

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (DCPS)



Public Hearing
on
Public Oversight Hearing on School Librarians in the District of Columbia Public Schools

Testimony of
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Good afternoon Chairman Mendelson, members of the Committee of the Whole, and staff. I am Dr. Amy Maisterra, Deputy Chancellor of Innovation and Systems Improvement at District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today.

DCPS librarians support our schools in providing a welcoming, inclusive, responsive, and open library where every student can access and utilize print, digital, and multimedia resources to inspire curiosity, innovation, problem-solving, and creativity. DCPS continues to make significant investments in school library programs, including technology applications and online learning tools.

DCPS currently employs 106 librarians and is working to actively recruit and onboard ten new hires so all schools all have a full-time librarian this school year. Schools currently without a librarian are supported by central office; we provide guidance on available resources, process the annual book order, and ensure access to library systems and applications for all students.

Additionally, since School Year 2021-2022, DCPS students have had access to BrainPOP, a digital learning resource of interactive video sessions aligned to curricular content. We also have over 80,000 dedicated high-quality digital eBooks in addition to our partnership with DC Public Library for students to access a vast collection of books and reference materials seamlessly through their DC One Card. We recognize that effective school library programs are fundamental to teaching and learning and are important for making learning engaging and relevant for all students.

Funding for a full-time or part-time school librarian position at DCPS has been allocated to all schools each year based on enrollment, with some flexibility. For school year 2022-2023, DCPS will allocate a full-time librarian at all DCPS schools and there will not be flexibility in reallocating these funds to other positions.

As we think holistically about our approach to literacy, librarians are playing a key role in the DCPS acceleration strategy through a multi-faceted approach. I'd like to share a few examples of their work.

- 1. Engaging reluctant readers:** Librarians proactively engage individual students to help them make personal connections to books in the library. For example, librarian Matthew Hoffman of Ida B. Wells Middle School creates a customized reading plan for each of his students to increase engagement and learn about each student's interests, potential, and opportunities. Tim Gordan, librarian at Payne Elementary School, strives to help students find great social-emotional learning books and supports struggling readers.
- 2. Cultivating a strong school-wide culture of reading:** School librarians take a leadership role in their schools to develop an environment where reading is valued, promoted, and actively encouraged. As we recover from the pandemic, librarians support learning acceleration for students who have been identified as needing extra reading support. For example, Eboni Henry, librarian at Truesdell Education Campus, recently hosted a "Sight Word Bingo" with students to support increased vocabulary awareness. Librarians throughout the District host book clubs, author visits, and celebrate active engagement in the [DC 3 Star Book Program](#) and the [DC Battle of the Books Competition](#),
- 3. Developing positive relationships and supporting social-emotional learning.** School librarians support their school communities, specifically around social-emotional learning.

For example, Rachel Leese, the librarian at Lafayette Elementary School recently collaborated with the reading specialists at her school to launch a new reading buddy program that helps students develop relationship skills through friendly and supportive collaborative reading. DCPS librarians help students find texts where they can read about characters processing life challenges, be it grief or a life transition. In this way, librarians can connect students to safe spaces and help them navigate difficult situations through books.

- 4. Developing students' digital fluency and information skills:** School librarians support technology and use of digital information to promote student engagement and learning. For example, Edgardo Guerrero, librarian at Brookland Middle School, brings technology to students during lunchtime to enable students to see mobile technology in action and gain access to books.

We will continue to build upon these best practices and increase internal supports to maximize the impact of library programs. We are appreciative of the hard work and creative collaboration of our school librarians in supporting the success of their students.

I'm happy to take any questions you have at this time.