

To Whom it May Concern;

Hello, my name is Tasha White and I am the full time Library Media Specialist at Alfred Lima Elementary School in Providence, RI. Our school serves over 600 K-5, multilingual learners. We have inclusion classrooms where students with special needs are serviced as well as dual language classrooms throughout every grade level. Before becoming a LMS for the past 8 years, I was an elementary classroom teacher in Providence for 13. For my first 5 years as a LMS in Providence, I was split between two schools (2 1/2 days each), saw over 800 students and held 36 classes a week. As a full time LMS, I am now able to service the needs of all of our students, support our teachers and their curriculum and support our families.

A trained LMS is able to take on 5 roles in their job as a teacher, a leader, a program administrator, an information specialist and an instructional partner. Here is a link to a slide deck about the 5 roles of the [Library Media Specialist](#).

We are able to know the students and their needs as individuals as well as their educational needs. We are able to support the teachers who are already juggling so many different pressures by collaborating, and offering resources to support their work. One specific example of this is through curating and sharing LLARC (Lima Library American Reading Company) Book Bags that enrich the core ELA curriculum they are focused on in the classroom. We are able to order books and resources to support the needs and interests of our school community including bilingual books, as well as books that allow students to see themselves and others creating and nurturing empathy and compassion in these growing young minds.

A trained full time LMS has time and the opportunity to not only secure and share Social Emotional resources for learning with teachers, students, families and our mental health workers, but also has time to run SEL book clubs with the students who need this extra support the most. Libraries are a safe place to come to and be yourself, especially when you are still figuring out who that person is and what interests you have.

Library Media Specialists offer digital media lessons and resources to help students, teachers and families navigate the ever changing 21st century of technology. We teach students (as early as Pre-K) how to find safe websites, talk to an adult, and that NOT everything on the internet is made for kids so they need to know how to make critical decisions for themselves at an early age. We teach

students how to evaluate their sources, cite their evidence, and evaluate who, what, why, and when the websites they are using were created.

We encourage independence and out of the box thinking through coding and creating so that students understand how things work. This supports all areas of their academic learning as well. In fact, here is a link to [Media Literacy Now](#) which includes an overview of what it is about, it also includes recommendations that have been made to RIDE as well as a statewide survey that was taken [Media Literacy RI survey](#).

This is a link to a 14 min documentary with RI School Library Media Specialists that aired on PBS several times called [Overdue: The Value of School Libraries](#) that focuses on the need and importance of having full time, certified Librarians in every school entitled

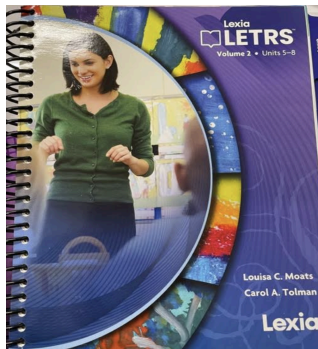
This is a link to a video of the [Alfred Lima E.S. Library](#) with students explaining what and why they love the library. I had the privilege of being on a committee with RIDE last year to help design libraries in all of the Providence elementary schools. Unfortunately, most of these libraries are understaffed and the work has not been completed.

Last year in our Alfred Lima E.S. library, we circulated over 16,000 books between the students and the teachers' requests. Being a full time LMS, I am able to support the needs of my community. I have also included some bullet points about the Roles and Responsibilities of the Library Media Specialist, an excerpt from AASL (American Association of School Librarians) and a written request by my partner and I (there is a .5 LMS who works at our school as well) and I about why with such a large school population we need 2 full time librarians (we are also utilized for lunch duties and other non-library related duties that cut into our library time).

I am planning on coming and speaking on Thursday. I wanted to share all of this beforehand to give some context of some of the roles and responsibilities of the Library Media Specialist. Thank you for taking this imperative bill into account and consideration. In this day and age, I do not know how schools and society in general can move forward without certified, full time Library Media Specialists at every school in the state!

With much respect,
Tasha White:)
Library Media Specialist
Alfred Lima E.S.
Providence, R.I.

*According to the **LETRS training** and the **Right to Read Act**, in order to succeed, a school must invest in its Library and Librarian(S) who act as the heart of the school and its community.

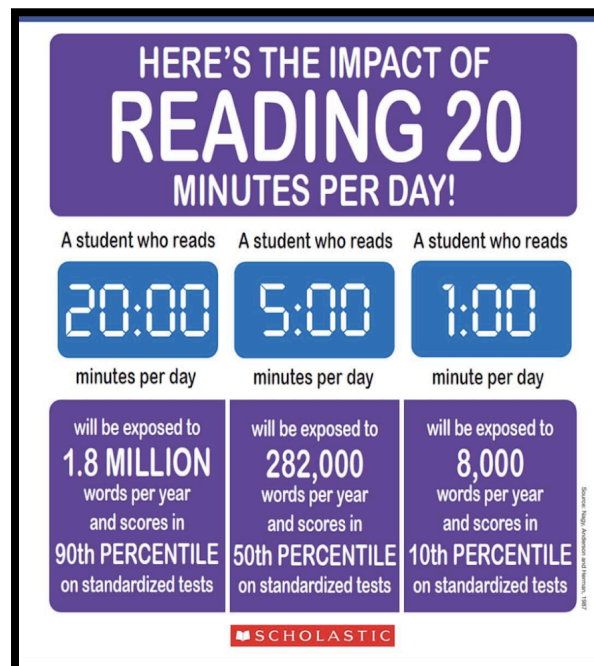


Independent Reading

Young students' listening vocabularies are typically greater than their reading vocabularies until they become fluent readers. By third or fourth grade, however, the amount of reading that students do, their use of independent word-learning strategies, and the depth and breadth of their academic study will have a major impact on their vocabulary growth. A national survey of students' reading habits (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2007) showed that one-fourth of students do no reading outside of school, and that the majority read for only a few minutes. Book reading is correlated with vocabulary growth and academic achievement, but students seem to have less and less time (and fewer incentives) to read on their own.

Unfortunately, schools in lower-income communities with high populations of students at risk often have no school library lending program, very few books in the classrooms, and no community library to counteract these trends (Neuman & Celano, 2001). **If schools expect students to become readers, well-stocked classroom and school libraries are a must**, along with reading lists, programs to match students with books, computer-assisted instruction, incentive programs, and carefully selected texts (Neuman & Wright, 2013).

20 LETRS • Unit 5



Roles & Responsibilities of the Library Media Specialist

- Foster a **lifelong love of reading**
- Encourage **independence** about digging deeper into personal interests
- Model how to *explore a variety of topics* for varied purposes
- Share **mirror** and **window** opportunities for students to see themselves as well as see others **developing empathy** for others and a deeper understanding of themselves.
- Deliver book-based instruction and activities that encourage students to practice **higher-level thinking skills**, S.E.L. strategies, and **making connections** between classroom learning and the world around them
- Curate **Social Emotional Resources** to support students, mental health workers, teachers and families that surround the **CASEL standards**.
- Conduct **SEL book clubs** so students have a safe space to share & learn from each other.
- Teach about **digital citizenship** and **online safety**
- **Digital Citizenship** includes learning how to respond to others online, what information is safe to share, how to be a productive member of the online world **creating vs. consuming**
- **Media Literacy** which includes exploring safe versus dangerous websites & what we can trust on the web. When asked how to find an answer to something the number one response is "check Google!" Students, their parents and even educators, need to understand that Google is a search engine & an algorithm. Over 80% of the Web is NOT safe for children yet every day children are accessing the Web. The need for **critically thinking** about **WHO** created the content, **WHY** did they share this content, **WHAT** is the purpose (are they trying to sell something, take something, influence an opinion, etc.), **WHEN** was the content created (has it been updated, is it still relevant?)
- Explore **coding** and allow time for **productive struggle**.
- Conduct **research utilizing books, databases** and other **online resources** that are trustworthy.
- **Curate resources** (books and online) to **enrich classroom curriculum**.
- Run & develop the **Lima News Broadcast** which shares what's going on in our Lima Community with our Students, their families and our entire staff keeping us all connected.
- **Collaborate** with the **neighborhood Library** to encourage & organize classroom visits & to utilize resources to **support our community** that our school does not have access to.
- To **maintain our collection** to **represent a diverse** and **relevant** selection of materials.

The Roles of the Library Media Specialist

~Teacher ~Leader ~Program Administrator ~Information Specialist ~Instructional Partner

According to the AASL (American Association of School Librarians):

Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning

Roles and Responsibilities of the School Library Media Specialist

- As **teacher**, the library media specialist collaborates with students and other members of the learning community to analyze learning and information needs, to locate and use resources that will meet those needs, and to understand and communicate the information the resources provide. An effective instructor of students, the library media specialist is knowledgeable about current research on teaching and learning and skilled in applying its findings to a variety of situation--particularly those that call upon students to access, evaluate, and use information from multiple sources in order to learn, to think, and to create and apply new knowledge. A curricular leader and a full participant on the instructional team, the library media specialist constantly updates personal skills and knowledge in order to work effectively with teachers, administrators, and other staff--both to expand their general understanding of information issues and to provide them with specific opportunities to develop sophisticated skills in information literacy, including the uses of information technology.
- As **instructional partner**, the library media specialist joins with teachers and others to identify links across student information needs, curricular content, learning outcomes, and a wide variety of print, nonprint, and electronic information resources. Working with the entire school community, the library media specialist takes a leading role in developing policies, practices, and curricula that guide students to develop the full range of information and communication abilities. Committed to the process of collaboration, the library media specialist works closely with individual teachers in the critical areas of designing authentic learning tasks and assessments and integrating the information and communication abilities required to meet subject matter standards.
- As **information specialist**, the library media specialist provides leadership and expertise in acquiring and evaluating information resources in all formats; in bringing an awareness of information issues into collaborative relationships with teachers, administrators, students, and others; and in modeling for students and others strategies for locating, accessing, and evaluating information within and beyond the library media center. Working in an environment that has been profoundly affected by technology, the library media specialist both masters sophisticated electronic resources and maintains a constant focus on the nature, quality, and ethical use of information available in these and in more traditional tools.
- As **program administrator**, the library media specialist works collaboratively with members of the learning community to define the policies of the library media program and to guide and direct all activities related to it. Confident of the importance of the effective use of information and information technology to students' personal and economic success in their future lives, the library media specialist is an advocate for the library media program and provides the knowledge, vision, and leadership to steer it creatively and energetically in the twenty-first century. Proficient in the management of staff, budgets, equipment, and facilities, the library media specialist plans, executes, and evaluates the program to ensure its quality both at a general level and on a day-to-day basis.

Our Alfred Lima Elementary School in Providence is a K-5 community with 29 classrooms that each need time in the library to explore, learn, create and imagine. The diverse and multilingual students need time to select books that interest them, to find and utilize safe resources to support their learning, and to gain 21st century skills that are a necessity for success in any role they may take in the future. It is essential that all Lima students have access to their library both during their weekly library time, and also during open library hours where the library media specialist can work with classroom teachers to support specific classroom academic and social-emotional needs.

There is not enough time in the schedule for 1 LMS to service the needs of every classroom adequately as well as maintain the books and resources that are available and carefully curated for each grade level to support the needs of the curriculum.

Teachers are constantly requesting more time in the library with their students and for the LMS to pull appropriate resources to support and enrich the learning taking place in their classrooms. This time is crucial and necessary to continue to push our school in advancing in all levels of education.

The LMS supports the Social and Emotional needs of all learners by providing resources to individual students, classrooms, and our Mental Health workers to deepen the understanding and commitment to our Lima core P.R.I.D.E. values along with diversity, equity and inclusion. The LMS builds relationships with all students in our school community to be a consistent source of support over the course of their elementary years. By getting to know students over the course of time, the LMS can help match them to independent reading materials that reflect their experiences back to them, show them how much they matter, and foster a lifelong love of reading.

With two full time LMS, we could support the needs of our students, staff and families even greater than we currently are able to. We could run a variety of training before, during and/or after school about new technology developments, databases, supporting the curriculum, and parent training as needed to support their own children with technology and the importance of reading. We could also more frequently collaborate with Providence public librarians to promote public library programming, resources, and guide Lima students and families towards community resources to support students during weekends, breaks, and during summer.

We would have more time to collaborate with the Reading & Math Coaches about how to bring reading and math to life for our students as well as more time for coding and STEAM based activities. We would be able to continue and improve upon our whole school initiative of The Lima News Crew to share and express all of the amazing things happening throughout the school. It is extremely difficult to keep such a large school connected and the Lima News Crew offers that opportunity. Reading clubs for advanced students as well as those struggling could be created and time spent focused on these smaller groups to support their individual learning and needs. A Kindness Club could once again be a possibility spreading love and kindness through our community inside and outside of the school.