



Testimony to the New Jersey State Board of Education

On N.J.A.C. 6A:9

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the proposed amendments to N.J.A.C. 6A:9, Professional Licensure and Standards. These regulations govern the preparation, licensure, and professional development of educators including School Library Media Specialists (SLMS). The proposed amendments address the recommendations advanced by Governor Christie’s Education Transformation Task Force (ETT) whose charge was to conduct a comprehensive review of all education-related statutes and regulations “to determine the extent to which they increase the quality of instruction for students, improve academic achievement of students, improve teaching effectiveness within schools or improve the safety and well-being of students . . . or are overly prescriptive.”

N.J.A.C.6A:9-13.14 School Library Media Specialist

NJASL supports the amendments proposed to the requirements for School Library Media Specialists and recommends adding the words underlined in the authorization for SLMS as follows:

13.14(a) *The school library media specialist (SLMS) endorsement is required for any person who serves as a school library media specialist in grades preschool through 12. The functions include delivery of instruction in information literacy skills, and the development and coordination of school library media*

*programs and resources. The functions also include the delivery of instruction in the evaluation, selection, organization, distribution, creation and utilization of school library media **including computers and other digital tools**. Media are defined as all print, non-print and electronic resources including the technologies needed for their use.*

School library media specialists are among the most important technological leaders in schools, and are uniquely educated to instruct students and school staff in the use of technology for information access, analysis, organization, knowledge creation, and communication. The regulations require candidates for certification as a SLMS to complete graduate studies in the “Integration of educational resources and technology throughout the school curriculum.” Also, professional development opportunities for SLMS explore the latest technologies and their application in an educational setting and strategies for educating students on how to access high-quality information using the latest technology and digital tools.

SLMS can demonstrate the knowledge and understanding of current and emerging technologies which places them on the cutting edge of their use in the school library media program and in classrooms. We work with classroom teachers to integrate technologies and digital tools into the curriculum; teach students to use technology and digital media strategically and capably; and we are keenly aware of the legal and ethical issues surrounding the use of technologies and digital tools; most importantly, we teach students to exhibit these behaviors when using technology. I’d like to share an example of how I work with teachers on lessons designed to teach students to use technology and digital media.

Recently, a math teacher at my school came to me because she wanted her students to research mathematicians and write a research paper about the person. I was extremely excited about this prospect because I don’t usually work with math teachers on research assignments. As our conversation about the project continued, I expressed that I have seen an overwhelming number of students use Google to copy and paste information, that many times is not accurate information. I also want students to develop the skills and dispositions to become successful in the 21st century. Therefore, in many cases, and in this case, I have tried to steer teachers towards innovative research assignments.

I suggested to the teacher that we ask students to develop a resume on a mathematician. As the assignment began, students used the Media Center's databases, which are digitized newspaper, magazine, and book resources, to research the mathematician. After researching the mathematician and taking notes, students used Microsoft Word to create a resume and cover letter for the mathematician. Then, students searched the newspaper and online want ads for appropriate jobs for the mathematician. With this project, students learned to ethically and effectively use digital resources and also learned how to write a resume and cover letter.

About a month after the project ended, a student came running into the library with a huge smile on his face. He let me know he had applied and found a job using the job search, resume and cover letter writing skills he learned in his math class. What a delight!

In this example, you can see that the school library media center and the certified school library media specialist teach the school's community how to find, access, and use information. We help our students develop their problem solving skills and prepare them for their future careers.

N.J.A.C.6A:9-13.15 Associate School Library Media Specialist

NJASL recommends that the requirements for this endorsement be allowed to sunset with a window of time provided for individuals enrolled in programs to complete the requirements for this endorsement. This change is supported by research and reflects current best practices for the training of professional librarians.

Library media specialist is the only certificate with a dual level, namely a Master's degree level School Library Media Specialist, and the BA plus 18 graduate credits Associate School Library Media Specialist (ASLMS). In school districts, there is a lack of understanding of the difference in duties for SLMS and ASLMS. Phasing out this redundant endorsement will eliminate that confusion and provide clarity for districts. Also, when established, ASLMS were to serve under the supervision of a SLMS

while the ASLMS worked to complete a Master's level program for certification as a SLMS. This distinction is meaningless now because all faculty members are supervised by a school administrator.

The ASLMS was initially established under the title of Teacher Librarian to assist school districts to fill positions because Master's level SLMS were in short supply which is no longer true. In practice, the ASLMS was viewed as a temporary certificate to allow a few years for the holder to complete the remaining requirements for SLMS. Paragraph (j) in the requirements for SLMS states "An emergency certificate may be issued to a candidate who has a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university and has completed a minimum of 12 graduate-level semester-hour credits in school library media." This section provides a process for a local board of education to apply for an emergency certificate if it can demonstrate its inability to locate a suitable certified SLMS candidate due to unforeseen shortages or other extenuating circumstances.

The American Library Association (ALA) sets a Master's Degree as the entry level degree for a professional librarian. In addition, a recent study of New Jersey's school libraries conducted by the Center for International Scholarship in School Librarianship at Rutgers University offers this recommendation "Given the importance of the instructional role of the school librarian, we recommend school librarians strive to meet the state Department of Education's master's level School Library Media Specialist certification requirements, enabling them to undertake a stronger instructional role in the school." Todd, R., C. Gordon, & Y. Lu. (2011). *One Common Goal: Student Learning. Report of Findings and Recommendations of the New Jersey School Library Survey Phase 2.* New Brunswick, Rutgers University. p.174.) Finally, several NJ Colleges and Universities have closed their ASLMS preparation programs.

In conclusion, NJASL believes it is time to let the ASLMS endorsement sunset with the understanding that holders of the ASLMS endorsement may continue to serve in the service areas in which the teaching staff member was authorized to serve under the former rules per N.J.A.C.6A:9-13.1(c).

NJASL continues to support the current list of K -12 representatives mandated in statute but proposed for elimination in the code you are reviewing. We ask that you vote to retain N.J.A.C.6A:9-4(a) in the regulations because it maintains diversity across the three areas of certification in the regulations – Instructional, Educational Services, and Administrative. Broad representation by practitioners within each of the three types of certificates brings an extensive knowledge base and valuable expertise to the Board. We believe that the current representation on the Board of Examiners is effective and responsive to the needs of the education community.

The ETT also recommended, “...that the Legislature amend the law to provide greater flexibility in the higher education appointments beyond just ‘two presidents of state colleges.’ Presidents, deans, and senior administrators of both state and non-public colleges and universities should be eligible to serve on the State Board of Examiners. With presidents of State colleges facing increased burdens on their time, the State has struggled to find suitable candidates to fill the two positions...”

NJASL can agree with a legislative change to provide flexibility for representation from state institutions of higher education. However, the institutions represented must be accredited by the State of New Jersey and offer approved educator preparation programs. Once the legislature acts to allow for flexibility for representation from institutions of higher education, the regulations can be amended.

On behalf of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians, I appreciate the opportunity to present this testimony. If you would like to discuss our recommendations, please contact me.

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