

Back to School Advocacy

Creating School Partnerships

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At the start of each school year, children's librarians may want to check in and reaffirm partnerships with the school media specialists in their service area. Here are some helpful tips to reconnect.

1. **Find out how your school libraries are staffed.** Does each library have a certified teacher librarian or are they run by a passionate paraprofessional?
2. **Send a friendly email to each school library staff member.** Let them know you are looking forward to collaborating and that you are interested to find out how you can best support them.
3. **Propose a staff training day.** Invite school library staff and public children's and teen librarians to get together to share favorite databases, websites, and books to use with the students. With the increased use of Zoom and Google Meets, this might be easier to schedule than in years past.
4. **Share lists of books that have been published in the past year relating to core content standards and electives offered at the school.** These titles might be worth school library staff spending their limited budget on. I offer this list through my Goodreads account yearly, and I have had several school media specialists tell me they often turn to that list when they receive a donation or extra funds. Currently, forty-one states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Common Core State Standards Initiative; find out more at www.corestandards.org. If your state is not included, find their standards at your state's Department of Education website.
5. **Send links to websites and free webinars year-round.** You might also consider a shared calendar, updated regularly, with upcoming virtual events.

Advocate for Your School Libraries

Another way to support local school libraries is to advocate to your school board for increased or continued investment in school media centers.

Consult with your school system's media specialists to see what is needed the most in their libraries and media centers.

- Do they need better staffing, including more certified teacher librarians?
- Do they need more staff so that the school library can be open before and after the school day?
- Do they need a bigger budget for print materials?
- Do they need more investment in technology and technology training?

The answer might be all of the above.

Once you know what you want to focus your advocacy on, start collecting data and anecdotal stories to help the school librarians share evidence of how their request supports student learning.

After data is collected and organized, ask your school librarians what else you can do to support their claim. You could write a letter of support or offer to speak at a future board meeting.

Strengthen Your Advocacy with Facts

To find more statistics to back up your argument, check out The Pew Research Center, (pewresearch.org), where you can

search for data by topic or age group, or AASL's (American Association of School Librarians) advocacy page at ala.org/aasl/advocacy. The latter's Resources page has infographics, reports, and research and statistics links to help you find concrete evidence to support your requests, including state contacts that will direct you to local leadership in school libraries. The Tools page includes more infographics, articles, brochures, a poster, and various toolkits, including AASL's Advocacy Toolkit.

Public and school libraries already share the same patrons, so combining and focusing our efforts will result in better service for all children. &