



# *Rhode Island Library Association*

May 14, 2009

**President**  
Christopher LaRoux  
**Vice-President**  
Laura Marlane  
**Secretary**  
Jennifer Bond  
**Treasurer**  
Cindy Lunghofer  
**NELA Councilor**  
Adrienne Gallo  
**ALA Councilor**  
David Macksam  
**Members-at-Large**  
Janet Levesque  
Robert Kelly

To: Board of Regents, Rhode Island Department of Education

From: Christopher La Roux, President, Rhode Island Library Association

RE: Basic Education Program update

The Rhode Island Library Association Board has reviewed closely the revised BEP, giving particular attention to the section covering library media programs. If the overall goal of the updated BEP is to ensure that school students are proficient in specific subject matter before graduating, then it is our opinion that library media programs must be taught by professional school library media specialists. To quote: "Each LEA shall ensure that its library-media program addresses the Rhode Island Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning by attending to... Information Literacy... Independent Learning..." We find it hard to imagine how a local education agency (LEA) will fulfill the requirement of making students proficient in Information Literacy and Independent Learning without the expertise of media specialists who hold both a Master in Library and Information Science degree, as well as a teaching degree.

The Board of Regents and the committee that has worked on revising the BEP recognize the importance of the school library and the school library media program. You recognize that in order to meet the State's requirements for high school graduation – and all of the learning that culminates in a diploma – students must have the skills to access, evaluate and utilize information. Students must know how to separate the most reliable and important information from the enormous amount of data available today. A professional library media specialist best teaches the skills necessary. In addition to assisting students with research, the media specialist evaluates and purchases informational materials that are both age and reading level appropriate, and provides guidance and inspiration to students in reading and exploring information that matters to them.

Research continues to show that school libraries staffed by qualified library media specialists are needed to have a positive impact on student academic achievement. Thus, the Rhode Island Library Association Board requests that the Board of Regents include language in the revised BEP that mandates that highly qualified professional media specialists teach in every school library. Further, we request that minimum professional staffing levels be indicated that will ensure that Rhode Island's students are best served by these professionals.

*RILA ∞ PO Box 6765 ∞ Providence, RI 02940*  
*www.rilibraryassoc.org*