

# Seen But Not Read: Advocating for (School) Libraries

Jen Park, Community Engagement & Talent Development Specialist, Ramapo  
Catskill Library System

Matthew Park, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of African History and Global Social  
Sciences at Bard High School Early College, Newark, NJ

Dawn Zeig, Library Media Specialist at Malcolm S. Mackay School in Tenafly, NJ



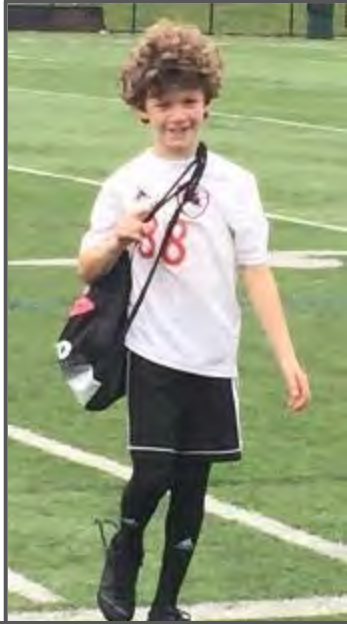
# Objectives

This presentation will provide specific insight into the how's and why's of advocating for the school library system as well as advocacy for libraries in general.

Participants will:

- Learn the timeline of events and gain insight into when it is appropriate to involve town parents, how to gain community involvement, professional library organizations, and the media
- Receive examples of Op Ed pieces as well as instructions on how to engage with a Board of Education
- Become further aware that advocacy extends beyond their own institution-type (academic, public, school) and that as a team we can support information literacy on a larger scale.





### Current Book Checkout Schedule

#### Grade K

Check out every other week  
Maximum of 2 books

#### Grade 1

Check out every other week  
Maximum of 3 books

#### Grade 2

Check out every other week  
Maximum of 3 books

#### Grade 3

Check out every other week  
Maximum of 3 books

#### Grade 4

Check out every three weeks  
Maximum of 3 books



#### Grade 5

Check out every three weeks  
Maximum of 3 books



Dear Parents,

My name is Mrs. Vander Pyl. I am thrilled to work with your child this year as their Library Media Specialist. My goal is to help your child become a critical thinker, problem solver, skillful researcher, and responsible digital citizen.

This year, we are adjusting book checkout to allow more time to focus on 21st Century skills such as: critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, to name a few. Book checkout from the library media center will be every three weeks. We are extremely fortunate that the K-5 students have access to a wide range books in their classroom libraries. They will be allowed to use these books on a daily basis.

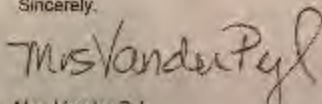
The Book Checkout Calendar, detailing when your child's class is scheduled to check out books, will be posted on our new media center website. You can navigate to the site by following the steps below:

- 1) Go to [www.mahwah.k12.nj.us](http://www.mahwah.k12.nj.us)
- 2) Click on your child's school in the top center.
- 3) Under "Departments" in the top left, click "Media Center".

Should a snow day or scheduling conflict fall on a book checkout day, the calendar will be adjusted to ensure each class can exchange their books.

I am excited to get to know your child and work with them this school year.

Sincerely,



Mrs. Vander Pyl

[svanderm@mahwah.k12.nj.us](mailto:svanderm@mahwah.k12.nj.us)



**Current B**

**Grade K**

Check out

Maximum

**Grade 3**

Check out

Maximum

**Proposed E**

Changes from

**Grade K**

Check out

Maximum

**Grade 3**

Check out

Maximum



other week  
oks

three weeks  
oks

her week  
ks

her week  
ks

# From Questions to Actions



**A systematic and methodical approach  
in navigating the system**

# Step One: Addressing an Issue

- What's happening and why? What is the context?
  - National: See Bill and Melinda Gates
  - Local: [Every district goal for 2019-20 was tech related](#), STEAM Lab
  - Personal: Director of Curriculum published on “maker spaces,” Library Director was a tech specialist





## Step One: Addressing an Issue (Cont.)

- Contact professional organizations
- Follow the Chain of Command
  - Teacher--->Principal---->Superintendent/Administration<---->Board of Education





50 East Huron Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60611 2785  
USA

Telephone: 312 544 8700  
Fax: 312 440 9574  
Toll Free: 800 545 2483  
E-mail: [ala@ala.org](mailto:ala@ala.org)  
[www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)

# ALA American Library Association

November 1, 2018

C. Lauren Schoen, Ed.D., Superintendent  
Board of Education Members  
Mahwah Township Public Schools  
60 Ridge Road  
Mahwah, NJ 07430

Dear Superintendent Schoen, President Barron, and Members of the Board of Education:  
Years of research has shown that reading for pleasure improves student attitudes towards reading and learning, self-confidence, and empathy. We learn that Mahwah Township Public Schools has restricted access to books for students.

We applaud the district's commitment to standards-based instruction. *School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Librarianship* is a commitment. These forward-looking standards provide students with diverse perspectives and experiences; collaboration towards individual resources for personal and academic growth; reflective practices that foster innovation; and capable and ethical use of information technology. We integrate these standards across grade levels and content areas, with a broad range of resources that facilitate learning and reflect diverse backgrounds, and personal interests. Classroom libraries simply can't provide the resources that will serve all learners.



October 31, 2018

Dr. C. Lauren Schoen, Superintendent  
Mahwah Township Public Schools  
60 Ridge Rd.  
Mahwah, NJ 07430

Dear Dr. Schoen,



Ms. Christina Cucci, President  
New Jersey Association of School Librarians  
PO Box 1160  
Springfield, NJ 07081

November 1, 2018

Dr. C. Lauren Schoen, Superintendent  
Mahwah Township Public Schools  
60 Ridge Road  
Mahwah, NJ 07430

Dear Dr. Schoen:

As President of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL), I am writing to urge you to allow students free access to book check-out at their school library. As the state-wide organization for school library media specialists, one of our guiding principles is that reading is essential for students' personal and academic success. Furthermore, research indicates that reading 15-20 minutes a day improves reading skills and having reading choice for independent reading is a key component (Kern). Although students may have access to classroom libraries, school libraries are the centers that provide the best utilization and diversity of resources to match not only the entire school curriculum but also students' interests.

Association, I must express our deep concerns regarding the new ability to check out books in the school media centers on the day detrimental to the educational experience of the students.

ation of a certified school media specialist is critical in providing a grade level. Unfortunately, when access to checking out books in suffer both academically and socially.

# Step Two: Get Organized

- Understand your audience

- Board of Education

- Supposed to be above the Superintendent...
    - Elected members from the community
    - Variety of backgrounds
    - In Mahwah many have ties to the business community

- Educators

- Again, the superintendent...
    - Passionate about their work
    - Can have a strained relationship with Board and Superintendent
    - Often reticent to say anything in public
    - Retirees were key!



# Step Two: Get Organized (Cont.)

- Understand your audience

- Parents

- Busy people who are passionate about their child's education
    - Want to be involved in scholastics
    - Each parent has a strength
    - Speaking at BOE meeting



# Speaking to the Board of Ed

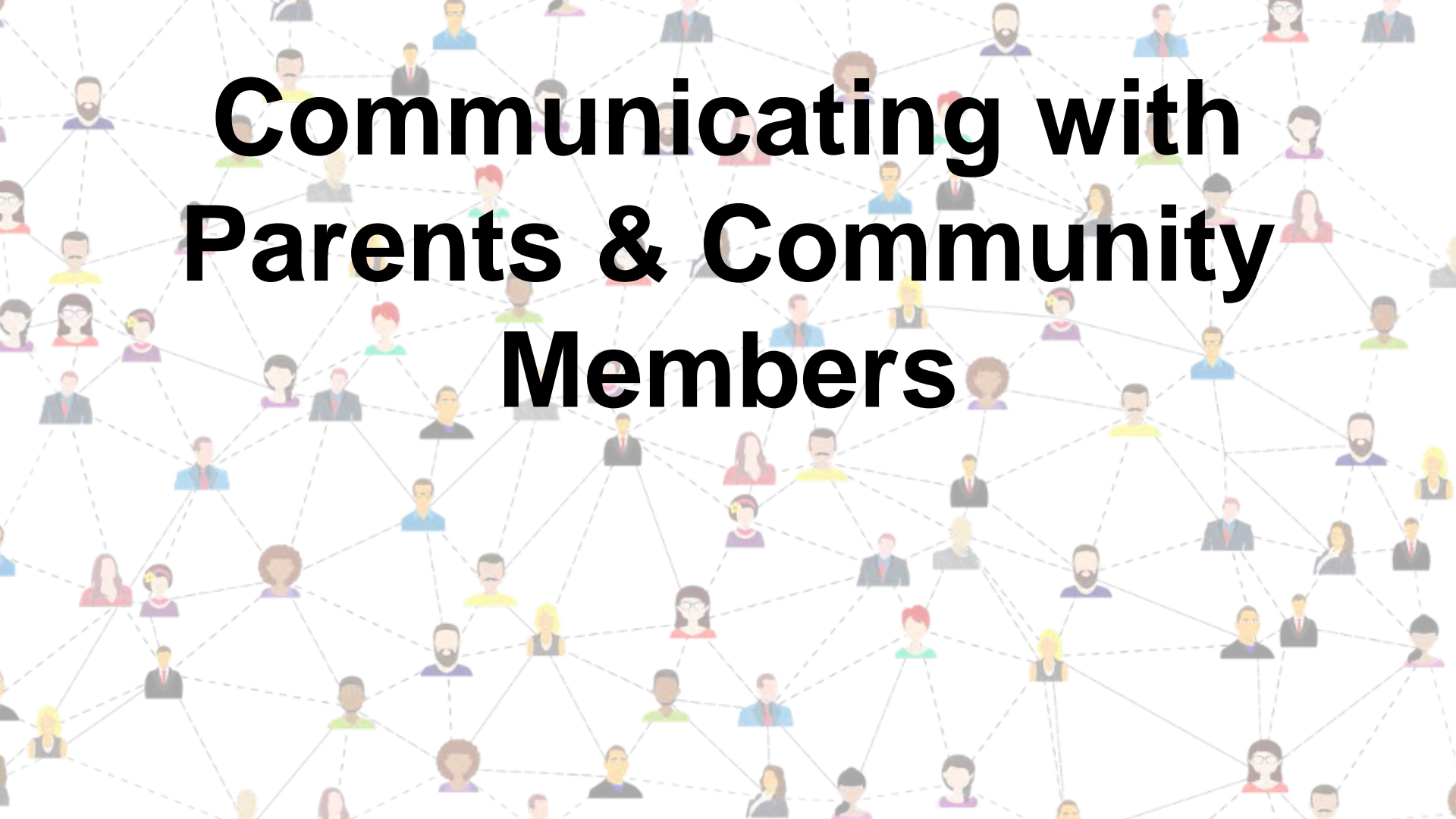


Many expressed support

Fewer came to the Board meetings

Fewer still were willing to speak publicly

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eHH144T5CyyW-f7oU2vaHibddOUHVtnS/view?usp=sharing>



# Communicating with Parents & Community Members



# Tools of Communication





On Mon, Oct 29, 2018 at 11:10 PM Jen Park <[parkjen101@gmail.com](mailto:parkjen101@gmail.com)> wrote:

Hi All,



← **Jen Park** <[parkjen101@gmail.com](mailto:parkjen101@gmail.com)>

Sat, Nov 17, 2018, 6:10 PM



to Matt, alepore, Dorwina, Julia, Amy, Anne, Cathy, Cheryl, Dawn, Drew, Eileen, Jackie, Jessica, Jessie, KLMCOORIMLISK, Miri, Morgan, Natasha, Patty, SALLOUM, Steven, Yvo

Hi All,

I hope everyone has recovered from the winter weather! This is the follow-up e-mail from the BOE meeting. While it is hopeful that this new rule will be retracted. we still have much work to do. The first step is writing a thank you e-mail to the Superintendent and the BOE members. I would suggest something along the lines of: *We appreciate your comments and we look forward to hearing the results of the internal assessment in January. Please consider parent and student feedback as part of the process.*

Contact information for the BOE can be found here: <https://www.mahwah.k12.nj.us/domain/135>

There are still a great number of concerns: The librarians were not consulted from the onset (Schoen stated this to be true), there is no method of assessment or evaluation of this program (but it will be a "thoughtful process" among the administration and librarians), the lack of transparency concerning our children's education, and the twisting of words to put forth new programs in order to sidestep current governance practice (calling it a "change in curriculum delivery" vs "change in curriculum" allowed the group to not bring this to the attention of the curriculum board).

We need to let them know that we have not nor WILL NOT forget about this issue as we await to learn of the assessment and evaluation of the program. I will be in attendance at the 12/12 BOE meeting--please consider joining me. I do not intend on speaking, but will certainly be there listening and tacitly showing my support for this issue. I will hold a re-group meeting the weekend following the BOE meeting. Please be on the lookout for an e-mail from me. And, of course, feel free to call/text me!

Best,  
Jen

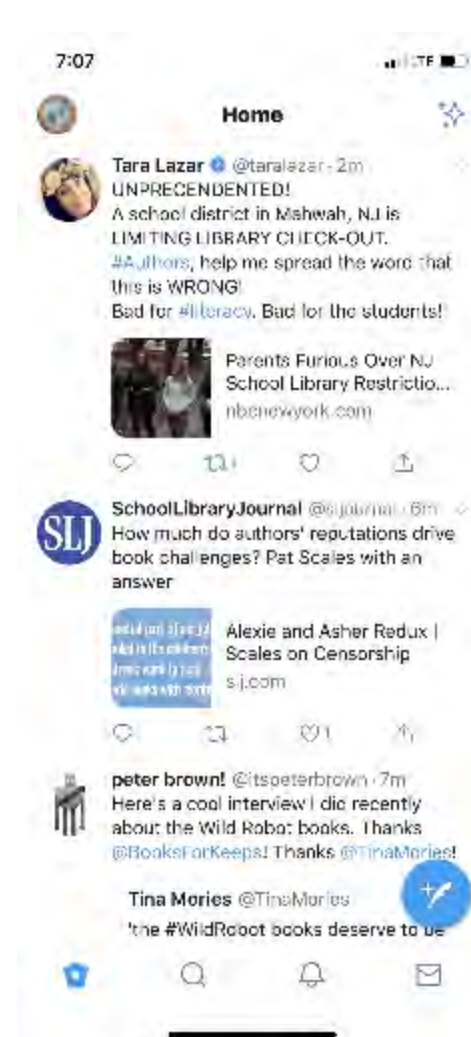
quite strong.





# Getting the Word out Outside the Community

- How
- Why
- When





A last resort:

Media Involvement





Oct 29, 2018 · 

Anyone have a contact at news stations or local newspapers?



Mandy Elizabeth

4 Comments

Then It Happened

# Why did the Press Release Land?

1. Conjure the hordes and you lure the media: Parents **crowded**, joined by librarians, teachers, social workers, educators, and representatives of the American Library Association (ALA), the New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL), and the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA), who echoed the parents.
1. Explain the harm: Tens of thousands of fewer checkouts! Students are upset and discouraged! What harm does this do in the long term?
1. Plant the seeds of hope: This harm can be reversed, we will keep fighting and we will win!



Bad  
Press in  
Pleasant  
Ville!





## New Jersey school district shifts library focus further from books to tech

Posted: 7:31 PM, Nov 14, 2018 Updated: 10:04 AM, Nov 15, 2018

By: Christine Kelly



Why we redesigned the website

## Parents In NJ School District Fear New Library Policy Could Turn Kids Away From Reading

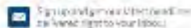
November 21, 2018 at 11:07 am Find Us On: All Devices, Bergen County, Local TV, New Jersey



FOLLOW US



OUR | NEWSLETTER



Sign up today to get our latest news and offers delivered right to your inbox.

## Library shouldn't limit book rentals to boost kids' screen time | Editorial

Posted Nov 29, 2018





Important



# Questions?

**Jen Park**

**jen@rcls.org**

**Matt Park**

**mpark@bhsec.bard.edu**

**Dawn Zeig**

**Dzeig@tenafly.k1  
2.nj.us**