



April 9, 2018

Mr. Russell Lazovick
Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District
836 Newmans Lane, Bridgewater, NJ 08807

Dear Mr. Lazovick,

On behalf of the membership of the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA), we are extremely concerned that the Bridgewater-Raritan School District is proposing the elimination of the School Media Specialist's position in the high school in its budget for the upcoming school year. It is our understanding that the district plans on implementing a k-12 media science curriculum for the next school year. We strongly support such an effort. However, we do not know how this can be successfully achieved if the school media specialist's position at the high school level is eliminated.

Through their educational training, school library media specialists receive graduate level training in literature, research, and technology skills essential in a twenty-first century learning environment. No other faculty member is uniquely qualified to ensure that a student has the literacy background and research skills to succeed in the increasingly competitive global educational environment that all students must face.

A school media specialist is especially critical at the high school level. Information literacy skills taught by school library media specialists, provide students with a critical foundation for future academic success particularly in college.

In a statement about the value and importance of highly effective school library programs, the NJ academic librarian community expresses its frustration that many students from NJ high schools are coming into their libraries not prepared for the demands of academic study: "We see that many college freshmen are poorly prepared to conduct college-level research, requiring professors and librarians to spend more time than they should on basic skills. We live with this cause and effect, frustrated in knowing that many of these students could hit the college ground running with proper training beforehand. All educations comprise a continuum of intervention necessary to help students gain essential career skills. School media specialists have a well-regarded place on this continuum."

The New Jersey Library Association membership is comprised primarily of public and academic librarians who understand the critical role that a school library media specialist plays in the educational development of a student. They see the results every day; students who have had a strong foundation in their school library come into the public and academic libraries fully prepared. However, those who come from schools where school library media specialist positions have been eliminated are left struggling and unable to handle complex research assignments.

I am including a link to a website <http://unlockstudentpotential.org/> and an article about the need for school librarians and strong school library programs here: <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/strong-school-library-programs/>. These can provide you with further information on the importance of this position for your students.

We strongly urge you to continue to fund this school library media position. The elimination of a school media specialist can have a significant impact on a student's future academic career.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Tumulty

Patricia A. Tumulty, Executive Director