



March 16, 2017

Dear Leadership of Putnam County Schools,

Greetings from the Florida Association for Media in Education (FAME). My name is Elizabeth Zdrodowski and I am the President of FAME. FAME is the state professional organization for library media specialists in the state of Florida. We provide support, professional development, and an annual conference for our members, who are making a substantial difference in Florida schools by doing amazing things in their library media centers.

A few days ago, I was contacted by some of my membership regarding your decision to eliminate library media specialists in Putnam County Schools. This is extremely concerning to our organization because we know, through personal experience and research, how important libraries are to our students, schools, and communities, and the profound effect healthy library programs can have on student achievement.

The role of a library media specialist has changed dramatically over the years and it has required us to not only continue as the literacy leaders on our campuses, but transform our libraries into the hubs of our schools with technology, collaboration, project-based learning, digital citizenship lessons, making, gaming, school-wide events, and professional development. And yet, in spite of these diverse demands, most of us are still the catalyst on each of our campuses who work tirelessly to create a lifelong love of reading in our students!

Librarians in the state of Florida whom I have encountered at our annual FAME conference, at national conferences, and whom I follow on social media are doing amazing things for our students. It would be a devastating loss to the students of your county to lose the opportunity to have healthy libraries staffed with certified instructional librarians. Clerks and volunteers play an important role in our libraries but are not qualified to provide instruction, make collection development decisions, or provide professional development to your faculty and staff.

According to the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), there are over 12 billion Google searches per month. Every school needs a qualified educator who can help students and teachers navigate the digital world to determine what is credible, useful, and appropriate for academic purposes. Additionally, libraries provide safe havens for students on our campuses and are an important part of the school community. AASL states, "School libraries provide equitable physical and intellectual access to the resources and tools required for learning in a warm, stimulating, and safe environment." I have personally seen the effect our school library has had on my students and many continue to visit long after graduation to thank me for the way our library program contributed to their education and overall wellbeing.

The recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) specifically mentions “school librarians” as specialized instructional support personnel and provides opportunities for revenue to enhance school library services, programs, and resources. If you want more information about ESSA and school libraries, please read the letter written by my predecessor, Lucretia Miller, which is posted on our website: http://www.floridamediaed.org/uploads/6/1/4/2/61420659/fame_essa_letter.pdf

It is the goal of our organization to see Putnam County Schools fund and appropriately staff library programs in all of its schools for FY18 and we will support the librarians, teachers, students, and parents in any way possible to help make that goal a reality. If you would like to speak with me personally, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Zdrodowski".

Elizabeth Zdrodowski, MA Ed.
FAME President
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