

The Role of New Mexico's School Librarians

JOINT POSITION STATEMENT



NEW MEXICO'S SCHOOL LIBRARIANS provide support and expertise to public school students, educators, and parents. They are certified teachers who are endorsed in library and media services. They reach and teach all students in our schools, and provide safe and welcoming spaces, both physical and virtual. School librarians also engage with educators to provide guidance in selecting and utilizing the best digital tools for teaching so that all students have equitable access for learning.

According to the American Association of School Librarians (AASL 2018), a school librarian provides five essential interconnected school library roles:

1. **Leader,**
2. **Instructional partner,**
3. **Information specialist,**
4. **Teacher, and**
5. **Program administrator.**

Not only do they teach every student and collaborate with every teacher, they are also curriculum developers, curators of our schools' digital and print resources, and managers of our libraries' collections.

School librarians are committed to three core values: developing relationships, fostering learning, and encouraging reading. These values are closely connected to three key roles of school librarians.

- As **collaborative leaders**, school librarians focus on developing relationships with students, school staff, and community members.
- As **teachers**, school librarians foster learning through teaching critical language and literacy skills.
- As **media specialists** and **collection managers**, school librarians facilitate a love of reading and encourage a wide range of reading by curating and providing engaging, diverse, culturally responsive, and inclusive resources.

In New Mexico, the majority of school districts have at least one certified librarian. In smaller and more rural school districts, a central librarian often manages paraprofessionals working in school libraries.

The Role of School Librarians During Pandemic Schooling

New Mexico's school librarians have specialized skills to support students and educators with pandemic schooling. As instructional leaders within their schools, they are uniquely positioned to provide curated digital resources and instructional strategies that are responsive to the diverse needs of our students, educators, and school communities.

As we navigate these unprecedented times, students, families, educators, and school communities need support and access to resources. School librarians provide information, connect stakeholders with the resources they need, and work to ensure that all students are given the opportunities they deserve to learn, grow, and flourish.

In a school setting, librarians could "push in" to classes to teach rather than teaching in the library. They could also use the library or classroom to co-teach with a classroom teacher to meet the needs of the students they are both working with. The embedded librarian model may be useful as school librarians determine how to best meet the needs of students and staff.

In considering the roles of school librarians and their potential responsibilities during pandemic learning conditions, it is critical that district and school administrators consider the unique and diverse characteristics and needs of districts, school communities, students, librarians, and libraries. This document is intended to reflect the



Reentry Support Guidance

role of full-time, certified staff. We recommend that school districts employing part-time or paraprofessional librarian staff make necessary adjustments to the responsibilities. For additional recommendations, AASL has developed [guidelines for school librarianship](#) during pandemic schooling, including School Librarian Role in Pandemic Learning Conditions.

The Role of the School Librarian in Phased Reentry Models

According to [AASL's position statement on Appropriate Staffing for School Libraries](#), best practices call for a certified librarian in every school. In recent years, many academic libraries have turned to embedded librarianship to better meet the needs of patrons.

“Being an embedded librarian means being where your patrons are. Embedding looks different depending on the type of library and the goals of the project, but all embedded librarian projects are focused on being part of the patron's environment so that they can be available at points of need rather than expecting patrons to come to the library.”¹

As outlined in [New Mexico Public Education Department \(NMPED\) Reentry Guidance](#), New Mexico will take a phased approach to reentering schools: remote learning, hybrid, and full reentry. In each phase, New Mexico school librarians will provide students, staff, and community members with support and expertise.

REMOTE LEARNING PHASE

As collaborative leaders, librarians will:

- Collaborate with stakeholders to develop and co-teach essential skills lessons.
- Participate in, and/or lead, professional development opportunities related to virtual instruction, librarianship, technology, and staff support.
- Collaborate with administration to determine and manage possible uses of library space and materials.
- Support stakeholders with technology and copyright questions and needs.
- Help teachers gather or transform resources for virtual instruction.
- Collaborate with educators and community partners to ensure equity and learner access to the Internet and digital resources.

As teachers, embedded librarians will:

- Use social emotional learning (SEL) and culturally and linguistically responsive strategies to teach:
 - ▶ Lessons, synchronously or asynchronously.
 - ▶ Reading and other essential skills, including inquiry, research, and critical thinking skills.

- ▶ Digital citizenship.
- ▶ The use of eBooks and other digital resources.
- Foster a sense of community through activities such as virtual story times, online book clubs, “lunch bunch” online meetings, social media, email Reader's Advisory, and more.

As media specialists and collection managers, librarians will:

- Curate and recommend eBooks and digital resources.
- Offer virtual book talks.
- Continue purchasing and cataloging physical and digital resources to reflect their community's diverse needs.
- Curate lists of resources to support SEL, essential skills, and key curricular content.
- Develop and support methods for requesting and holding books (digital and non-digital).
- Consider circulation to students via scheduled pickup (curbside).
- Maintain or consider creating digital access points for library resources, such as websites and Google Classrooms.

HYBRID LEARNING PHASE

As collaborative leaders, librarians will:

- Review and implement all tasks listed in the remote learning phase, as appropriate.
- Plan with teachers for the delivery of instructional physical materials.
- Collaborate with school and/or state administrators to determine instructional methods that best meet the needs of individual school sites.
- Collaborate with school and/or district administrators to develop circulation procedures that best meet the needs of individual school sites.
- Coordinate a schedule for student and staff use of library space and resources.

As teachers, embedded librarians will:

- Review and implement all tasks listed in the remote learning phase, as appropriate.
- Determine how to safely meet the instructional needs of students. Library instruction may take place:

- ▶ In a “push in” model in classrooms during in-person days.
- ▶ On fully virtual days/times.

As media specialists and collection managers, librarians will:

- Review and implement all tasks listed in the remote learning phase, as appropriate
- Determine circulation protocols, which may include:
 - ▶ Supporting students and staff with requesting books and distributing books.
 - ▶ Limiting staff access to physical library space to check out books for instructional purposes.
 - ▶ Limiting circulation of physical books to students via scheduled pickup (curbside and/or library pick-up).
 - ▶ Limiting delivery of physical books to “in-person” students.



FULL REENTRY PHASE

As collaborative leaders, librarians will:

- Review and implement all tasks listed in the remote and hybrid learning phases, as appropriate.
- Employ print/media to educate library users about the protocols of using shared spaces, based on ongoing research and recommendations from public health experts.

As teachers, embedded librarians will:

- Review and implement all tasks listed in the remote and hybrid learning phases, as appropriate.
- Determine how to safely meet the instructional needs of students. Library instruction may take place:

- ▶ In a “push in” model in classrooms.
- ▶ As remote instruction from the library.
- ▶ In safe socially-distant library settings.

As media specialists and collection managers, librarians will:

- Review and implement all tasks listed in the remote and hybrid learning phases, as appropriate.
- Establish and adhere to safety protocols for the circulation and checkout of physical books.

Use of the School Library in Phased Reentry Models

Library staff will collaborate with school administrators, educators, and janitorial staff to develop library safety protocols.

Library Safety Protocols

- Follow all applicable [COVID Safe Practices](#).
- Enforce CDC safety and social distancing guidelines with signs/displays.
- Provide hand sanitizer near entrances and exits.
- Provide sanitizer and cleaning wipes near all staff computers/copiers.
- Place plastic desk shields/sneeze guards at the checkout desk.
- Wear masks or face shields in the library (all library staff and visitors, while mandated and/or recommended by state health orders).
- Observe six feet social distancing all times.
- Restrict use of shared computers.
- Encourage students to touch only books they plan to check out.
- Limit shelf access to individual students (one at a time per section).
- Clean high-touch areas of the library between each group that visits.
- Include the library in the school-wide deep cleaning schedule.

Book Handling Procedures

- Quarantine books and AV items, according to [current research on library circulated materials](#), for three to four days (72 to 96 hours) prior to check in or handling.
- Require use of hand sanitizer and/or gloves when pulling and shelving books.
- Restrict access to shelves for materials.
- Disable student self checkout and circulation computers to avoid shared keypads.

As discussed in [NMPED Reentry Guidance](#), library spaces may need to be utilized by school staff in hybrid and full reentry phases to ensure social distancing during classroom instruction. In the event that the school library is used as a classroom space, it is essential that library resources remain quarantined. This may require physically separating physical collections (books) from classes with ropes or barriers, or covering shelving units with butcher paper, cloth, etc.

