

December 15, 2021

Kathy Goldenberg, President
New Jersey State Board of Education
State Board Office
P.O. Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625-500

via email only: stateboardoffice@doe.nj.gov

Dear President Goldenberg:

I have a two-fold purpose for reaching out to you today. First, to introduce myself and second to discuss the importance of updating the wording in N.J.A.C. 6A:13-2.1 (h). I currently serve as New Jersey's state librarian, a role I assumed in February 2021. While I have an extensive background working in and for libraries, I had the pleasure from 2013 -2021 of serving as Director, Library Services and Charter Schools at the Minnesota Department of Education. As a result of my experience, I have deep appreciation and respect for the work that the New Jersey State Board of Education does on behalf of New Jersey's learners. I look forward to learning more about the specific activities of the Board as my tenure here moves forward.

Today, I wanted to call your attention to a proposed change to the New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:13-2.1 (h) *Standards-based instruction and School Library Services*. A change in wording would significantly strengthen where and how school library services are provided to students across the state. By replacing "school district" with "school" and "under the direction of" to "by a", the Board has an opportunity to demonstrate the value that it sees in the role of our state's licensed school library media specialists in promoting student learning at all grades. Such a change would also promote equity of access to critical skills and information for all students.

Recent national studies have confirmed the findings of past studies, and indicate that the presence of a school library media program led by a school library media specialist is a key component of student success. In fact, the results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), three-year longitudinal study were released. PIRLS is a test administered to 10-year-olds in over 50 countries. It found that school libraries and their collections were the main contributing factor to higher reading scores, and made up for some of the negative effects of poverty.

Kathy Goldenberg, New Jersey State Board of Education

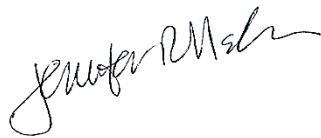
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Like you, I am interested in exploring all of the ways we can promote student achievement and success. In my experience, well-stocked and staffed school library media centers are one way, and have the added benefit of promoting social and emotional learning by being a safe space.

I would be more than happy to speak with you more in depth about school libraries and school library media specialists. Please don't hesitate to reach out. I wish you well through the holiday season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Nelson", written in a cursive style.

Jennifer R. Nelson

State Librarian

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