



9 May 2023

School Libraries Link Students to Literacies: What We Know Now

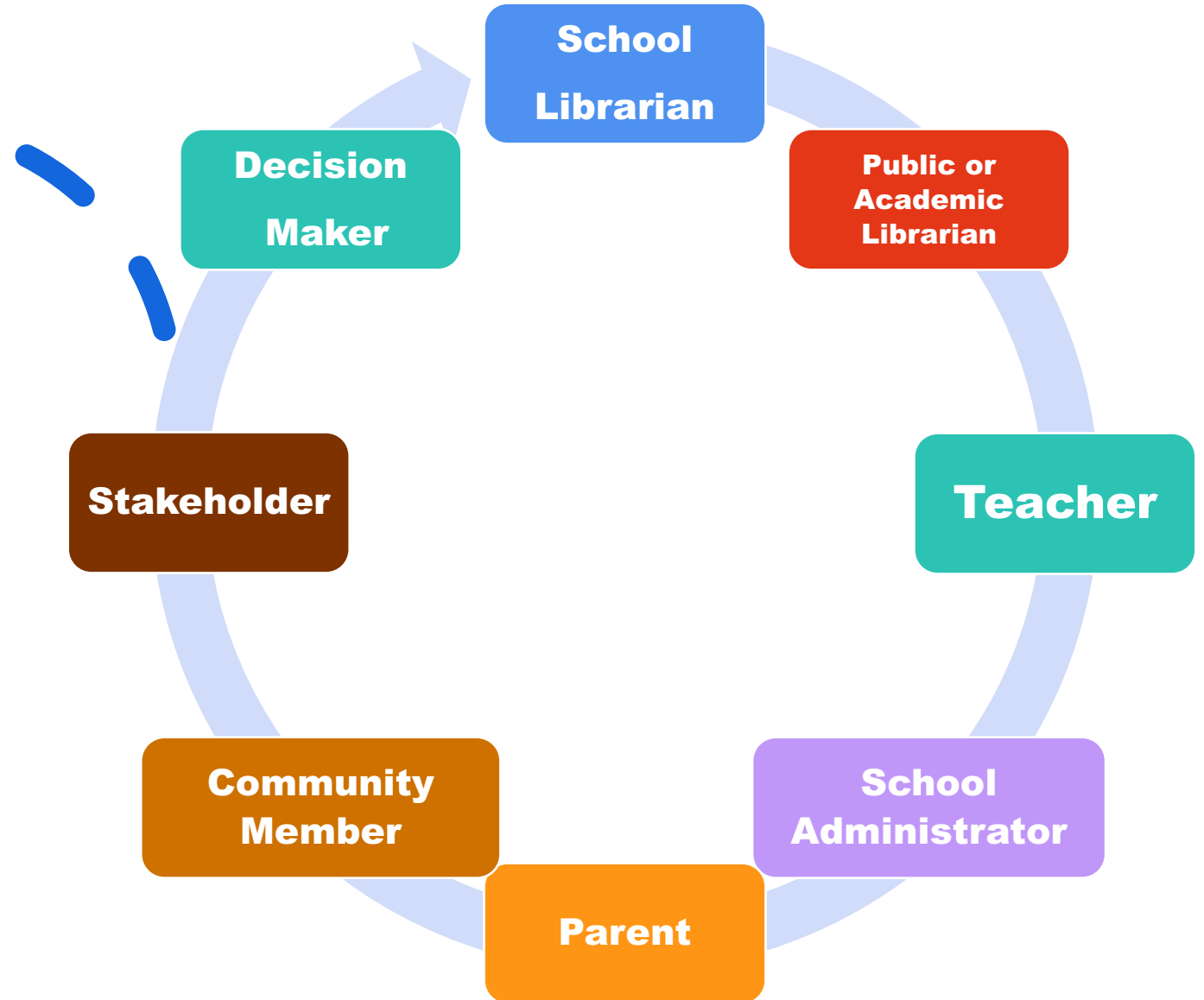
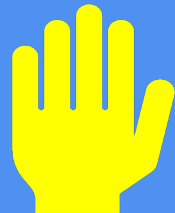
**Mary K. Biagini, PhD
University of Pittsburgh**

**Indiana Libraries and Literacies
Symposium**

Who are we?

Can we do a 27-second share?

Show of hands



I come
as
a
messenger

- How do school librarians help students learn and build their literacies? **Results from past state studies**
- What do we know now about school libraries and school librarians? **SLIDE Study**
- What can we do to strengthen school libraries and assure that all students learn and become productive citizens? **It's up to us**

SLIDE: The School Librarian Investigation-- Decline or Evolution?



Deb Kachel
SLIDE Project
Director



Keith Curry Lance
SLIDE Principal
Investigator

SLIDE Overview

▪ Funding


- **Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grant program: Research in Service to Practice project**

▪ Purposes

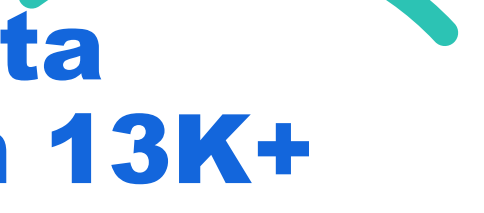
- **Examine national, state, and local district data to assess inequities in access to librarians by K–12 students in public schools**
- **Learn how and why school decision-makers chose staffing patterns to deliver library, information services, and instructional technology to their schools**

▪ How

- **Analyzed NCES school librarian employment data at national, state, and district levels**
- **Analyzed state surveys providing context for school librarian employment**
- **Interviewed school decision-makers and examined job descriptions--both indicating the shifting or blending of roles and duties of school librarians**



**Source
of data
analyzed
for SLIDE**



**SLIDE uses data
collected from 13K+
local districts included
in the Common Core of
Data (CCD) Project of
the National Center for
Education Statistics
(NCES)**

<https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/>



**School
Libraries
&
Librarians
&
Literacies**

- **How did we get to now?**
- **What's the status of school libraries nationally?**
- **What's the status of Indiana school libraries?**
- **How can we shape a positive future for school libraries and for our students?**



First— what is a school library?

- **Center of the school community**
- **Safe place for students**
- **Where students and faculty learn and achieve**
- **Collaboration space for critical inquiry using reliable sources for learning and for life**
- **Critical location for developing lifelong learners and readers**



What do school librarians do?

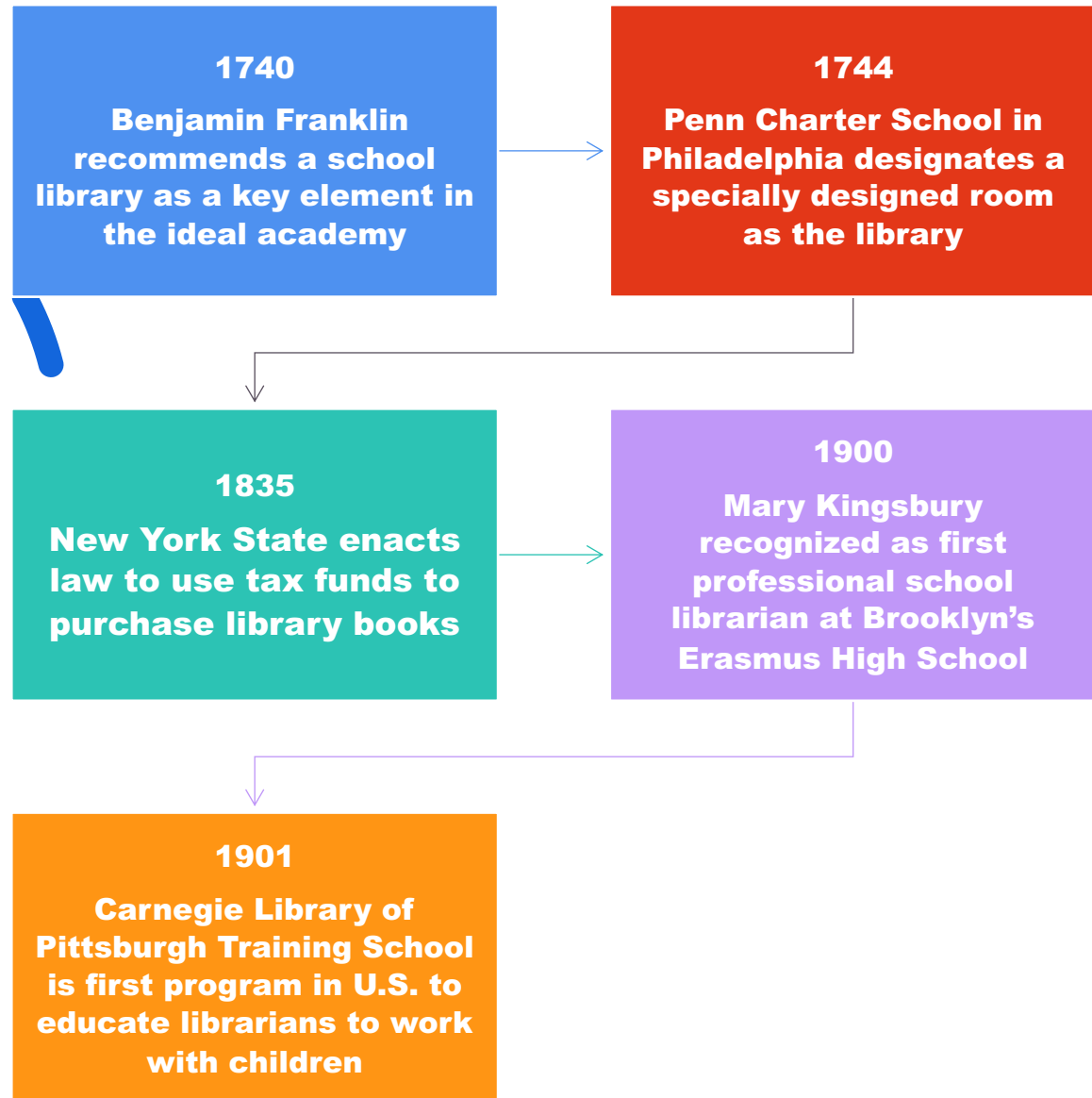
- **Provide equitable access for all students to pursue academic and personal interests**
- **Select and provide access to current, trustworthy, diverse resources**
- **Collaborate with teachers to teach and assess information literacy competencies across the curriculum**
- **Teach and model digital citizenship and media and computing literacy skills**
- **Foster a love of reading**
- **Create a welcoming, inclusive hub of learning for students and teachers**
- **Offer teachers professional development**



Our Context

**To understand today
we need to
understand
how we got here**

School Libraries are not a new concept-- Ben Franklin realized their importance!





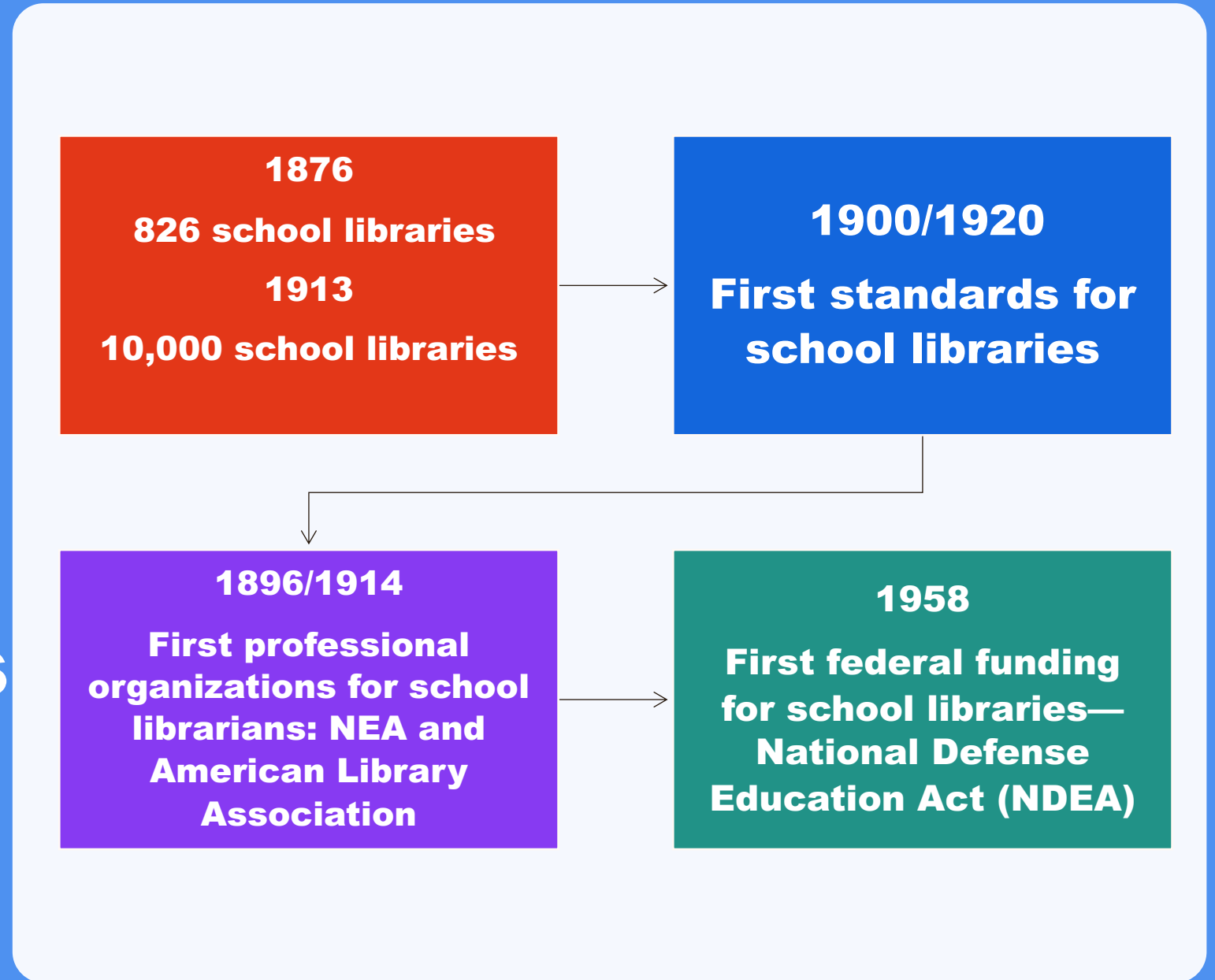
Mary Kingsbury, First professionally-trained school librarian--1900

Rise of school libraries:

Standards

Professional organizations

Federal funding





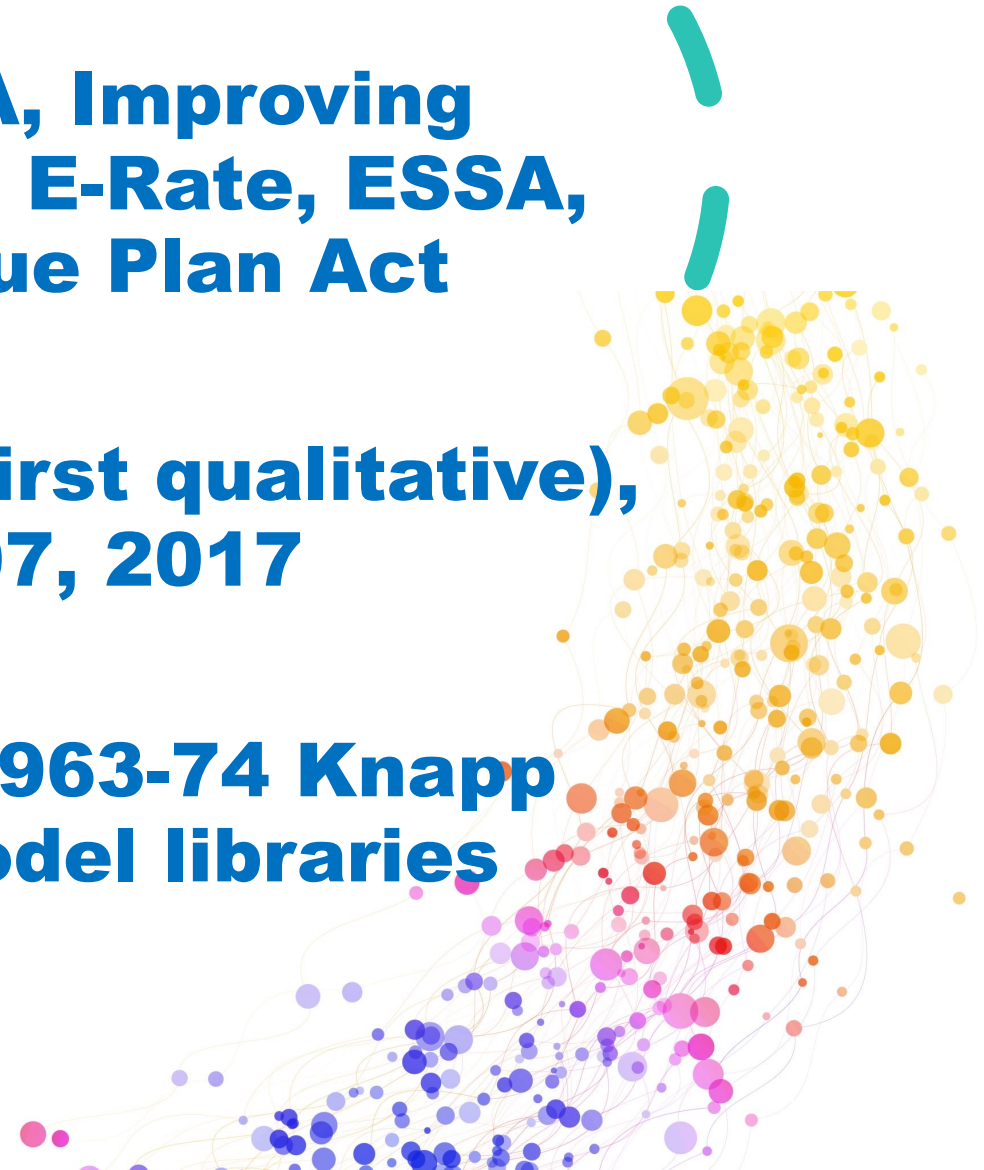
AASL Standards Framework for Learners

SHARED FOUNDATIONS AND KEY COMMITMENTS						
DOMAINS AND COMPETENCIES	I. INQUIRE	II. INCLUDE	III. COLLABORATE	IV. CURATE	V. EXPLORE	VI. ENGAGE
A. THINK	<p>Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.</p> <p>Learners display curiosity and initiative by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Formulating questions about a personal interest or a curricular topic. Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new learning. 	<p>Demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the learning community.</p> <p>Learners contribute a balanced perspective when participating in a learning community by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Articulating an awareness of the contributions of a range of learners. Adopting a discerning stance toward points of view and opinions expressed in information resources and learning products. Describing their understanding of cultural relevancy and placement within the global learning community. 	<p>Work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals.</p> <p>Learners identify collaborative opportunities by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrating their desire to broaden and deepen understandings. Developing new understandings through engagement in a learning group. Deciding to solve problems informed by group interaction. 	<p>Make meaning for oneself and others by collecting, organizing, and sharing resources of personal relevance.</p> <p>Learners act on an information need by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Determining the need to gather information. Identifying possible sources of information. Making critical choices about information sources to use. 	<p>Discover and innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection.</p> <p>Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reading widely and deeply in multiple formats and eras and create for a variety of purposes. Reflecting and questioning assumptions and possible misconceptions. Engaging in inquiry-based processes for personal growth. 	<p>Demonstrate safe, legal, and ethical creating and sharing of knowledge products independently while engaging in a community of practice and an interconnected world.</p> <p>Learners follow ethical and legal guidelines for gathering and using information by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibly applying information, technology, and media to learning. Understanding the ethical use of information, technology, and media. Evaluating information for accuracy, validity, social and cultural context, and appropriateness for use.
B. CREATE	<p>Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Using evidence to investigate questions. Devising and implementing a plan to fill knowledge gaps. Generating products that illustrate learning. 	<p>Learners adjust their awareness of the global learning community by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Interacting with learners who reflect a range of perspectives. Evaluating a variety of perspectives during learning activities. Representing diverse perspectives during learning activities. 	<p>Learners work productively with others to solve problems by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Solving and responding to feedback from others. Involving diverse perspectives in their own inquiry processes. 	<p>Learners exchange information resources within and beyond their learning community by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing and evaluating collaboratively constructed information sites. Contributing to collaboratively constructed information sites by ethically using and reproducing others' work. Joining with others to compare and contrast information derived from collaboratively constructed information sites. 	<p>Learners engage with the learning community by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Expressing curiosity about a topic of personal interest or curricular relevance. Co-constructing innovative means of investigation. Collaboratively identifying innovative solutions to a challenge or problem. 	<p>Learners use valid information and reasoned conclusions to make ethical decisions in the creation of knowledge by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ethically using and reproducing others' work. Acknowledging authorship and demonstrating respect for the intellectual property of others. Including elements in personal knowledge products that allow others to credit content appropriately.
C. SHARE	<p>Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Interacting with content presented by others. Providing constructive feedback. Acting on feedback to improve. Sharing products with an authentic audience. 	<p>Learners exhibit empathy with and tolerance for diverse ideas by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in informed conversation and active debate. Contributing to discussions in which multiple viewpoints on a topic are expressed. 	<p>Learners actively participate with others in learning situations by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Actively contributing to group discussions. Recognizing learning as a social responsibility. 	<p>Learners select and organize information for a variety of audiences by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Performing ongoing analysis of and reflection on the quality, usefulness, and accuracy of curated resources. Integrating and depicting in a conceptual knowledge network their understanding gained from resources. Openly communicating curation processes for others to see, interpret, and rebidit. 	<p>Learners develop through experience and reflection by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Resiliently responding to challenges. Recognizing capabilities and skills that can be developed, improved, and expanded. Open-mindedly accepting feedback for positive and constructive growth. 	<p>Learners responsibly, ethically, and legally share new information with a global community by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing information resources in accordance with modification, reuse, and reuse policies. Disseminating new knowledge through means appropriate for the intended audience.
D. GROW	<p>Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continually seeking knowledge. Engaging in sustained inquiry. Enacting new understanding through real-world connections. Using reflection to guide informed decisions. 	<p>Learners demonstrate empathy and equity in knowledge building within the global learning community by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking interactions with a range of learners. Demonstrating interest in other perspectives during learning activities. Reflecting on their own place within the global learning community. 	<p>Learners actively participate with others in learning situations by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Actively contributing to group discussions. Recognizing learning as a social responsibility. 	<p>Learners select and organize information for a variety of audiences by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Performing ongoing analysis of and reflection on the quality, usefulness, and accuracy of curated resources. Integrating and depicting in a conceptual knowledge network their understanding gained from resources. Openly communicating curation processes for others to see, interpret, and rebidit. 	<p>Learners develop through experience and reflection by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Resiliently responding to challenges. Recognizing capabilities and skills that can be developed, improved, and expanded. Open-mindedly accepting feedback for positive and constructive growth. 	<p>Learners engage with information to extend personal learning by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Personalizing their use of information and information technologies. Reflecting on the process of ethical generation of knowledge. Inspiring others to engage in safe, responsible, ethical, and legal information behaviors.

**Latest Standards
AASL, 2017**

Milestones with impact on school libraries

- **Federal Funding:** NDEA, ESEA, Improving Literacy through School Libraries, E-Rate, ESSA, IMLS, LSCA/LSTA, American Rescue Plan Act
- **Standards:** 1920, 1925, 1945 (first qualitative), 1960, 1969, 1975, 1988, 1998, 2007, 2017
- **Demonstration Libraries:** 1963-74 Knapp School Library Project created model libraries



Some milestones are positive/**Some aren't**

- **1979/2002: White House Conferences on Libraries**
- **1982: Pico vs. Island Trees Supreme Court decision ruled in favor of First Amendment rights for students**
- **1988: DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund: Library Power's collection development, flexible scheduling, and professional development contributes to new collaborations and practices in participating schools**
- **1993: Supreme Court upholds Children's Internet Protection Act**
- **2023: ALA documents 1,269 demands in 2022 to censor library books--highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling data 20+ years ago and nearly doubles the 729 challenges reported in 2021**

How do school librarians help students learn and build their literacies?

What we know from state studies

- **Impact on learning:** 22+ state studies document impact of certified school librarians on student achievement
- **Problem:** Impact is little known by decision makers and key stakeholders so school librarians must advocate for their instructional role.
- **Result:** When librarian positions are cut or in danger of being cut, often no local voices lead awareness efforts to sustain school librarians for students

SLIDE finding: when librarian positions were cut, only one position out of 10 were reinstated over 5-year span

Developing Literacies in students is a collaborative process partnering school librarians with teachers, administrators, and other librarians

Print Literacy

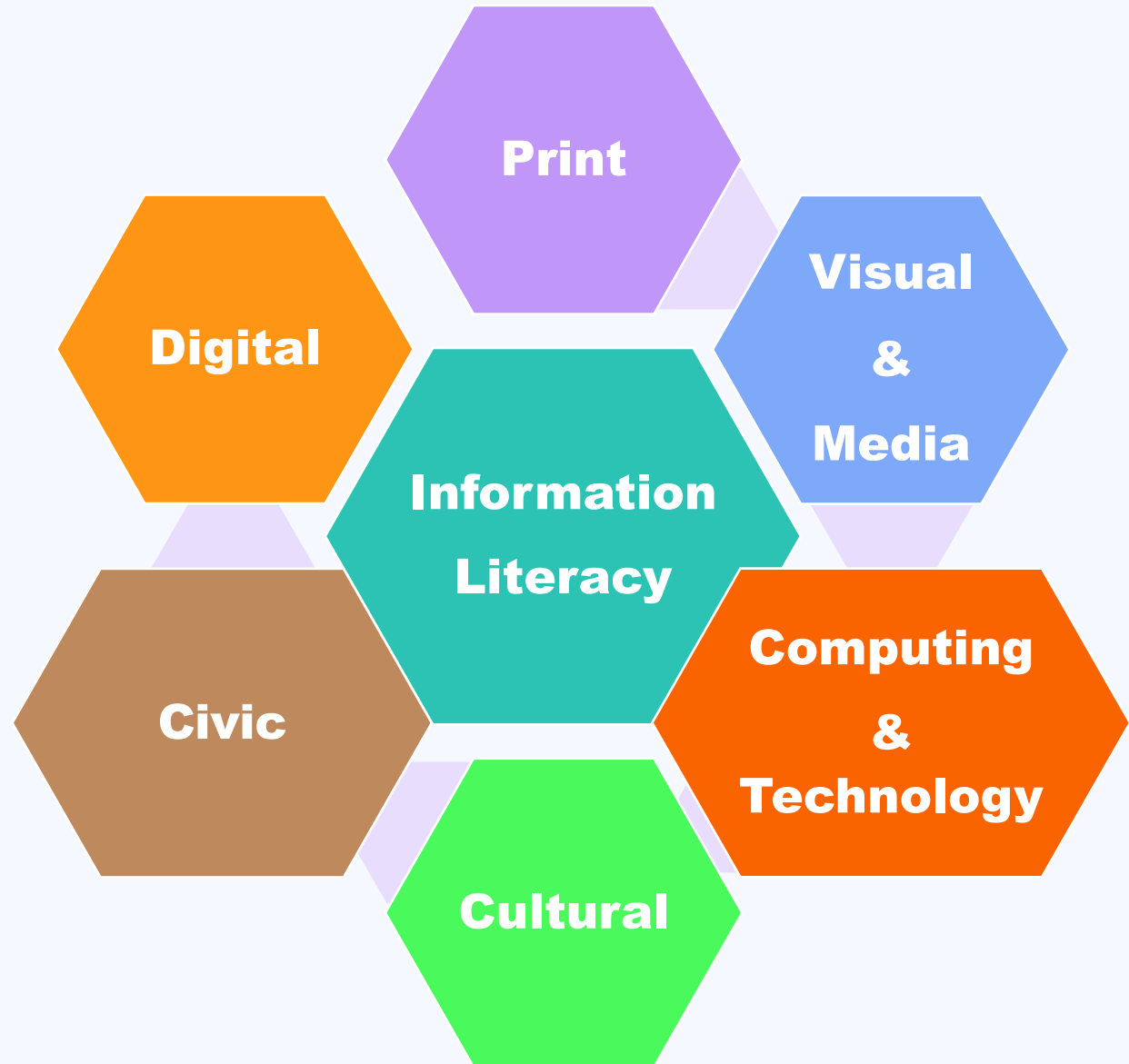
Combat Illiteracy/Aliteracy

Librarians partner with teachers to:

- **Develop life-long readers,**
- **Help students read critically**
- **Make reading fun!**



School librarians teach students multiple literacies



Librarians are more than “nice to have” in the budget

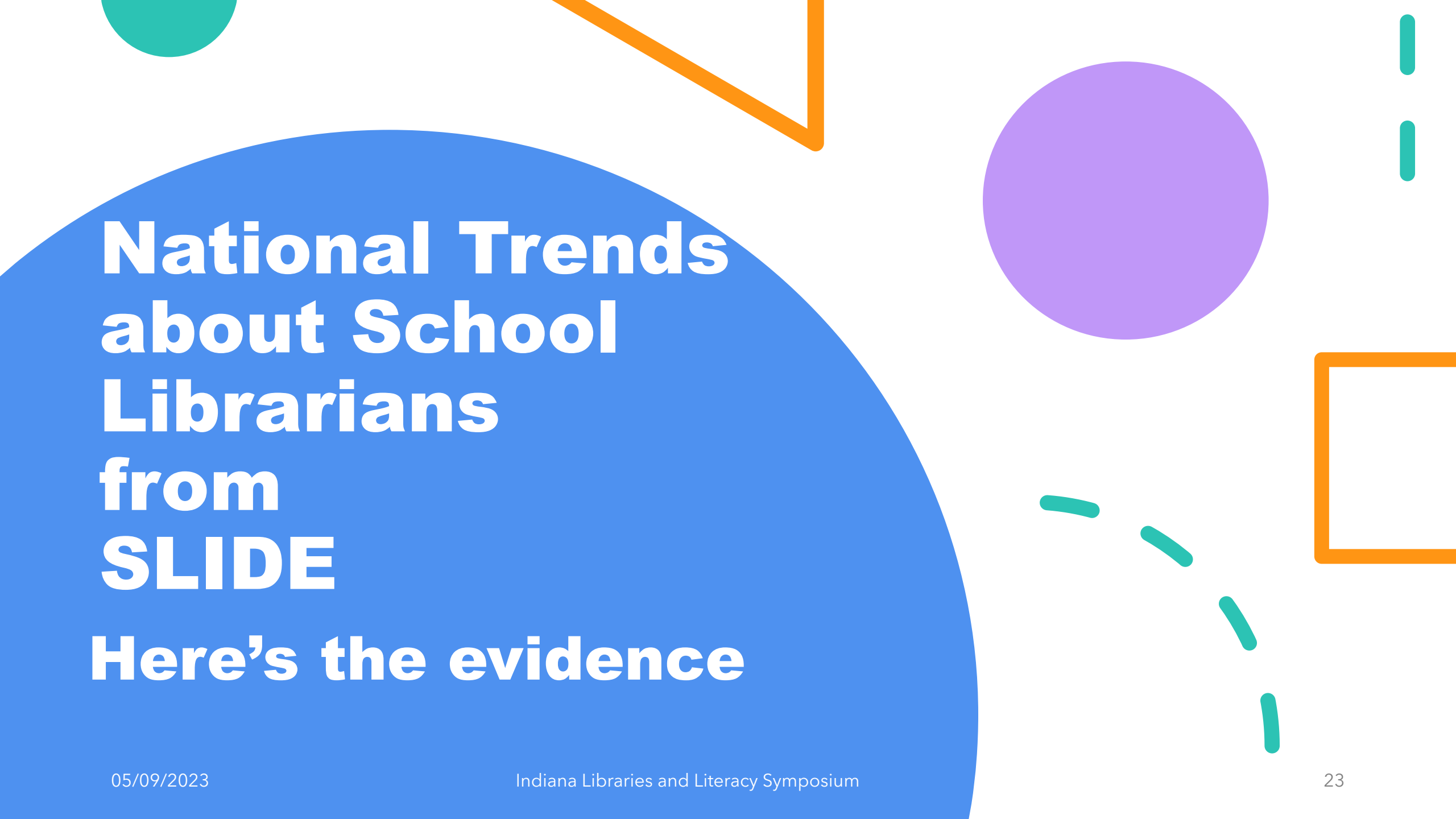
- **Administrators can misunderstand the teaching roles of librarians and fail to support librarians partnering and collaborating with teachers**
- **When budgets are cut, the perception that librarians are “nice to have” but nonessential—performing mostly clerical work—can lead to position cuts or reductions**



Key components of effective school libraries

- **Funding for library resources annually**
- **Full-time, certified librarian and support staff**
- **Technology: Internet-accessible computers and access to digital resources and support infrastructure**
- **Collection: Current trustworthy resources**
- **Access by students to school library beyond school day and flexibility in elementary libraries**
- **Teaching and assessing information literacy skills in collaboration with teachers**



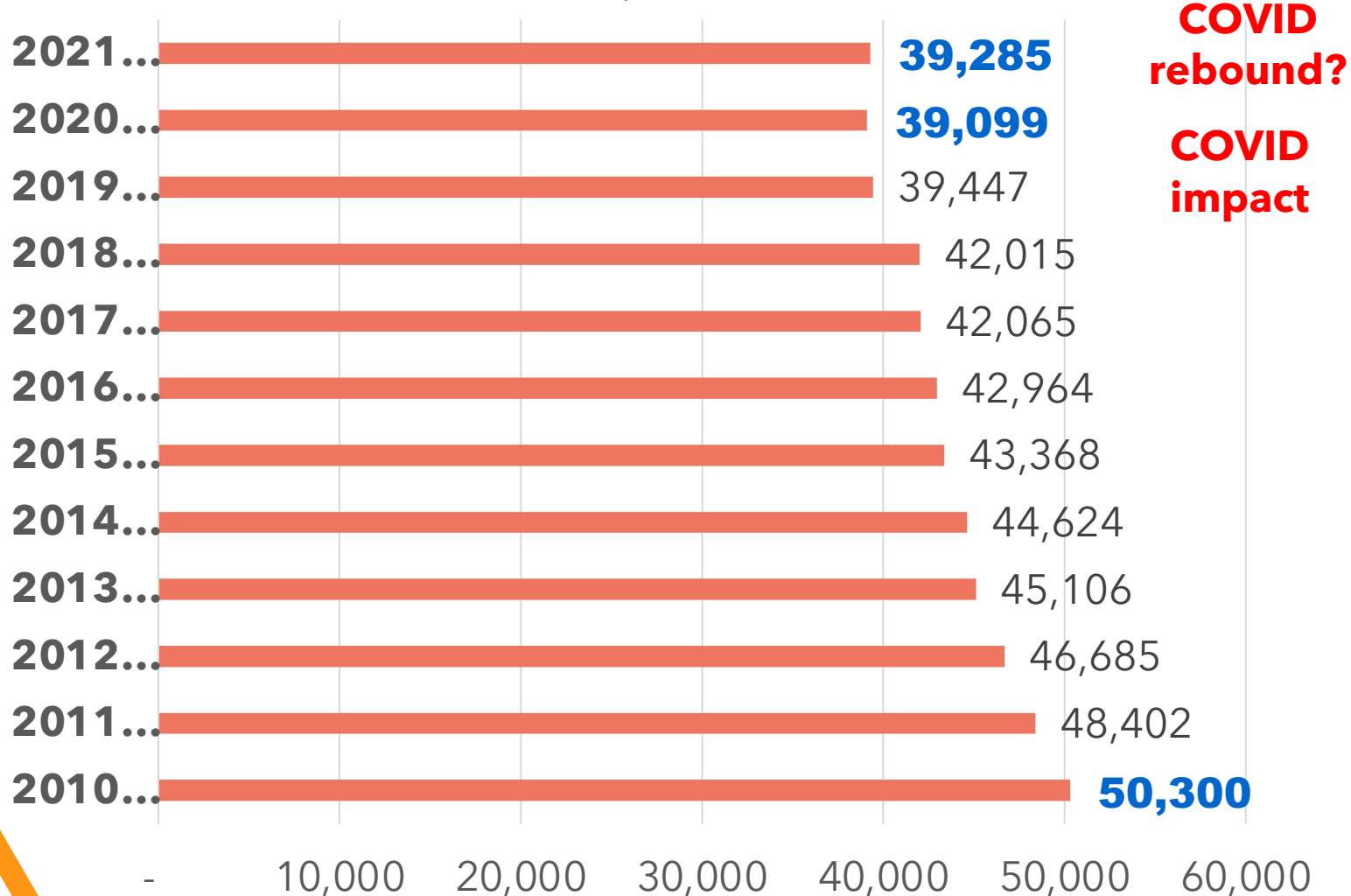


National Trends about School Librarians from SLIDE Here's the evidence

SLIDE
Finding:
Why are
there fewer
school
librarians?

With a nationwide literacy crisis, an epidemic of information illiteracy (“fake news”), and the demand for supporting students in hybrid and blended learning, there has been a **20 percent drop in the number of school librarian positions over the past ten years**

School Librarians in Full-Time Equivalents in the U.S. 50 States & D.C., 2010-11 to 2021-22



COVID rebound?

COVID impact

Nationwide, number of school librarians has been declining for more than a decade:

In 2019-20, COVID accelerated that trend . . . but losses slowed in 2020-21

2021-22 1st year in decade that number of school librarians increased: **+186**

- Were some librarians temporarily reassigned?
- Did some librarians prove their worth during pandemic?



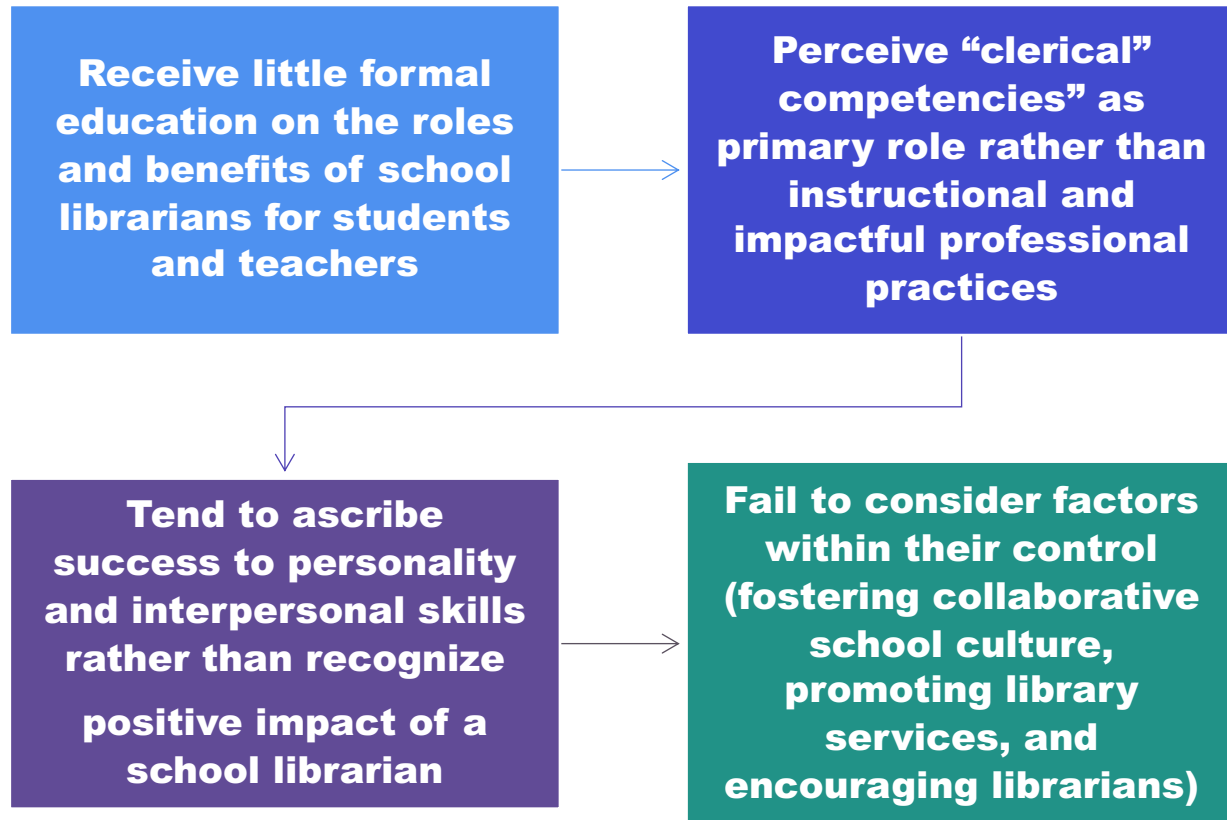
What happened during the pandemic?

Many school librarians were assigned or reassigned to other job responsibilities or positions:

- **Testing coordination**
- **Textbook and computing-device distribution**
- **Substitute teaching**
- **Tech support for online learning--sometimes outside the school day**

These assigned tasks remove librarians from their most impactful roles as instructional partners and teachers

Administrator support is key to the school library's success in student achievement



Key factors why administrators don't always provide support



It's all about equity for all students

- **School libraries bridge the gap between access and opportunity, providing students a safe space to explore personal interests and issues**
- **School libraries are not immune to challenges to the very foundation of public education: equitable access and intellectual freedom**



How are staffing decisions made?

SLIDE is 1st study to explore trends in school-library staffing decisions

- **Connection between school-librarian losses and race, ethnicity, poverty, locale, and enrollment of school & district posit that access to a qualified school librarian is an educational equity issue.**

Are the responsibilities of “the traditional school librarian” being

- **Delegated elsewhere?**
- **Evolving?**
- **Combining with other educator roles and taking on a different model entirely?**





What decisions on positions got made?

SLIDE Interviewers conducted 50+ interviews of school leaders nationwide in districts that gained, lost some, or lost all librarians:

- **Decisions driven by structural, pragmatic & strategic considerations**
- **Many factors affecting each situation & decision type**
- **Evolving positions: combined jobs, restructured jobs, new positions and new position titles**

What we know now

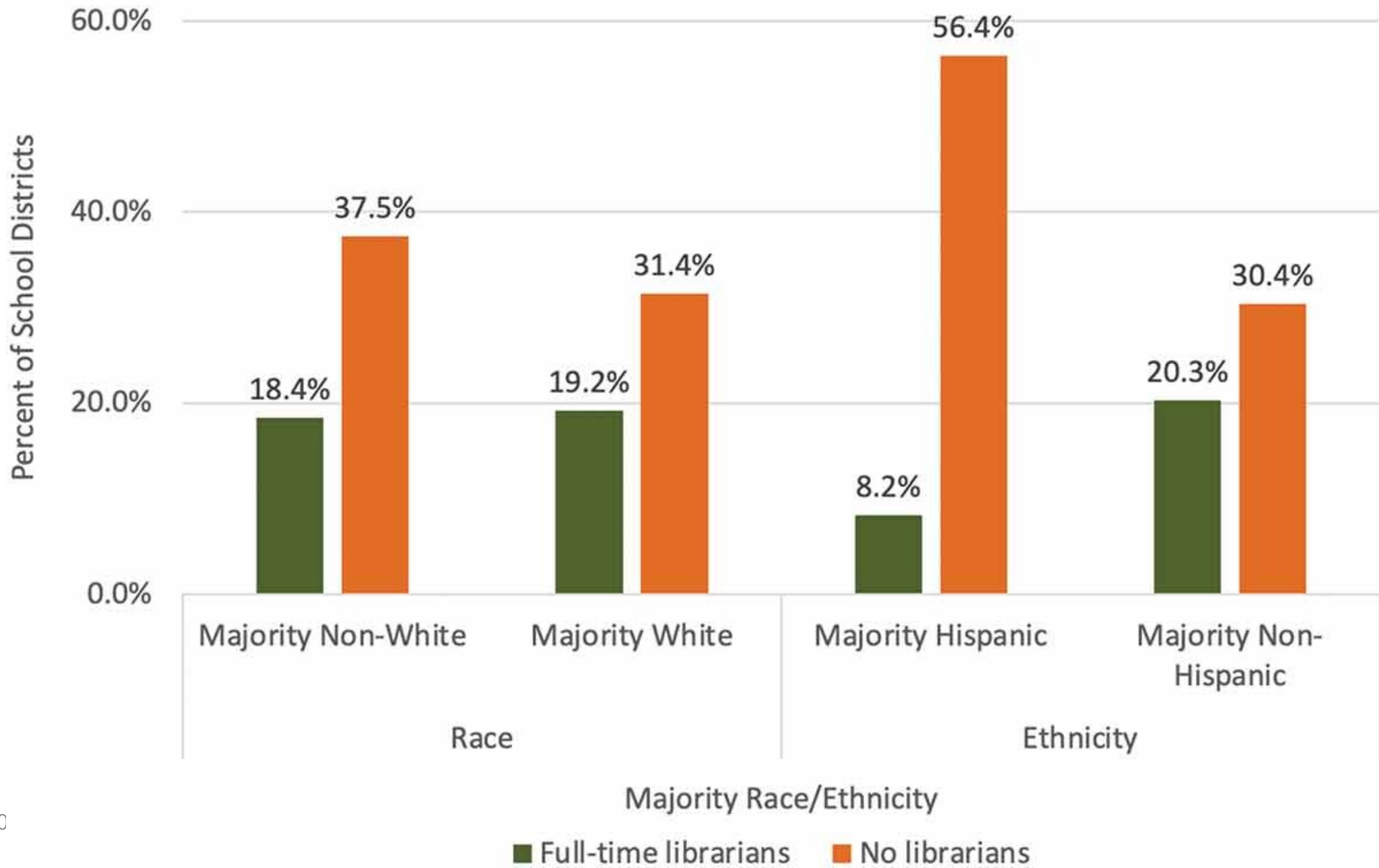
Access to school librarians is strongly related to student race and ethnicity

Access is further exacerbated for students living in:

- **Extreme poverty**
- **More isolated locales**
- **Smallest school districts where students are less likely to have access to educational resources available in large districts**



District Ratio of Librarian FTE per School by Race/Ethnicity, Local School Districts, 2020-21

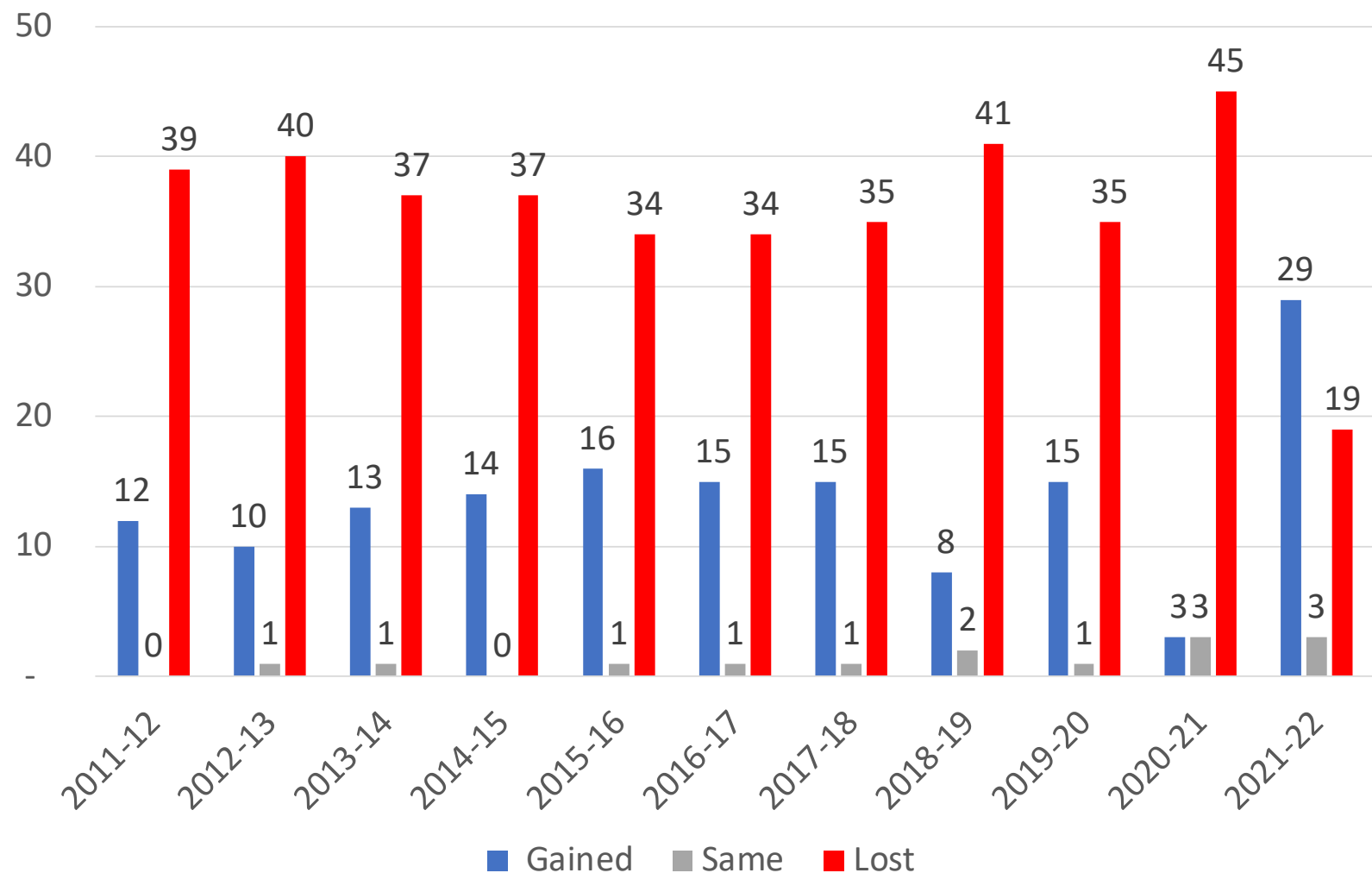


An equity issue for students and teachers

- **Students and teachers who have access to school librarians have a decided advantage over those who do not—a library privilege**
- **Access to school librarians is an educational equity issue**



Number of U.S. States (& D.C.) Gaining & Losing School Librarians
Annually, 2011-12 to 2021-22



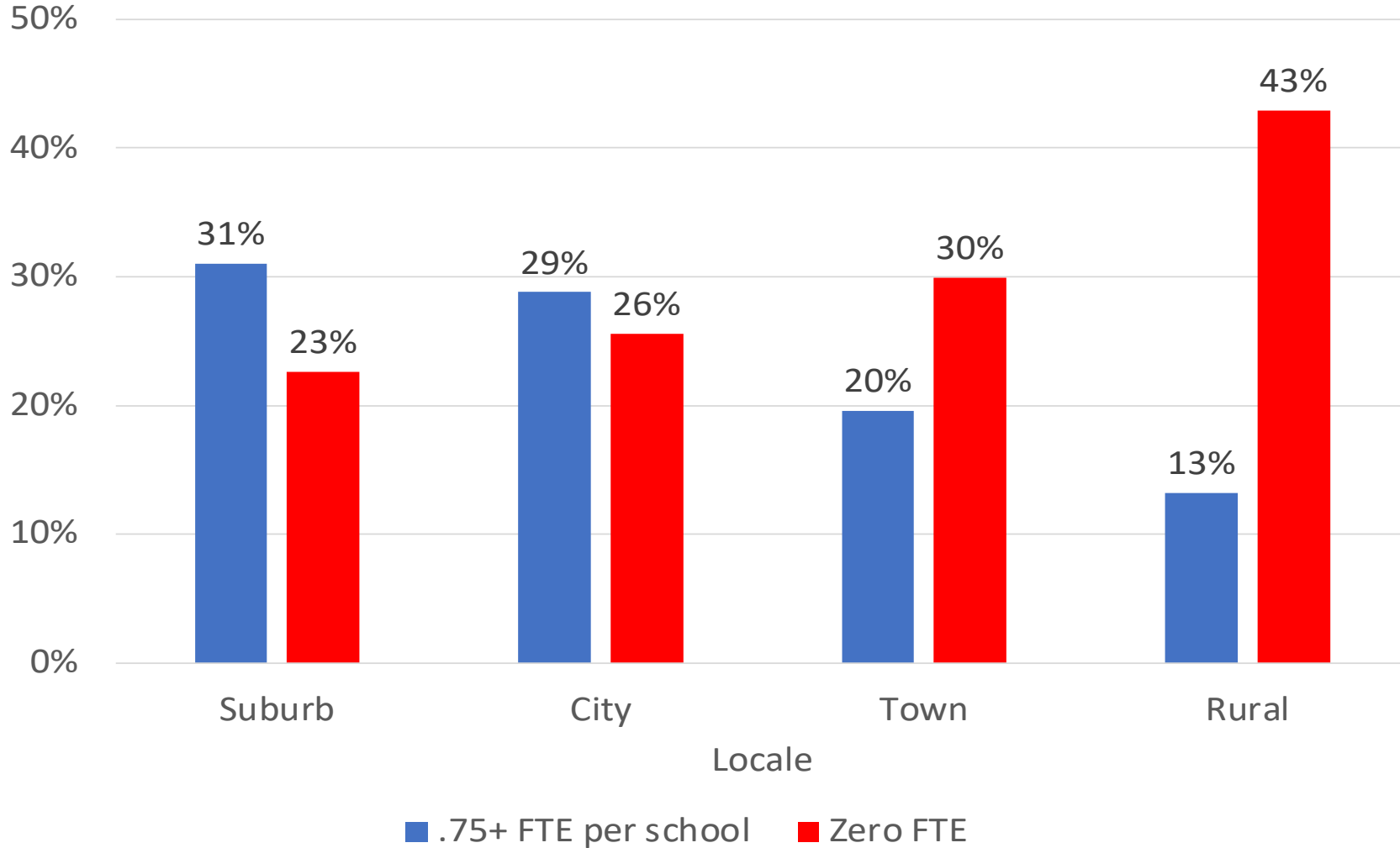
School librarian losses not universal

Most years for more than a decade, 10-15 states gained librarians but 3-4 times that many states lost librarians

COVID impact: 2020-21 record low number of states gained and record high number of states lost. 2021-22 record high number of gaining states and record low number of losing states.

What next?

Ratio of Librarians to Schools by Locale,
United States: 50 States & D.C., 2021-22



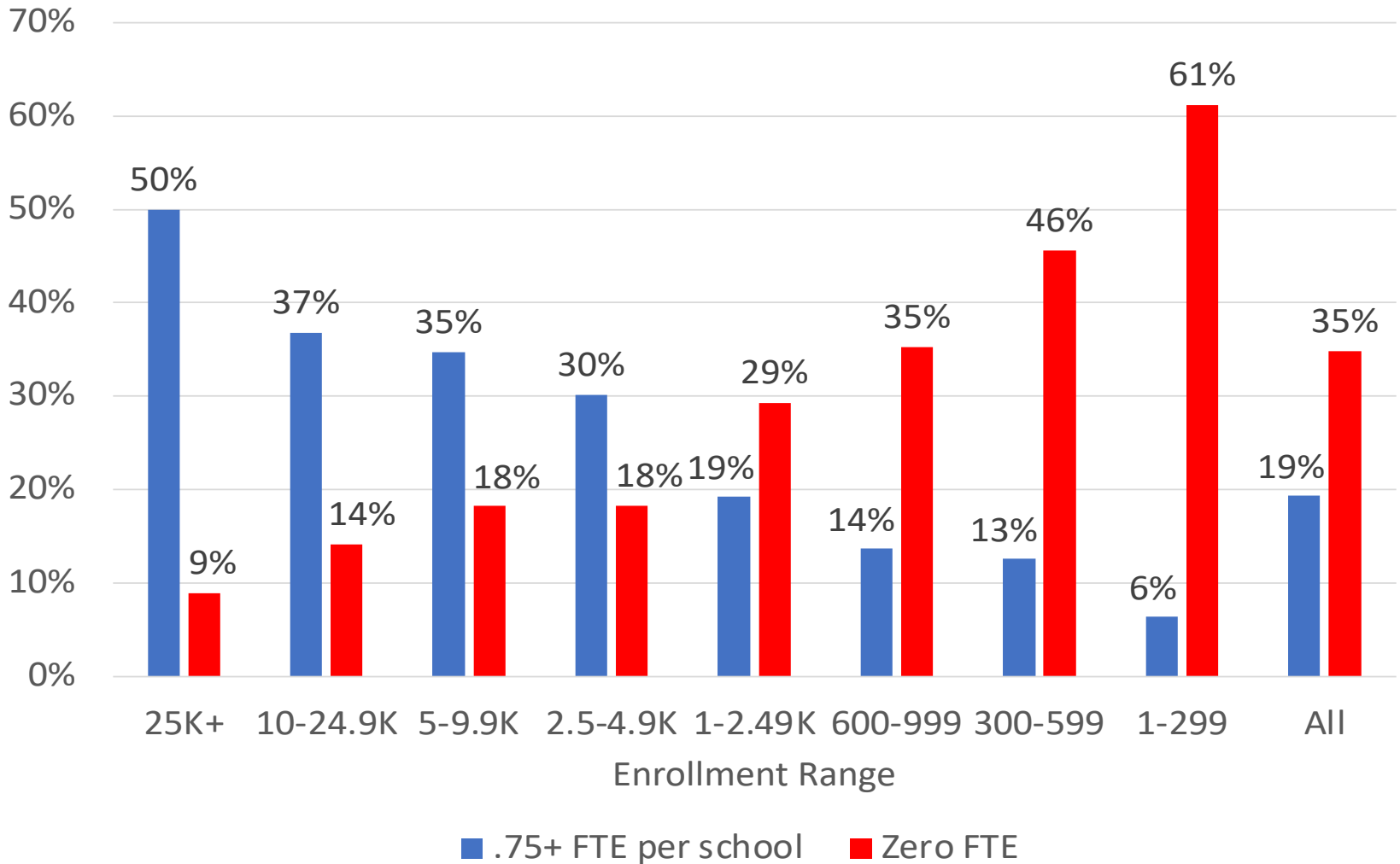
**.75+ FTE per school is the ratio SLIDE uses to determine if a district has enough librarians to have a full-time librarian in all or most schools.
(Actual school staffing data on librarians are not available.)**

Access to school librarians varies by locale

Districts in suburbs & cities more likely to have librarians in all or most schools

Districts in towns and rural areas more likely to have no librarians in any schools

**Ratio of Librarians to Schools by Enrollment,
United States: 50 States & D.C., 2021-22**

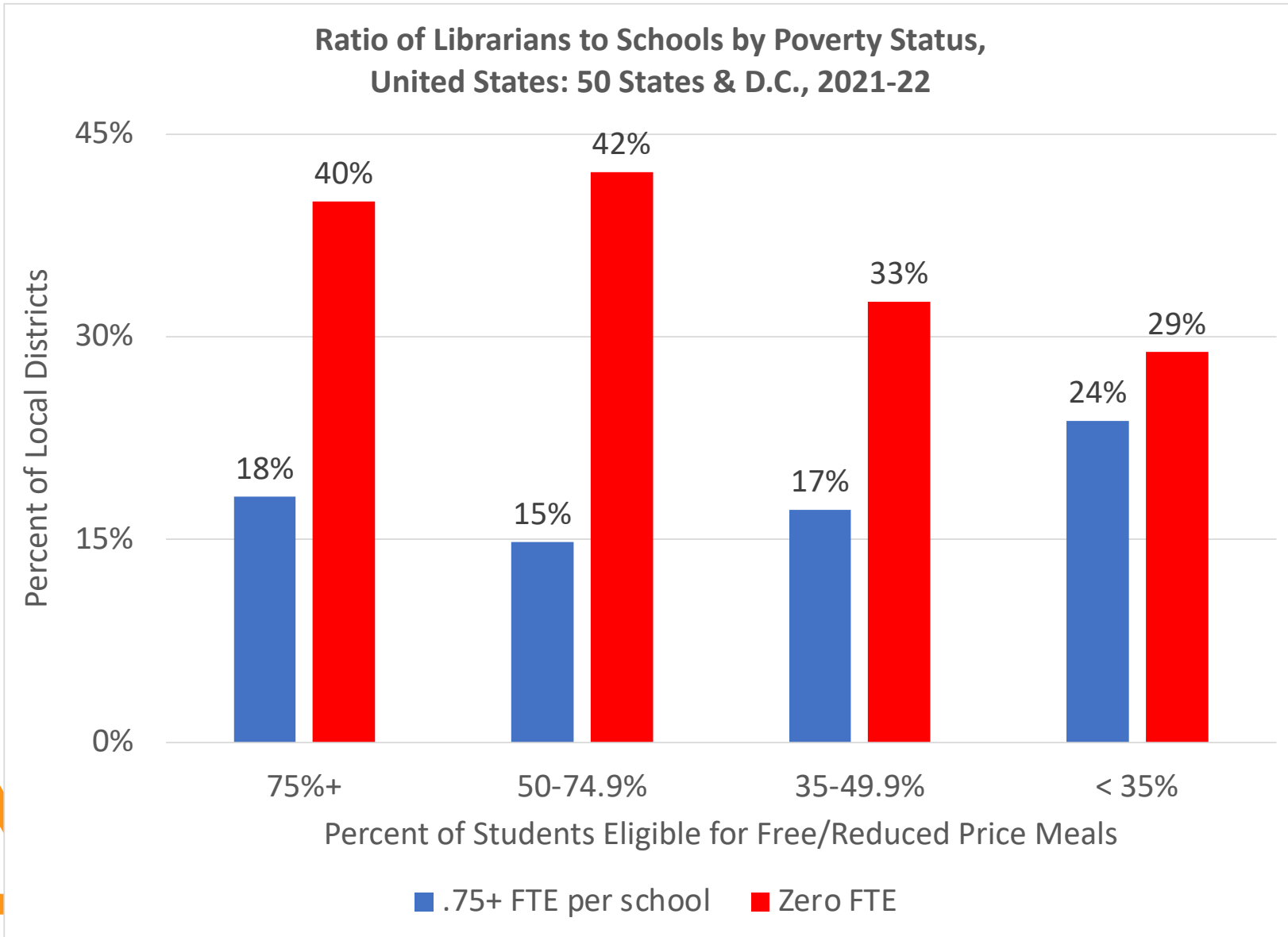


Access to school librarians varies by student enrollment

Larger district are more likely to have librarians in all or most schools

Smaller districts are more likely not to have librarians in any schools

Overall, less than 1 in 5 districts has librarians in all or most schools, and more than 1/3 have no librarians in any schools

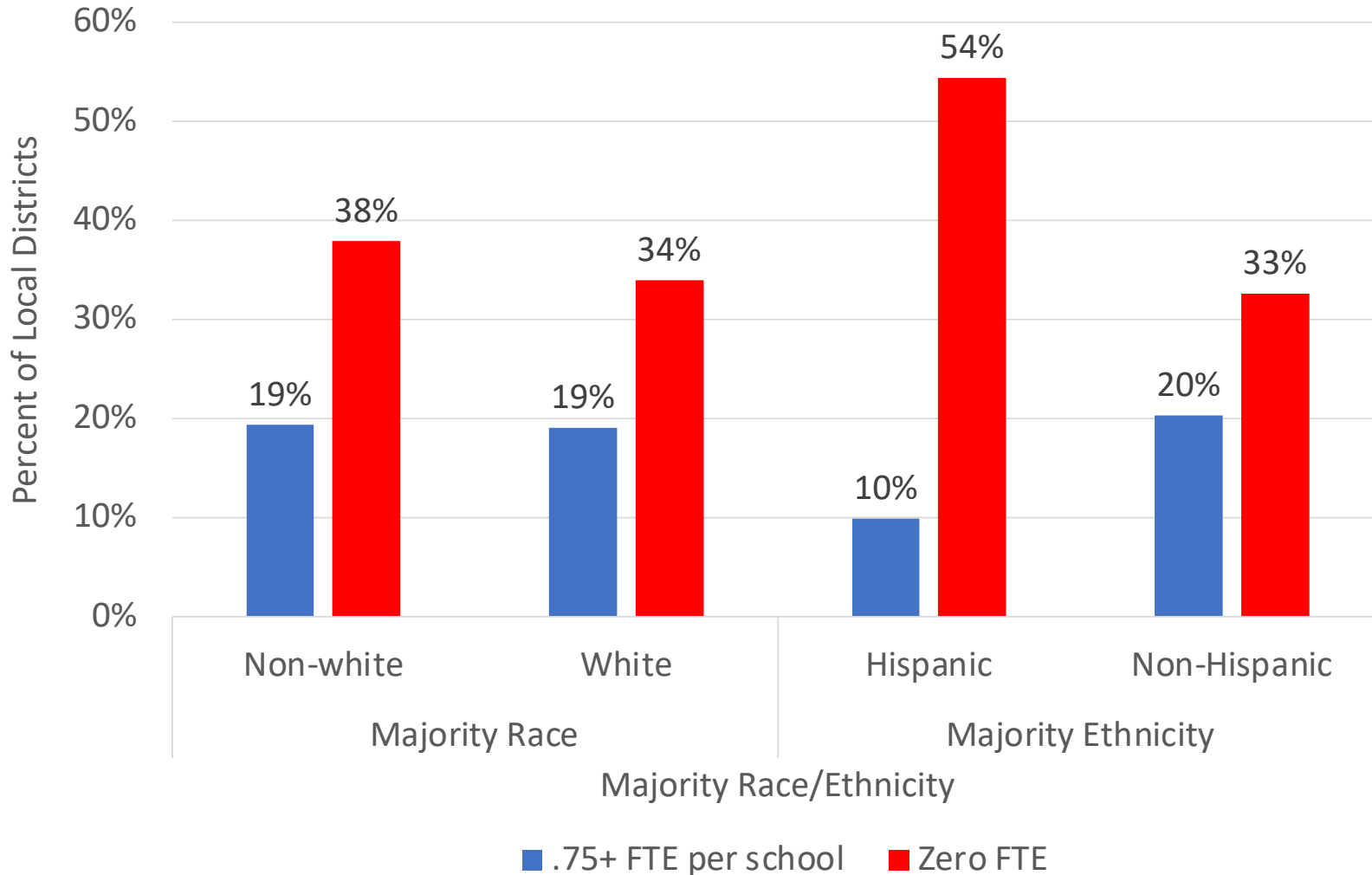


Access to school librarians varies by student poverty status

Districts in wealthiest communities most likely to have librarians in all or most schools

Districts in poorer communities more likely not to have librarians in any schools

Ratio of Librarians to Schools by Majority Race/Ethnicity,
United States: 50 States & D.C., 2021-22



Majority non-white districts are equally unlikely to have librarians in most schools and are slightly more likely not to have librarians in any schools

Impact of majority race often ameliorated by locale (city) and enrollment (higher)

Majority Hispanic districts mostly smaller and rural fare dramatically worse than majority non-Hispanic ones and are half as likely to have librarians in most schools, and far more likely not to have librarians in any schools.

Bottom Line: Lack of equity across the U.S.

- **20% of full-time equivalent school librarians lost in last decade**
- **Fewer than 40,000 school librarians nationwide**
- **Decline in the number of FTE school librarians between 2015 and 2020-21**
- **In 2020-21, 3 million students in majority nonwhite districts were without any librarians**
- **54% of the 5.6 million students in all districts did not have any librarians during the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Gap between students in districts with a “library privilege” and those without librarians continues to widen**



Indiana Demographics

Students/Staff

Students

982,308

Teachers

62,980

Librarians

517

Library Support

1,107

Public Schools

1,769

(1920-21: 120 charter schools not included in SLIDE data)

Student Race/Ethnicity

White = 67%

Hispanic = 13%

Black = 11%

2 or More = 5%

Asian Pacific = 3%

Bottom Line Indiana



103 Indiana school districts have NO school librarians: 35% of all school districts (103/291)



Number of FTE Librarians fell from 692 in 2015-16 to 458 in 20-21: 34% fewer in 6 years

<https://libslide.org/data-tools/state-profile/>

Bottom Line Indiana

**Number of students
per librarian has risen
751 students in 6
years: 015-16: 1,512
2020-21: 2,263**

**Almost half of NO-
librarian districts
have libraries run by
support staff.**

**In 2020-21, there
were 517 Librarians
and 1,107 Library
Support staff**

New Threat: Massive Book Banning



Newly donated LGBTQ+ books are displayed in the library at Nystrom Elementary School on May 17, 2022, in Richmond, California. Justin Sullivan / Getty Images

How do librarians serve all students?





Some states eliminated classroom collections

<https://www.tcpalm.com/story/opinion/columnists/laurence-reisman/2022/09/16/pic-closed-classroom-library-shocking-who-chooses-books-opinion/10396783002/>

05/09/2023

45

It's become impossible to keep up with news about book bans!

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Indiana lawmakers on April 27, 2023, approved a bill that could make it easier to ban books from public school libraries. This was signed by governor.

- **Require school libraries to publicly post a list of books they offer and provide a complaints process for community members**
- **Schools and librarians could also no longer argue, as a legal defense, that the texts in their libraries have “educational” value. The law would still allow them to argue the text has literary, artistic, political or scientific value**

We need school librarians

Emily Drabinski ,
Truthout
4 February 2023



Students rally on the steps of the New York City Department of Education, demanding a librarian for their school and all other NYC public school students.

Jeff Samaniego

The pipeline of new librarians is a trickle

- **Teachers often pivot from the classroom to the library with little coursework or experience**
- **Fewer programs educate school librarians—undergraduate or graduate. PA has 2 school library education programs--down from 6 ten years ago. Indiana has 1.**



The long- term effects for school libraries

**SHORTAGES OF TEACHERS AND
SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS**

**LIBRARIANS BEING USED AS SUBS AND
FOR OTHER TASKS**

**FEWER SCHOOL LIBRARIANS WITH
SCHOOL LIBRARIAN EDUCATION**

**HOW CAN WE PERSUADE POTENTIAL
SCHOOL LIBRARIANS TO ENTER THE
PROFESSION GIVEN LESS
PROFESSIONAL WORK CONDITIONS AND
MASSIVE CHALLENGES TO
INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM?**



**The way to get
started is to quit
talking and begin
doing.**

Walt Disney

School librarians hold a strategic position

Because school librarians have knowledge of:

- All students
- All faculty
- School culture & curriculum

School librarians can lead from the middle



Take-Away Idea #1

Collaborate

- **Use your collaborative and pedagogical expertise**
- **Demonstrate your unique value to achieving your school's mission and goals**
- **Lead from the middle**



Add Value for Students

- **Provide reading guidance to raise student reading achievement**
- **Encourage independent reading**
- **Teach, coach, and model information literacy skills & digital citizenship**
- **Advocate for students' rights to information, and access to resources and technology**
- **Coach individual and small-groups of students; volunteer with student organizations**
- **Offer a safe learning space (makerspace/learning commons)**



Add Value for Teachers

Partner with teachers to help them reach their instructional goals for their students and their own professional development

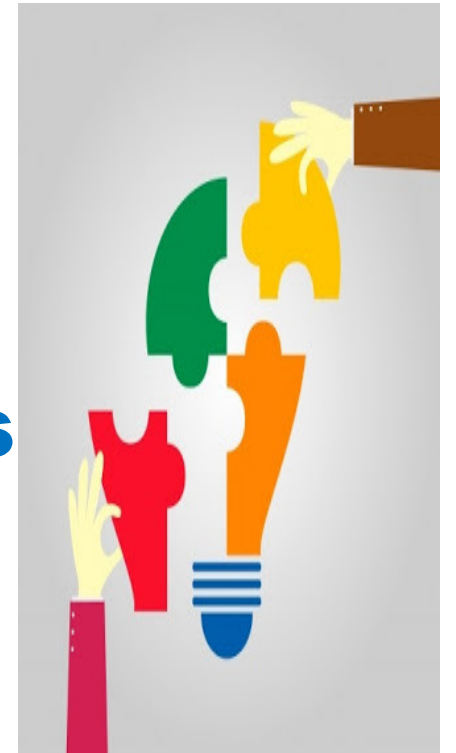
- Keep current on curriculum resources
- Offer professional development
- Collaborate in teaching and assessing student learning
- Emphasize information literacy skills
- Encourage their students to read
- Write grants for partnering with teachers



Add Value for Administrators

Help principals reach their objectives

- **Keep current on pertinent info and resources**
- **Provide current awareness on issues**
- **Offer professional development**
- **Conduct research**
- **Write grants**



Take-Away Idea #2

Support Mission

Support your school district's mission and initiatives and show how the school library program demonstrates the value the school librarian brings "to the table"



Don't allow zip codes to determine which students have access to school libraries

Build support for school libraries at every level:

Building

District

Community

State

Federal



Get on board— support literacy



<https://www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/right2read>

Right to Read Act

Protect the Constitutional rights of students to access information in school libraries

Extend liability protections to teachers and school librarians

Authorize \$500 million in Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants and \$100 million for Innovative Approaches to Literacy Programs to help provide needed literacy resources and build strong and effective school libraries

Take-Away Idea #3

Tell with Data

Collect evidence of student success (data, artifacts, photos, video) to show the value the librarian brings in supporting the school's mission and in achieving student progress



Listen to Students-- understand and advocate for their needs

In a time of fake news and information overload, students deserve access to a:

- **School library**
- **School librarian**

Students need access to information for learning and for life—give them access

Students learn critical thinking and empathy skills by reading—let them read



Thank you!
Mary Kay
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University of
Pittsburgh
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Please check out the **SLIDE website**

Interactive data tools for
accessing user-specified data
at state & district levels
(step-by-step tutorials
included)

- **Custom Search**
- **District Comparison**
- **State Profile (including time-lapse map of districts)**
- **State Survey**

<https://libslide.org>



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Museum and **Library**
SERVICES

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