Transforming Decision Makers into Champions for School Library Programs

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The PowerPoint slides, handouts, and other resources for this workshop are located at
http://paschoollibraryproject.org/aasl
Working Schedule

- 8:30-8:40  “In-Common” Connections
- 8:40-8:55  Overview of PA School Library Project & Lessons Learned
- 8:55-9:40  Prioritizing Your Power Pie
- 9:40-10:00 Unpacking the Research
- 10:00-10:15 Working Break
- 10:15-11:05 Drafting Your Position Statements, Elevator Speeches, & Talking Points
- 11:05-12 noon Assembling the Elements of Your Advocacy Plan
Our “In-Commons”

Who are we?
- Educators of school librarians
- Pennsylvanians
- Former school librarians
- Active in our state association PSLA
- Long-distance collaborators

Who are you?
Overview
PA School Library Project

- PA School Library Project started with a resolution passed unanimously in the PA House of Representatives.

- But before that resolution passed, much strategic and delicate work had been done behind the scenes by Deb Kachel, advocate Baruch Kintisch, and Representative Mark Longietti to get the resolution to a vote.
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Resolution 987 of 2010

Urged the State Board of Education to conduct a study of the Commonwealth’s public school library services for students in kindergarten through grade 12:

- measuring and comparing access to print and electronic resources, professional support, and instruction in the use of information and research . . . and
- evaluating how funding and resources are allocated for school library services in relation to student and community circumstances.
Key Findings Affecting PA Students

PA School Library Study

In 2011, more than half of the 1.8 million students in PA publicly-funded schools (56%) did not have access to a full-time librarian at their schools.

PSLA Surveys

In 2011-2012, 198 PA schools (7% of 2,970 schools) eliminated or severely curtailed librarian positions, reducing service to their students;

In 2012-2013, an additional 117 librarian positions were eliminated or severely curtailed.

Over 11% of library positions were eliminated or curtailed in two school years.
2012 PA School Library Project

- Funding from IMLS of $434 K
- Collaboration of PSLA, Education Law Center, & HSLC as fiscal agent
- Project Team: Deb Kachel, Keith Curry Lance, Sandy Zelno, & Mary Kay Biagini
- Professional Judgment Panel (18 librarians)
- Focus groups of citizens (4 sessions, 71 participants)
- Advisory Board (8 members)
- 1,000 administrators, teachers & librarians through surveys
Focus of 2012 Research

- **Quantitative:** What components do 21st-century school library programs need to improve student learning and academic achievement?

- **Qualitative:** What are the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and school librarians about the effectiveness of school library programs in their schools?
How Was Data Gathered & Analyzed?

Correlations were made between robust & specific data representing 73% of PA schools/78% of school districts:

- information gathered from the 2,180 school libraries participating in the 2011 PA School Library Study and
- scores on the PA System of School Assessment (PSSA) Reading and Writing tests of the students in those schools.
Key Finding: Libraries Need These Building Blocks

- Remember this mnemonic: FACTTS
  - F = Adequate annual funding for library resources
  - A = Access to school library beyond school day
  - C = Collection of current resources in a variety of physical formats including print & digital
  - T = Technology including Internet-accessible computers and access to digital resources (e.g., databases, eBooks)
  - T = Teaching information literacy skills correlated with Common Core Standards in collaboration with teachers, using flexible scheduling
  - S = Full-time, certified librarian and support staff
Key Finding:
Information Literacy Instruction

Information Literacy Instruction:

- The more often students receive instruction in information literacy from their librarians, the higher their test scores in reading and writing.  
  (Lance, 2012)

- Librarians play a leading role in encouraging students to read independently for information and pleasure and to develop a habit of reading. Both administrators and teachers value this role highly.  
  (Lance, 2012)
Key Finding: Elementary Libraries Need Flexible Scheduling

- $\frac{3}{4}$ of elementary libraries used **fixed scheduling** (i.e., assigned, fixed period for each class to receive weekly instruction).

- Need for **flexible scheduling** for classes to use library when most appropriate for learning, integrated with curriculum and standards.
What We Learned: Collaboration Is Necessary

- Many fingerprints need to be on your advocacy plan
- State, regional, and local library associations representing all types of librarians (school, public, and academic) need to:
  - collaborate and organize their efforts toward a common goal and
  - reach out to other types of professional and community-based organizations by publishing, presenting, and exhibiting at their events
What we Learned: PA Librarians Need Professional Development

- Many librarians do not know how to advocate for stronger school library programs.
- We need to enable our members to become active advocates by providing ongoing professional development and resources.
What We Learned: Working with Adults Can Be Hard

Working with adult stakeholders and decision makers can be hard work and can take us out of our comfort zone:

- Different cultures
- Different contexts
- Different experiences
- Different language
- Different values
Why Do We Need to Be Advocates Right Now?

- **Growing inequities** (e.g., decreased funding, increasing economic slippage, and lack of support) make it harder for students to learn and achieve.

- **Widening gap** in school library staffing, budgets, and resources are creating student, teacher, and librarian “haves” and “have-nots.”
Build Your Advocacy Plan in Steps

1. Define your challenge
2. Identify your stakeholders (allies, opponents, and undecided)
3. Get the facts and research
4. Organize and prepare your plan
5. Develop & own your communications components (written, oral, logo)
6. Execute your plan and assess and adjust at every step
Step 1: Define Your Challenge

- Identify your primary challenge
- Identify who has the authority to support or influence a change
- Define your position statement (and stick to it)
- Understand your challenge: Is it achievable? Is the risk worth taking? What happens if you do nothing?
- Will there be allies who will help?
- Assess resources and strengths—people, time, money, talent
Step 2: Identify Your Stakeholders (and what they care about)

- **In-School Stakeholders**
  - Principal(s)
  - Teachers
  - Students
  - Grade-level/dept. leaders

- **In-District Stakeholders**
  - Superintendent
  - Curriculum directors
  - Technology directors
  - Other central administrators
  - Board members

- **Out-of-School Stakeholders**
  - Parents
  - PTA/PTOs
  - Taxpayers
  - Community residents
  - Community organizations & businesses
  - Professional associations (librarians, teachers)
  - Legislators