

I am Kathy Lester. I am a certified school librarian at East Middle School in Plymouth Canton Community Schools and the Advocacy Chairperson for the Michigan Association for Media in Education (MAME).

I would like to take this opportunity to outline the importance of effective school libraries staffed by certified school librarians in Michigan. Today's school libraries are dynamic centers of learning.

Currently, there are zero dollars allocated specifically to school libraries in Michigan.

Equity to access to school libraries staffed by certified school librarians for ALL students in Michigan is important because

as shown by multiple research studies -- the academic success of students corresponds with the presence of an effective school library led by a certified school librarian in each school.

School librarians are teachers who:

- Provide equitable access to diverse resources in their schools
- Increase student achievement with focus on reading achievement by supporting and teaching reading and inquiry learning
- Teach media literacy, research, and digital citizenship skills to prepare students for college and career
- Lead and support technology integration in their schools

Studies have shown that the presence of a certified school librarian is even more important to the achievement of students who are economically disadvantaged, black, Hispanic, or have disabilities. Thus, it is an important equity issue that all students have the same access to effective school libraries.

School libraries are an important part of the library ecosystem. Students that have access to a strong school library will be better prepared to use their college and public libraries and are more likely to be strong library supporters as adults.

Michigan is currently ranked 47th in our nation in supporting school libraries and is currently ranked 32nd in national 4th grade reading scores. In addition, the Michigan State University Third Grade Reading Law reports that there is a disparity across school districts in the availability of library resources. We can do better! Michigan's students deserve a quality education and that should include equitable access to a school library staffed by a certified school librarian.

The Michigan library community supports equitable access for all students in Michigan to school libraries staffed by certified school librarians. This issue is especially important right now because our students will need the resources, experiences, and opportunities provided by a certified school librarian as we move forward past COVID-19 and work to reverse any resulting learning loss.

Please support specific funding for school libraries and school librarians and support the school library bills.