

**TESTIMONY OF PATRICIA A. TUMULTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION  
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
SCHOOL FACILITIES**

**MARCH 25, 2003**

Good afternoon. I am Patricia Tumulty, Executive Director of the New Jersey Library Association. I am joined this afternoon by our State Librarian Norma Blake. We would like to discuss an issue which is of great concern to the library community.

As funding for new schools becomes available we are seeing more and more newspaper articles and news coverage about community and renaissance schools. Most articles indicate that these schools may have shared facilities community facilities. Examples of shared services in these facilities most often mention a library. The recent announcement of the new renaissance school in Trenton indicated that there would be a “community library” included in the design.

Unfortunately, as representatives of the library community we have had not been involved in any discussions regarding planning, designing or building these “community libraries”. We have not seen any definitions or standards for libraries in either a community school or a renaissance school. The most basic operational questions have not even been addressed. Who are these libraries designed to serve; how are they to be administered and how are they to be operated. These are fundamental in discussing what type of library service will be provided in this facility.

We believe that a strong school media program is essential to a quality educational program. All students must access to a full stocked library with materials and technology to do research; have a certified educational media specialist to guide research and to teach information literacy skills and have a bright attractive facility conducive to learning. No student should have access to a cart of books delivered to a classroom and consider this library services.

Providing public library service, however, in a school building is a very different situation. It is not a simple situation. A school library and a public library are very different in purpose, mission and responsibilities. Before such facilities can be joined many factors must be taken into consideration. For example, security. A public library is generally open in the evening and serves residents from preschoolers to older adults.

The New Jersey Library Association and the Education Media Association, which represents school media specialists, have both developed position papers on this topic. I have included for you a pamphlet that briefly outlines the roles opportunities and challenges of school and public libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This pamphlet discusses the shared goals of school and public

libraries. It also provides examples of basic questions that must be answered before considering a school/ public library facility.

We strongly believe that a definitive process must be established to discuss the establishment of a library in a new school facility. Community schools and renaissance schools can not go forward with vague statements regarding the library facility. Representatives from the school library community, the public library community and the State Library must be involved to ensure that a newly designed facility can provide quality library services for all residents of that community. We must have common definitions of what constitutes library service in these facilities and have a process to discuss the feasibility of providing library services in a shared facility. Without such a process we may be developing libraries that will not meet the needs of our students or of our communities.

We look forward to working with the committee to establish such a process and guidelines.