



AISLE

Association of Illinois School
Library Educators

P.O. BOX 110, SENECA, IL 61360 • PHONE/FAX: 815-357-6023 • WWW.AISLED.ORG

July 2, 2020

Illinois State Board of Education
100 N. 1st St.
Springfield, IL 62777

Dear Illinois State Board of Education,

When the Association of Illinois School Library Educators learned that you were releasing guidelines for transitioning in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 school year, we were concerned that our organization was not contacted in order to collaborate on a document that would directly affect school library programs and instruction.

Among the list of stakeholders who were involved in creating the guidelines are classroom teachers, school nurses, social workers, and administrators; however, school librarians are glaringly absent. This omission is particularly striking in light of the sacrifices school librarians are asked to make by giving up library spaces and handling potentially hazardous materials. We have documented the tremendous work school librarians contributed during the remote learning phase, such as troubleshooting technology problems, running virtual book clubs, and collaborating with colleagues on virtual lessons and projects. School librarians know the value of flexibility and making adjustments to benefit the students.

But, what the guidelines require of school librarians is not entirely feasible; nor do they take into account the number of students who use the library space and take advantage of library materials. School libraries promote equity for all; removing access puts an already vulnerable population further at risk. Furthermore, asking school librarians to make this abrupt shift leaves them vulnerable to being cut from their positions when their library floor space seems to be more valuable than the very librarian who is specifically trained to serve the students, faculty, and staff.

AISLE asks that ISBE take into consideration our concerns about the released guidelines and include a school librarian on any task force that impacts library services. As a specialized learning space that provides services to the entire building, we would appreciate a seat at the table to determine a way that will allow us to re-open our libraries safely, both for our students and for library staff. Please contact AISLE leadership at any time to open a dialogue regarding school library programs in Illinois.

Sincerely,

Christy Semande
2020-2021 AISLE President
president@aisled.org

Anna Kim
2020-2021 AISLE Past-President
pastpres@aisled.org