

ALA American Library Association

October 24, 2022

Melissa R. Friez, Ed.D., Superintendent
Board of School Directors
North Allegheny School District
200 Hillvue Lane
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Dear Superintendent Friez, President McClure, Vice President Blackburn, and School Directors:

North Allegheny School District is rightfully proud of its designation as a high performing district offering a well-rounded education to Pennsylvania students. Your strategic plan articulates a commitment to continued excellence; and, so, we were alarmed to learn that the district is veering from that promise and proposes to cut staffing for school library programs. We urge you to maintain appropriate library staffing,¹ including library assistants, at all North Allegheny schools.

North Allegheny school libraries are the hearts of their learning communities. School librarians collaborate with their grade level and content area colleagues both in and beyond the library to develop a continuum of literacies and nurture a school-wide culture of inquiry, in accordance with *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*.² Cuts to library assistants will have a detrimental impact on student learning as librarians are forced to reduce their instructional time and juggle standards-focused work with clerical responsibilities. Cuts will also reduce student and faculty access to print and digital resources, advisory services, enrichment programs, and professional development.

Studies from across the country show that appropriately staffed libraries have a positive impact on student achievement.³ Appropriately staffed libraries are also integral to North Allegheny's strategic goals of increased collaboration, personalized instruction, integrated support services, and an environment that cultivates teaching and learning—as well as to every component of the strategic plan.

School library assistants are the invisible heroes of effective school library programs. They know every student and staff member in their buildings, and they support the administrative, instructional, and extra-curricular activities of school libraries while maintaining physical space that is open and accessible

¹ http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/positionstatements/AASL_Position%20Statement_Appropriate%20Staffing_2016-06-25.pdf

² <https://standards.aasl.org/>

³ <https://www.kappanonline.org/lance-kachel-school-librarians-matter-years-research/>

to all. North Allegheny Schools are a model for what works in school libraries. We urge you to maintain library assistants at all schools so that your district continues to be a compass pointing towards excellence, with the staffing required to achieve the district's goals and advance students towards their full potential.

Sincerely,



Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada, President
American Library Association



Katherine M. Lester, President
American Association of School Librarians

cc: Aimee Emerson, President, Pennsylvania School Librarians Association
Jen Knisely, President Pennsylvania Library Association