The Massachusetts School Library Study: Equity and Access for the Students of the Commonwealth

Meeting with Dept. of ESE 8.1.18

DESE, MBLC, MSLA
Context: Commission

Charge

Bring stakeholders together to investigate the school library environment and report to the Joint Committee on Education with long-range plans for school library programs that best serve students. (Appendix A)

Commission Members

- The Legislature
- The Education Community
- The Library Community
- The Business Community
Overview: Lack of Library Equity

We have evidence that equity is lacking in Massachusetts schools:

- Librarians
- Library access
- Digital and print resources
- Technology
- Library funding
- Library instruction
School Library Impact Studies (Gretes, 2013)

Analysis of 60+ school library impact studies from across the US involving over 8,700 schools and 2.6 million students

Universal findings:

- A strong library program leads to overall higher scores (PA 2012)
- School librarians provide much more than access to books
- High levels of poverty mean little access to books
- Access to books appears to offset the impact of poverty
We have recommendations

- Specific
- Evidence-based
- Timeline
- Consensus from the Commission: library and educational community
What will our recommendations help remedy?

- Literacy equity:
  - ESSA compliance looking at early literacy

- Technology equity:
  - DLCS Standards and online testing

- Information literacy equity
  - “Fake news” is in the news
Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners

- Stronger relationship between DESE & MBLC
- MBLC strategic plan to work with DESE
- State funding - national comparisons
- Investment of $1.4 million
- Other partnership opportunities with Massachusetts Library System and Massachusetts School Library Association
Year-One Recommendations

- Use DESE approved SISP rubric for universal job description for school librarians to be used for performance evaluation
- Develop guidelines that distinguish between educational and administrative technology and define the role and responsibilities of the school librarian in educational, not administrative technology
- Provide PD and training in administrator preparation programs to raise administrators’ awareness of the school librarian’s role
- Reach out to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and Massachusetts Library System to coordinate professional development for school librarians to provide better training through MLS and educational consortia

- **Highest Impact Recommendation: Create position of School Library Curriculum Specialist**
ESSA Funding

- ESSA - MA no language about school libraries, no access to funding
- AASL* data indicates that 32 states currently have language on school libraries
- Recommend including school libraries in next MA revision

*AASL - American Association of School Librarians
The Commission’s long-range action plan

These steps call for collaboration to build equity and high-quality school library services statewide

- Create a school library curriculum specialist post to ensure that school library services are integrated into the fabric of K-12 education in Massachusetts and liaison with the larger library community
- Investigate a DESE/MBLC partnership to foster equitable access to electronic content and other critical library services
- Liaisons from DESE, MBLC, MSLA, and key stakeholders begin to work together to bring the Recommendations to fruition
Action Steps

Conduct a thorough audit of school library services in Massachusetts to define the landscape

- DESE, MBLC/Mass. Library System, and MSLA

Conduct a study on the benefits of school library services on education

- Study models in other states, e.g., PA, Grete's report
- Seek grant support
Who will help?

• Massachusetts Library Community:
  • Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, Massachusetts Library System, Massachusetts School Library Association, Massachusetts Library Association, New England School Library Association

• Educational Community:
  • Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
  • Massachusetts Teachers Association, American Federation of Teachers

• Legislators
  • Joint Committee on Education, Library Caucus