol20/SLR_LileadSurvey_V20.pdf.

RECOMMENDED READING LIST:

Bundy, M. L., P. Wasserman, and J. O’Connell. 1970. *The School Library Supervisor and Her Situation: Final Report*. University of Maryland, School of Library and Information Services.

Kodama, C. 2019. "School District Library Supervisors and Their Role in Professional Development for Building-Level School Librarians: A Baseline Study." University of Maryland.

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Massey, S. A., J. DiScala, A. C. Weeks, D. L. Barlow, and C. Kodama. 2016. "The Impact of the School District Library Supervisor: A Review of the Literature and an Agenda for Research and Action." *The Library Quarterly* 86 (4): 389–402.

Traska, M. R. 2014. "District Library Supervisors under Duress: The Lilead Project Survey Results." *American Libraries* (Nov. 17).

<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2014/11/17/district-library-supervisors-under-duress/>.

DISCLAIMER:

The position taken by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) represents the organization and cannot be applied to individual members or groups affiliated with the association without their direct confirmation.

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COMMITTEE/TASK FORCE NAME: School Library Supervisor Position Statement Task Force

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