April 5, 2013

Lori White, Superintendent of Schools
Sarasota County School District
1960 Landings Boulevard
Sarasota, Florida 34231

Dear Superintendent White,

In these times of difficult financial decisions for district school leaders and administrators, the Florida Library Association strongly urges you to reconsider removing library media specialists from media centers. Your support for literacy over the years has been noted by the Association’s members and we understand that these decisions must be difficult ones.

As recent research shows, a full-time school library media specialist makes a critical difference in boosting student achievement (http://tinyurl.com/b4kamx4). Library Media Centers serve crucial instructional roles in their schools, providing access to information resources; large and small group instruction; information upon request; and access to the Internet and various other media and computing applications. These services are essential for developing critical thinking and information literacy skills; improving standardized test scores; providing support for teachers; and enhancing classroom performance.

Adequate staffing is vital for library media centers to provide these services to students and teachers in the schools they serve. To meet the needs of their schools appropriately, all library media centers require professional certified media specialists, well-trained staff, sufficient facilities to accommodate local needs, core collections and resources, and current information technologies.

The Florida Library Association strongly supports quality library media services and the Florida Association of Media in Education’s enclosed position statement. School library media specialists are needed now, more than ever.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Barbara J. Stites, President
Florida Library Association

cc:  Jane Goodwin, Chair
     Shirley Brown, Vice Chair
     Caroline Zucker
     Dr. Carol Todd
     Frank Kovach
     Cora Dunkley, FAME
Eliminating School Librarians in Pasco County

Position Statement from Florida Association for Media in Education (FAME):

Florida Association for Media in Education (FAME) finds Superintendent Kurk Browning's idea of eliminating school librarians in Pasco County schools disappointing. The thought of placing professional school librarians in classrooms as teachers, where their professional skills will be limited to serving one group of students rather than using the professionals' skills for all who come into the school libraries for various needs, is devastating. Further, media technologists cannot respond to the variety of needs of teachers teaching in numerous subject areas. The proposed move seems to ignore the impact, supported by research, school librarians have on the academic success of students in the school community. School librarians are using the Common Core State Standards and embedding themselves in collaboration with teachers to plan and teach lessons to engage students, and to make them lifelong learners. This collaborative effort supports the mission of the national organization that advocates for school librarians, the American Association of School Librarians, which states: "The school librarian leads in building 21st-Century skills by collaborating with classroom teachers to design engaging learning tasks that integrate key critical thinking skills, technology and information literacy skills with subject area content." (http://www.ala.org/aasl/aasliissues/positionstatements/collegecareerstandards)

FAME hopes Superintendent Browning will reconsider his decision and keep school librarians in school libraries where they will be available to provide the necessary assistance students and teachers so desperately need.