

# AASL Crisis Toolkit

If you are looking at the AASL Crisis Toolkit, chances are your program is in danger of being reduced or eliminated. This kit is designed to assist you as you build meaningful and effective support for saving your program. That means educating and rallying stakeholders to speak out on behalf of school libraries.

If cuts are not imminent, visit AASL's [School Library Program Health and Wellness](#) page for prevention strategies. The ideal time to start advocacy efforts is before there is a crisis.

## Thinking about Advocacy

True advocacy is when stakeholders stand up and speak out for you on behalf of a cause, idea, program or organization. Think of what is happening in Washington State with the [Spokane Moms](#). With the Moms behind the message, it carries significantly more weight than if librarians alone campaign for better funding for their own school libraries. As librarians, we need to plan ahead and focus our efforts on building support from stakeholder groups. Ideally, you want students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders to carry the message that school libraries make a difference to students. But this won't happen without careful planning and action. We need to educate and mobilize our stakeholders to advocate for school libraries. The voices of school librarians are most effective when we join our voices with others to advocate for students and student learning.

- [Crisis Planning](#)
  - [State and National Support: Contacting AASL and Other Associations](#)
  - [Resources](#)
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## Crisis Planning

- **Defining the situation**
  - Determine who is making the decision(s).
  - Determine why decisions are being made.
  - Ascertain the decision timeline.
- **Mission**
  - Develop goals for the Crisis Action Group.
  - If there is time, think in terms of the group's mission, vision, and objectives.
  - Put together a timeline to organize efforts.

**Key:** Remember decisions are business and not personal. Try to avoid forcing decision makers, who are reluctantly making cuts, into defensive positions. When are forced to defend cuts, they are more likely to feel strongly in favor of the cuts. The goal is to build bridges for working relationships centered around what is best for children. Messages have to be about students and student learning; they cannot be about the jobs of librarians. Schools are not in the business of employing librarians; they are about students and learning. We need to reach out to these

decision makers with a helping hand. A positive approach is to offer to supply information to help inform difficult decisions and to help support efforts to bring back positions. It is critical not to form an adversarial relationship.

- **Communication structure**
  - How will you keep your coordinating group informed?
  - How will you ask for support?
    - Who is going to contact which group?
    - Who is going to follow up?
  - How will interested parties be kept informed?
- **Identifying the stakeholders**
  - Bring together any interested parties. Arrange for a meeting with library personnel and other concerned individuals.
  - Determine potential sources of support:
    - local organizations
      - union
        - know which members of your group are dues paying members
        - encourage non members to join
        - review contract with union leadership
      - PTA/PTO
        - building
        - district
      - public library
      - local colleges, technical schools, and universities
    - professional library organizations
      - local and regional library associations and organizations
      - state library organization(s)
      - AASL
    - individuals
      - students
      - alumni
      - parents
      - teachers
      - administrators
      - community members
      - business owners
- **Crafting messages**

**Key:** When asking for support, messages should be child-centered. Write in terms of "what the students will gain or lose with a diminished educational opportunities" and not about "what the library will gain or lose." Stakeholders are interested in children, not libraries.

- Know the mission, vision, and goals of the educational institute.
- [Have program-specific quantitative empirical data available](#)
  - national and state standards and indicators taught,

- access to technology,
- integration of technology,
- impact on reading,
- equity,
- the libraries' connection to test scores,
- course load, and
- access to materials
- Also provide qualitative anecdotal information and evidence:
  - student quotes
  - brief stories
  - alumni testimonials
  - photographs
  - examples of student work
  - videos
- Collect and share relevant:
  - state study findings
  - local data that connects the learning in the library to
    - 21st Century Skills
    - the global economy
    - information technologies
    - reading skills
    - students' special needs
    - the district's educational needs
  - petition signatures
- Prepare talking points

**Key Point:** Connect the data to the educational problems, issues, goals and priorities in the district and demonstrate how the library supports them or is part of the solution.

Talking points should focus on education and students. The focus should NOT be libraries and librarians.

- - Know what is desired/be ready to make specific requests.
    - staffing and other support needed
    - amount of funding needed
  - Acknowledge the reality of the situation.
  - Say thank you for opportunity to speak and past support to
    - stakeholders
    - decision-makers
- **Sharing the message:**
  - Web site - use to:
    - Share information & build support
    - Coordinate efforts
    - Gather information (i.e. signatures)
    - Raise funds for effort
  - Offer to speak at meetings
    - Who
      - Parent meetings

- Community meetings
    - Teacher meetings
    - Administrative meetings
  - What-
    - Demonstrate database use
    - Demonstrate Web 2.0 tools and resources
    - Teach information and technology skills and strategies
- Coordinate or encourage letters to:
  - the editor
  - board
- Attend board meetings.
- Invite the local paper to do a story on student learning in the library.
- Invite law-makers and other decision-makers to observe or participate in student learning activities
- Encourage others to visit the library and participate in students learning experiences
- **Getting people involved:**
  - Be clear about what people are being asked to do:
    - obtain petition signatures
    - inform and recruit other supporters
    - attend a board or other meeting
      - be part of a large presence
      - speak
      - carry signs
    - write letters to the editor
    - meet with or contact school board members
    - meet with or write to the superintendent
  - Provide clear message information
  - Provide support
    - Identify contact people (If you have questions, call or email...)
    - Sample letters
      - [School library programs encourage reading](#) - from parent(s)
      - [When position cuts are made](#)

## **State and National Support: Contacting AASL and Other Associations:**

Asking for letters of support from state and national organizations:

- Provide:
  - contact person(s) with contact information
  - nature of changes/cuts
  - reasons for cuts
  - number of students to be impacted and how
  - meeting dates

- when cuts are to be made
- other relevant information about the
  - program
  - community
- people to be contacted:
  - names, positions and other helpful information
  - contact information
  - name, position and role
  - preferred contact method
    - email
    - fax
    - snail mail