

SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA TOGETHER

**Planning Guidelines for the Continuation of School
Library Support in Maryland's Recovery Plan for an
Education Path Forward**

**A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN THE
MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION AND LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM
LEADERS**



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Executive Summary.

Supporting and maintaining school library programs ensures that local school systems can continue to provide stakeholder access to resources in order to prepare students for college, career, and life. Library Media Specialists (School Librarians) forge and maintain connections between schools and homes through access to materials whether in person or in remote settings. As leaders, they must continue to collaborate with staff and students to create information literate, informed and empowered digital citizens, and foster critical thinking. School Librarians are essential educators who positively impact students, staff, families and the school community.

Library Media Specialists are Teachers and Instructional Partners

As an educator and a collaborator, school librarians teach students to efficiently, effectively, and ethically access and utilize print and digital resources for lifelong learning in multiple literacies. This instruction and collaboration must continue in all Maryland schools regardless of the learning environment.

Library Media Specialists are Information Specialists

School librarians enrich the learning environment by expertly vetting and integrating approved innovative digital tools and sharing award-winning books through diverse collections. In addition, school librarians provide guidance on emergent issues including accessibility, privacy, digital ethics, and copyright. They are leaders in the creation of engaging lessons, leveraging their expertise to support staff and student success.

Library Media Programs Provide Unique Learning Environments

The library program fosters a safe, inviting, and inclusive community learning environment that promotes a culture of belonging. School librarians build virtual and physical spaces that enable students to access materials in multiple formats to meet diverse instructional and personal needs. School libraries are dynamic learning environments that should remain functional in order to allow students to access the collection.

Library Media Programs Support Literacy and Student Achievement

A substantial body of research⁽¹⁾ finds that reading, writing, and graduation rates improve where schools employ certified school librarians. The benefits associated with effective school library programs are strongest for the most vulnerable and at-risk student groups.

Library Media Programs Foster Equity and Connections

School librarians maintain diverse collections by selecting literature that enables students to develop knowledge, share experiences and cultivate empathy. They guide students to consider multiple perspectives on global issues, historical injustices, and underrepresented voices. School libraries offer spaces and resources that encourage a sense of belonging and support social and emotional learning. This is where students not only encounter a variety of voices, but also where they learn to use and share their own voice as both consumers and creators of content.

A collaborative project between The Maryland State Department of Education and Local School System Leaders

(1) [Why school librarians matter: What years of research tell us.](#)

Introduction

The sudden and complete closure of school buildings due to the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the way that learners and educators access education in Maryland. This document was created to provide guidance and technical assistance to decision makers in Local School Systems (LSS) who are moving to reopen schools. School librarians and library programs ensure equitable access to and technical support for the resources that are foundational to the acquisition of information, digital, and reading literacy. Learners and educators benefit from the contributions from school library programs in support of a culturally relevant and well-rounded education.

This document was written with three return-to-school scenarios in mind:

1. Schools are closed and remote teaching continues.
2. Schools are open but operating on a hybrid (at-home and in-school) model that allows for staggered, partial, or adapted schedules.
3. Schools are open but with protocols in place.

Regardless of the instructional delivery, utilization of school librarians and the school library program to support learners, educators, and the school community is vital to student success.

Library Media Specialists and Remote Teaching

School libraries and certified school librarians are essential to provide every learner a rich learning experience. Research¹ has shown that the presence of a certified school librarian in a well-supported school library program has positive effects on academic and reading achievement, helps to alleviate resource inequalities, and creates positive relationships to satisfy the social and emotional health of learners and educators.

School librarians have shown expertise and training in the following areas:

Library Media Specialists are Teachers and Instructional Partners who:

Collaborate and/or co-teach with educators to plan and implement instructional lessons and units that integrate inquiry, information literacy, technology skills, and resources with content curriculum.

Provide teachers with digital resources related to specific units and proactively reach out to educators to support their instruction, including collaboration with colleagues using web conferencing tools.

Participate virtually in grade level content planning meetings and local school system curriculum development.

Help structure student assignments for deeper thinking and research.

¹ [Why school librarians matter: What years of research tell us.](#)

Suggested activities include, but are not limited to:

- Collaborating with content area teachers through virtual meetings and shared documents to create lesson plans.
- Developing tutorials on how to access digital resources and databases that will aid content areas and post in a shared area of an electronic platform.
- Creating screencasts for teachers demonstrating how to set up a Flipgrid assignment and for students to understand how to use Flipgrid.
- Curating/Creating digital resources addressing netiquette, online safety, and online learning platform navigation that can be accessed by educators through the local school system electronic platform.
- Requesting to be added to team, content, and grade group virtual meetings to support student learning.
- Hosting virtual meetings for teachers who plan to teach units addressing sensitive topics.
- Providing guiding questions and supporting resources such as database articles that align with student learning outcomes.
- Planning and delivering synchronous and asynchronous professional learning opportunities that support instructional needs.

Library Media Specialists are Information Specialists who:

Develop and provide professional learning opportunities for educators to understand the depth and breadth of digital resources owned by the library and how to most effectively use them.

Locate, evaluate and integrate innovative technologies and digital resources in multiple formats to target diverse student needs.

Act as the school's resource on privacy, intellectual property, and best practices for data and identity management.

Create online opportunities for students to use library resources for research, individual exploration, independent reading, and personal inquiry.

Suggested activities include, but are not limited to:

- Utilizing local school system approved programs/applications, such as Destiny Collections, Wakelets, or QR codes, to share available student resources.
- Advertising through classroom teachers and post on the school website an electronic sign-up calendar for scheduling and hosting virtual drop-in sessions (office hours) for students to meet with the school librarian.
- Developing, offering, recording, and posting a series of virtual informational sessions on different topics (ex. Flipgrid, Pear Deck, MackinVIA) to include time for questions.
- Publicly posting a database for stakeholders regarding individual publisher guidelines for reading books online.
- Curating/Creating digital resources addressing netiquette, online safety, and online learning platform navigation that can be accessed by stakeholders through the local school system electronic platform.

Library Media Programs Provide Unique Learning Environments that:

Create and maintain a virtual library presence that ensures equitable access to tools and resources for the entire school community, including technical support for accessing and using hardware and software.

Leverage system-wide online platforms to communicate regularly with staff, students, and families regarding access to library resources, and to deliver digital and information literacy instruction.

Develop a scheduling policy and virtual office hours that facilitates open and flexible access to the library media specialist during the scheduled school day.

Develop programming in various forms (e.g., social media, email, digital newsletters, website, etc.), integrating resources from public, academic, and special library partners.

Suggested activities include, but are not limited to:

- Creating and posting on the school's Intranet or assigned portion of the LSS learning platform an electronic calendar for teachers to schedule media time or additional media time for themselves and/or their students.
- Posting important information and links that provide access to digital resources on school websites or utilize other applications such as Destiny Discover.
- Creating short videos that address how-tos and troubleshooting techniques for various hardware and software to post on the school platform for community access.
- Distributing an electronic media newsletter to school staff outlining office hours and available services to support remote teaching and learning.
- Using social media to advertise featured book talks and include reminders related to accessing eContent.
- Designing a collaborative area in the LMS or school platform for digital and information literacy that all educators can access.

Library Media Programs Support Literacy and Student Achievement that:

Ensure that age appropriate digital citizenship, inquiry and information literacy lessons and resources are available to students to integrate with content area lessons.

Promote independent reading for all students as part of the school's program and curate e-resources for support.

Develop and implement reading initiatives with videos, eBooks, virtual assignments, and collaborative tools to motivate and engage each student in independent reading.

Host online library sessions and book studies that align with curriculum.

Suggested activities include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting synchronous digital citizenship lessons for students and ensure that teachers integrate digital citizenship lessons into instruction.
- Producing short videos for students that demonstrate how to develop and maintain safe digital footprints.

- Using Google Meet to schedule, host, record, and post online library sessions (to include author visits, maker labs, and interactive library programs) and book studies that align with curriculum that include virtual assignments.
- Creating and continually updating online book displays using online curation tools, such as Destiny, Goodreads, Beanstack, etc.
- Providing short introductions to several books from which students can choose and initiate book discussion or book study groups for students. Conducting the introductions and follow-up discussion sessions using web conferencing software.

Library Media Programs Foster Equity and Connections that:

Promote information equity by curating culturally responsive print and non-print resources and digital tools that address multiple literacies and diverse perspectives to inspire inquiry and creativity.

Ensure the continuity of positive relationships between every learner in the school and the School Library Media Specialist, through activities such as office hours, virtual lunch meetings or book clubs, in order to provide a sense of safety and security.

Ensure resources reflect student groups and the school community so that all feel seen, heard and appreciated.

Provide materials for bibliotherapy and trauma-informed instruction that encourage personal growth.

Suggested activities include, but are not limited to:

- Creating Destiny Collections or suggested reading lists highlighting books on key topics such as coping with depression.
- Creating and posting on the school website a LibGuide with titles that are reflective of student groups to promote multicultural resources.
- Making arrangements to ensure that all students have the opportunity to obtain e-library cards from the public library.
- Collaborating with public libraries to share with stakeholders virtual social/emotional/mental health training opportunities.

Continuity of learning for library lessons

Regardless of the learning environment, it is critical that the lessons Library Media Specialists conduct continue for all students at school. These lessons ensure that students are able to effectively navigate the library's digital resources, locate and evaluate high quality online information sources, and ethically and responsibly contribute to digital products.

Guidance for reopening procedures

In the event a decision is made to move to a hybrid or full return to school model, considerations need to be made for the safe reopening and use of the school library. These recommendations are based on the *Handling Materials During Covid-19* guidelines published by the Maryland State Library Resource Center and include information from the Centers for Disease Control, the American Library Association, the Institute for Museum and Library Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency, among others.

Considerations for COVID face-to-face instruction

Library Media Specialists should continue to provide collaborative instructional lessons that align with Maryland School Library Media Standards and specific content standards. The development and implementation of reading incentives that motivate and engage students in independent reading should also be included.

Suggested protective measures include:

- Class visits to the library for a lesson should include students bringing their own materials/pencil boxes.
- Class visits to the library should be staggered to allow entering and leaving without social contact.
- Media staff should schedule time between class visits for sanitizing.
- Group size when visiting the library should comply with social distancing and room capacity guidelines.

General Library Safety Guidelines

Personal safety

- All library staff should wear masks/shields.
- All library staff should wear gloves when handling materials.
- All library staff should practice frequent handwashing.
- All library staff should continue to practice social distancing with coworkers.

Shared materials safety

- Students should be instructed to only touch books they want to borrow.
- Shelf markers should not be used.
- Materials that cannot be sanitized (stuffed animals or puppets) should be removed.
- Magazines and newspapers should not be displayed.
- Library staff should regularly disinfect frequently touched surfaces (desk tops, countertops, door handles) between classes and patrons.
- Aesthetic displays of books should be reduced or eliminated.
- A safety shield should be installed at the circulation desk.
- Hand sanitizer should be used by everyone upon entering the library.
- Shared materials (Maker Space items, VR goggles, headsets, etc) should be initially removed, but can be reintroduced after a plan for reintroduction is composed.
- Self-checkout stations should be suspended.
- Inter-library loans between schools should be suspended.
- Water fountain use should be suspended.
- Use of restrooms should be restricted.

Social distancing safety

- Signage promoting social distancing and hand washing should be prominently displayed.
- Visual cues should be used to assist learners with social distancing (markers on floor for queuing in line and sitting on the floor).
- Furniture should be rearranged to accommodate social distancing.
- Traffic flow must be planned to minimize social contact (entering/exiting, checkout, seating order).
- Student/class visits to the library should be staggered to allow entering and leaving without social contact and sanitizing between classes.
- The number of students permitted in the library at one time should be limited based on local guidance.
- Open library times should be cancelled (before and after school, open periods, lunchtimes).

Book checkout safety

- Browsing should be conducted online to limit touching of books.
- Students should be taught how to place holds through the online public access catalog.
- Three options are available for book checkout:
 - Curbside checkout (for the distance learning and hybrid model) - Library staff should pull holds for students, bag and label them and deliver them for pick up.
 - Concierge checkout (for the hybrid and face-to-face models) - Library staff should pull holds for students, bag and label them and deliver them to students in their classes. Alternatively, a cart of books can be brought to the classroom and students can individually check out books from the cart.
 - Library visits for checkout (for face-to-face model) - Small groups of students should visit the library in staggered intervals to select books. Students should be reminded to only touch books they want to borrow. After checkout students should sanitize their hands then line up in spots designated for social distancing.

Returned materials - Quarantine procedures

1. Establish a quarantine area for returned materials and ensure staff knows where it is located to avoid contact.
2. Put on gloves. Prepare a slip for the cart for incoming materials, noting the date and time. Add additional signage to the cart as needed so that staff do not accidentally handle the materials.
3. Retrieve materials from the book drop. Place items on the cart.
4. Avoid contact with door handles and other contact points after materials have been touched. Move the cart to the identified quarantine area.
5. Remove gloves and promptly wash hands.
6. After items have been on the cart for a minimum of 72 hours, check in the items using the circulation system and shelve them as normal.

Example of a Translation of Practice in a Remote Environment

<p style="text-align: center;">Planning and Preparation</p> <p>Collaborates with teachers in virtual meetings to plan and implement instructional lessons and units that integrate information literacy skills and resources with content curriculum.</p> <p>Documents collaboration with teachers.</p> <p>Participates in virtual school, department, and grade-level curriculum development.</p> <p>Provides teachers with digital resources related to specific units upon request and proactively reaches out to teachers to support their instruction.</p> <p>Facilitates collaboration among classroom teachers using web conferencing tools.</p> <p>Collaborates with other educators as appropriate.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Library Environment</p> <p>Curates digital resources in multiple formats to target diverse student needs.</p> <p>Creates online opportunities for students to use library resources for research, individual exploration, independent reading, and personal inquiry.</p> <p>Continually updates online book displays or using online curation tools.</p> <p>Organizes digital classrooms to replicate and share/deliver to classes.</p> <p>Develops a scheduling policy and virtual office hours that facilitates open and flexible access to the library media specialist during the scheduled school day.</p> <p>Promotes public library accounts in order to share student resources</p> <p>Promotes independent reading for all students as part of the school's program and e-resources to support it.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Teaching and Learning</p> <p>Shares responsibility with teachers for integrating inquiry, information literacy and technology skills into online school curriculum.</p> <p>Helps structure student assignments for deeper thinking and research with virtual office hours, email, and online response tools.</p> <p>Teaches collaboratively with classroom teachers whenever possible in a virtual environment.</p> <p>Develops and implements reading initiatives with videos, eBooks, virtual assignments, and collaborative tools to motivate and engage each student in independent reading.</p> <p>Ensures that all students have equitable opportunities to develop and practice information fluency through resources, assessments, print and virtual learning opportunities</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Professional Responsibilities</p> <p>Develops and adapts library policies for remote learning and procedures.</p> <p>Keeps online records and maintains documentation regarding all aspects of the library program.</p> <p>Attends online meetings and virtual conferences.</p> <p>Coordinates professional learning opportunities for classroom teachers on databases, library resources, technology tools in order to build a professional learning community.</p> <p>Provides copyright guidance.</p> <p>Effectively communicates the vision for the school library to the faculty, staff, families, and community.</p> <p>Communicates regularly with staff, students, and families regarding access to library resources including User IDs and passwords.</p> <p>Develops programming in various forms (e.g., social media, email, digital newsletters, website, etc.).</p>

Sources

[Handling Materials During Covid-19](#) by Maryland State Library Resource Center

[Road Back to Student Success Through Your School Librarian](#) from the New Jersey Association of School Librarians

[School Librarians at the Center of School Renewal and Transformation](#) by the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association

[School Librarian Role in Pandemic Learning Conditions](#) from the American Association of School Librarians

[Translation of Practice for School Librarians](#) by New York City Department of Education

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