

Good evening. My name is Jeanette Marin and I am the school library media specialist at Candlewood Elementary School. I am speaking to you tonight on behalf of the Montgomery County Educational Media Specialist Association, and on behalf of our students.

As media specialists, we collaborate with our colleagues to teach students the research process: how to access information and evaluate resources, how to use the creative work of others ethically in their own inquiry projects, and how to use a variety of multimedia formats to present their findings. We encourage students to read by building a collection with enticing choices that we recommend to our students, and we offer a safe space with multiple tangible and human resources, supporting students and staff throughout the school day.

Tragically, the economic challenges of recent years have forced MCPS to make difficult choices about cuts to the operating budget. While there are no kind cuts when resources are so strained, the seemingly minor reductions to School Library Media Programs have a major impact on teaching and learning. Staffing cuts and cuts to the resource budget for the media center programs mean reduced hours of operation, limiting independent access to resources which are an important means of serving students equitably. Reduced resource budgets mean having to choose between purchasing books and online resources to support a rigorous curriculum and purchasing free choice reading selections that engage students and keep them reading.

The students at our schools know the value of the media center program and what they learn as a result of media center instruction. When asked why it is important to have a media specialist at his school, one 4th grader said, “[The media specialist] teaches us how to find, read and analyze books in the library.” Another 4th grader said “I think it is important for [the media specialist] to teach me because what she is teaching I might need [...] later on in my life.” A high school student talks about the media center at her school: “It offers a plethora of informative books, databases and other resources. With the assistance of these websites and the librarians, I can gain better researching skills, which helps me with the topic I’m learning about and any future projects I may do.”

In the words of one middle school student, “If library budgets are cut, it will severely hurt the learning environment and students’ will to learn.” On behalf of our students, I urge you to restore the funding cut in recent years so that they will have access to the resources they need to become successful and savvy users of information, giving them the skills they need to thrive in the 21st century. Thank you.

Works Cited

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