

**Background:**

Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School is Maryland's first charter school set up by a group of dedicated parents in 2002. The school follows the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, an education visionary, who believed that all children learn best through hands on, self-directed exploration of their environment. Currently, MVMPCS serves 299 students in pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grades. They are housed in an old church building with limited space. Their current "library" is a small room (about 120 square feet) which features approximately 1,000 books, most of which were donated by various families throughout its history. A great number of the books are outdated, in need of repair, and irrelevant to student interests and curriculum needs. MVMPCS does have access to FCPS databases and their OPAC system for cataloguing and checking out books. A parent volunteer is in charge of checking in and out books at scheduled times during the day. Many teachers resort to bringing their class in small groups on field trips to the local public library, which is about a twenty minute walk away, for books. MVMPCS, being a charter school, has a tight budget, having to pay for its facility costs and other expenses out of its own budget. The current principal is interested in augmenting our selection of books and has asked the school's Governing Council for a budget to buy more materials. She and I discussed moving the current collection into a larger room which is now being used for small group instruction, to make room for more books and materials, if it should happen. We also discussed the constraints in the budget and the unlikelihood of us having any money in the near future to implement a full library media program with a media specialist. She was open to looking at grants and finding people who would be willing to help drum up support from local businesses as well.

# Advocacy Action Plan

## Assessing Your Message

Their Agenda	LMC Agenda
<b>Identifying Your Message</b>	
<p><b>What is important to the target audience?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student achievement is of utmost importance to all the stakeholders of our school</li> </ul> <p><b>What is foremost in their mind?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our principal is especially interested in increasing reading scores of FARM, IEP, and ELL students in our school</li> <li>• Teachers need support in meeting the demands of the Common Core curriculum</li> <li>• Students want good books to read and resources for the research projects.</li> <li>• District officials are interested in test scores and evidence of growth</li> </ul> <p><b>How can you link up to their agenda?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building a school library with a qualified media specialist will provide many valuable resources that will improve test scores by supporting teachers, students and administrators</li> </ul> <p><b>What can the LMS do to help move their agenda forward?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for the implementation of a school library using research, support from other librarians in the county, find available grants, get support from parents and teachers</li> </ul> <p><b>How can you benefit them and their needs?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A school library will have the resources available to support the curriculum and encourage reading for pleasure</li> <li>• A school librarian will be collaborate with teachers and offer curriculum support</li> <li>• A school librarian can help administration with staff development and provide added leadership in the building</li> </ul>	<p><b>What is important to the LMC Agenda?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping to increase student achievement at MVMPCS</li> <li>• Infusing a love of reading in all students</li> <li>• Helping teachers and students access the curriculum</li> <li>• Helping to integrate technology</li> <li>• Providing a wide variety of resources including excellent print and digital materials</li> </ul> <p><b>How can you fulfill LMC goals by linking to their agenda?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As studies show, school libraries serve to increase student learning, as well as help develop lifelong readers</li> </ul> <p><b>What services can you provide?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff development &amp; training on latest technology and educational innovations.</li> <li>• Collaboration at team meetings</li> <li>• Gathering resources for various units of study</li> <li>• Helping students with research process and finding resources/books to read</li> <li>• Giving book talks</li> </ul> <p><b>What resources do you have?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A computer lab</li> <li>• A medium sized room that is currently being used for small group instruction can be converted into a library space</li> <li>• A collection of about 1,000 books</li> <li>• Access to a variety of databases provided by FCPS</li> <li>• Many talented parents in our school community who might be able to help with fund raising, grant writing, and developing community partnerships</li> </ul> <p><b>What benefits can you provide?</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the added resources and leadership a school library and librarian can provide, test scores are sure to increase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support administration by providing staff trainings</li> <li>• Support teachers by helping them find resources and materials</li> <li>• Adding a school library and turning it into a “special” will benefit teachers by giving them more planning time</li> <li>• Students having library as a special will benefit from the regular visits to the library where they will learn research skills and get help with book selection, etc.</li> </ul>
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### Assessing Your Message and Reporting Guide

Identifying the Agenda	
Target Audience	LMC Agenda
<p><b>School Administrators and Governing Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boost whole school student achievement</li> <li>• Increase FARM, ELL, and IEP student group achievement</li> <li>• Have a place for students to access reading materials for both pleasure and information</li> <li>• Have a leader in the school who is an expert on technology integration and can provide staff development and support to teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a new learning space by implementing a library media program at MVMPCS</li> <li>• Get parents and other community members involved in the school through the new library media program and its development</li> <li>• Support teachers and administrators in their goal to increase student learning</li> </ul>

**What are the benefits:** The school as a whole will benefit tremendously by the addition of a school library media program. Administrators will get help with staff development and have the added benefit of an additional school leader. Test scores will be sure to increase as the result of the program and therefore administrators will see a concrete increase in overall student achievement. Since the administrators are concerned especially for targeted sub-groups, the new school library can be set up with them in mind (added Spanish materials and other multicultural resources, liberal book check-out policies, digital technologies that support struggling readers, etc.) Teachers will benefit by having a dedicated teacher who is familiar with all of the many resources available that will help them in the delivery of their curriculum. They will have somebody to go to when they need help planning a lesson or integrating technology. Teachers will also appreciate the support in developing a love of reading in their students, making their jobs in the classroom all the more easier. Students will be so happy to have a place to go to pick out a good book or find a resource on the topic they are studying. It will also be an additional place for them to go to work with partners on research projects for class.

**What service is provided:** The school library will be the heart of the school. It will have a wide selection of books representing diverse cultures and perspectives. There will be a solid collection of nonfiction materials addressing curriculum needs and student interest. Ideally, the library will also have the latest technology, digital resources, and audio visual equipment to address the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. A school librarian will collaborate with teachers, give critical lessons to students, provide staff training, and serve as a leader in the school community.

**Evaluation:** The plan will be a success when a school library is funded in our school's operating budget. In order for it to be successful, many people will have to come together and work hard to make it happen. This fact alone will strengthen our community and create a whole group of people with direct and vested interested in the success of the library once it is launched. The committee we create will continue on as the champions of the library to see that our goals for its success are met. We will have a built-in advocacy committee that will continue to work to ensure that it is indeed meeting the needs of all the stakeholders.

**Last Step: What is your key message? Are benefits included in the message?**

The key message is that MVMPCS needs a fully functioning library media program to help support teachers, students, and administrators in their quest to boost student achievement. The benefits are almost innumerable. However, teachers will find their responsibilities eased with the added support of a library and school librarians, administrators will find their responsibility eased with the added leadership and staff development support, and students will finally be able to find the books and resources they need. Busy parents who have guilt about lack of time to bring their children to the library will also be happy to see their children coming home with quality books and resources. All of the stakeholders will see an increase in overall student achievement.

## Advocacy Campaign – MVMPCS Needs a Library Media Program

### Step 1 - Mission:

The mission of this advocacy campaign is to gain a fully functioning library media center at MVMPCS.

### Step 2 – Purposes for Planning:

MVMPCS does not have enough books or resources to support their students or teachers. In a survey conducted by ALA and published in School Library Journal, the standard number of books a school library should have is an average of 27 books per pupil for elementary students and 19 books per pupil in middle. Given MVMPC's population of about 250 elementary students and 50 middle school students, their school library should have at least 6,800 books. That leaves them about 5,000 books short.

There are a multitude of studies linking student achievement to strong school library programs. MVMPCS has typically fared well on state and county assessments; however, there is always room for improvement. The school's administrator is especially concerned with increasing the reading scores of ELL, FARM, and IEP students. A school library will be a huge help in this endeavor with its greater access to relevant, interesting, and diverse reading selections.

### Step 3 – Products:

I hope to gather a group of dedicated people who share my vision of a fully functioning media center. Together we will work to gain the support of the staff and school community, find ways to raise money, and get a school library media program embedded into the school's operating budget. Using the budgeted money we will purchase current materials catering to the school's curriculum, student interest, and teacher's requests. I hope to weed out the old materials from our current collection and move our school's library to a larger room in the building. We will also need to obtain new shelving, tables, comfortable chairs, and possibly some new technology such as a/v equipment, tablets, eReaders, and computers. I also hope to see the hiring of a qualified media specialist at some point in the process to help with the implementation and execution of the new library program.

### Step 4 – People Involved:

Name: Principal

Reason: She is the school's administrator and her support will ultimately be needed if this plan is to get off the ground.

Name: Teachers

Reason: The teachers' support will be crucial in getting the message out. They need to believe in my message that a school library will not only help them, but their students too. They will most likely need to be willing to make sacrifices in order to put a library into the school's operating budget and so I will want their full support. They have a lot of influence over decisions that are made in the school and can make or break this endeavor.

Name: Parents

Reason: Being a charter school, the parents in our community have a strong voice in how things are run in our school. There are parent members on our Governing Council who have the power to help get the library into the operating budget. We also have many parents in our community who have strengths in writing grants, working with local businesses, and marketing our school. I will want as many parents on board as possible.

Name: Students

Reason: The students are ultimately the reason why we want a library at our school. They are the ones who stand to benefit the most from this endeavor and so I will most definitely want their support. I will want to involve them as much as possible in my campaign so that they can be the constant reminder for why we are doing this.

Name: Other school librarians

Reason: School librarians from around the county have first-hand experience and know exactly what the benefits are because they live them each day. Their voice will be a valuable addition to our campaign.

Name: School's Governing Council and Board of Trustees

Reason: The Governing Council will ultimately make the decision to include a library program in the school's operating budget. We will need their support in order to make it happen. The Governing Council has several committees the might be able to help with fundraising and campaign efforts. The Board of Trustees holds our charter and has a vested interest in the success of our school. They can allot funds from their budget to help our media center succeed and throw their support behind it with fund raising and campaign efforts.

Name: Local businesses

Reason: If we could gain the support of local businesses for fundraising and spreading the word about our need for a school library, it would go a long way in helping us to succeed.

Name: FCPS's Central Office/Library Media Supervisor

Reason: Having the support of county Library Media officials will also go a long way in helping us meet our goal. They can provide advice and resources along the way.

### **Step 5 - Committee Building:**

In order to gather a team of people willing to put the energy and time into this effort I will look for the most enthusiastic supporters among students, parents, teachers and administrators. I would want to have at least one of each on my team so that we can be representatives of the whole school community. In particular, we have a school librarian from Spring Ridge whose children go to our school and I know she will be more than willing to help out as she has done much already for our school library. I would also approach the parents who are setting up the school's book fair this year because they have done an amazing job networking with a local book store and I believe they would be on board with helping me in my endeavor. I would also survey teachers informally to see if I could find one who might be interested in helping out. I am sure I could also get several students from each level to join the task force. Our students are always eager to help out.

### **Step 6 - Responsibilities of the Committee Members:**

#### Students:

- Spreading the word to their peers what a school library could do for them and why it would be so great
- Visiting other school libraries to come up with lists of things they would like in their own school library
- Attending meetings with local business to help bring the face of our school, our children, to the forefront
- Making posters to hang up around the school promoting their favorite idea for a school library
- Taking their message to a Governing Council meeting where they will tell why they would love a library in their school

#### Teachers:

- Talking to their teammates about the value of a school library, showing the connections between a strong library program and a Montessori education
- Disseminating brochures and other promotional materials to colleagues and parents
- Speaking at a Governing Council meeting where they will express the need for added curriculum and technology support to help in the goal of increasing student test scores

#### Parents:

- Spreading the word in the school community about our push for a school library
- Using their various talents in networking, advertising, communicating, and grant writing to find the resources we'll need to get this library going
- Reach out to our Board of Trustees, local businesses, and other charitable organizations
- Speaking at Governing Council meetings to get the message across that they support a school library program
- Present fundraising ideas and grant information in order to show that there is a way to fund the library in a large part with outside sources

**School Librarians:**

- Educate the community on the importance of school libraries to student achievement.
- Gathering helpful statistics for the budget like number of books per pupil, average price per book, average school librarian salaries, etc.
- Finding resources for purchasing books, materials, and furniture
- Help advertise the campaign through brochures and posters
- Create a MVMPCS school library web page with information and links to promotional videos, websites and studies showing why libraries are important
- Create a Facebook account where community members can go to learn more about the effort and sign up to support it

**Step 7 - Criteria for Assessment of Current Program:**

Since we don't have much of a library at all, it seems best to start with a basic overview of what a library program is (as opposed to using a lengthy checklist made for an already established library program). According to the AASL, "The mission of the school library program is to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information. The school librarian empowers students to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information." It goes on to state that this will happen when students have access to materials representing a variety of formats including "up-to-date- high quality, varied literature" and that students are instructed in "using, evaluating, and producing information and ideas through active use of a broad range of appropriate tools, resources, and information technologies." With these criteria we can see that our school library is lacking in even the basics. With less than an average of four books per student in our school, we cannot say that we are providing a sufficient amount of reading material for our students, added to it being far from up-to-date and high quality. Without a school librarian or the necessary tools, you will also be hard-pressed to find students learning how to access information technologies or use appropriate tools for finding information.

**Step 8 - Time Requirements:**

The effort to get a school library program into the operating budget of our school will take at least one year. The planning process itself: gathering members for the committee, educating the community, collecting information from students, disseminating brochures, building a website, and finding funding sources will take at least six to eight months. Once all of the preliminary work is done, the committee members will have to request a time to present their findings to the Governing Council. Once that happens, it will be up to the Governing Council. They will determine first if the school library program fits with the vision of the school, second if it is indeed essential to meeting our school's goals, and finally if it is financially feasible based on the fundraising possibilities presented by parents. They might say we can go ahead and start fund raising and base their decision on whether or not we can come up with viable ways to fund the opening of the library and sustain it indefinitely. In that case, fund raising and grant writing can take at least another six months if not more.

**Step 9 - Resources:**

The biggest resources in this endeavor are the people. We will need dedicated, resourceful people who can devote the time and energy needed to get this going. People with talents in promoting libraries, grant writing, marketing, working with businesses, and fundraising will be essential for this to work.

**Step 10 - Timeline:****Phase 1 – Three Months: “Preparation”**

- Poll staff, parents, and students about their attitudes towards a school library
- Gather committee members
- Gather student representatives from each level and bring them to a local school library to make their list of wants
- Collect statistics and supporting information for the campaign
- Make brochures and posters, build a website, start a Facebook page
- Have committee members start looking for grants, local business partnerships, and fundraising opportunities
- Make a plan for the library: how many books will you need, what furniture, what the space will look like, how much money you will need to make it all happen

**Phase 2 – Three Months: “Get the Word Out”**

- Present the brochures, posters, website, Facebook page etc. to the administrator
- Ask for time at a staff meeting to talk to teachers about your campaign
- Get permission to hang up the posters, disseminate the brochures and advertise the website and Facebook page
- Take student representatives to a local school library and have them record their favorite things
- Have students make posters and get the word out to their classmates
- Continue looking for grants, local business partnerships, and fundraising opportunities

**Phase 3 –One Month: “Convince the GC”**

- Request at least one month in advance to be put on a Governing Council meeting agenda
- Different members of the committee present their part of the plan (education, logistics, fundraising) to the Governing Council

**Phase 4 –Three to Six Months: “Make it Happen”**

- If the Governing Council approves of the idea the committee will have to seek out funding sources in earnest, applying for grants and getting donations from local businesses
- Finalize budgets and sources of income and bring back your information to the GC so that can vote to put the library into the budget
- Start looking for a qualified media specialist who meets the needs and fits the vision of the school

- Using the vision of the committee the new media specialist will order books, materials and furniture, and generally prepare the school library program so she can meet the criteria laid out in the mission statement of AASL
- The school administration will adjust the specials schedules so that all classes will have at least one opportunity a week to receive instruction from the media specialist

### **Step 11 - Evaluation of Project:**

Ultimately, the success of this project will be based on whether or not the GC will agree to put a school library program into the budget. The committee will meet periodically to check in on each of the member's progress with their assigned tasks.

### **Future Advocacy:**

Once this library comes to fruition it will continue to need the work of the original committee to advocate for funding and support from the community. The school librarian will need to work hard to ensure that she has time in her schedule to collaborate with teachers. She will need help from the committee to continue applying for grants and finding fundraising opportunities. The library's collection will need to grow significantly each year in order to get to acceptable levels. Knowing the school's population as I do, I know that the school librarian will have to work hard to bring the teachers on board with technology.

#### *Campaign #1: Library Twitter Account and Facebook Pages*

This will get the message out to the entire community that this school library is worth every penny of the budget. I will post photos and announcement regularly, keeping the school community informed about all the wonderful learning that is going on inside the library.

#### *Campaign #2: School Newsletter Blurbs*

Getting a space in the weekly school newsletter will also go a long way to promoting the great things that are going on inside the library. I can describe projects that are happening and give parents tips on how to extend the learning to the home environment.

#### *Campaign #3: Community Read Alouds*

This would involve inviting people from our Frederick community to come in and read their favorite books to students. I would invite local businesses, doctors, dentists, baseball players (Frederick has a AAA MLB baseball team) parents, administrators, and teachers to participate. We could have a different person in each classroom reading their favorite books and have students rotate through. This is a good way to connect with the community and showcase our school. Not to mention, it promotes reading for pleasure and exposes students to new books.

## Why Does MVMPCS Need a School Library Program?

- Studies show that students in schools with well-equipped media centers staffed by certified librarians perform better on assessments
- Studies show that disadvantaged students have a better chance of succeeding academically when they attend schools with library programs
- Researchers have found the quantity of resources in the school library to be a powerful predictor of reading scores
- A school library should have about 27 books per student, our current “library” has about 9 books per student
- Certified media specialists are trained to help children love to read and voluntary reading has a positive impact on reading comprehension, vocabulary, spelling ability, grammar usage and writing skills
- A certified media specialist will teach students critical research skills, how to use and evaluate all of the resources available, and how to find books they love to read
- A certified media specialist can train teachers on technology integration and the latest innovations in education
- A certified media specialist can collaborate with teachers on curriculum and planning, and finding them resources and materials to enhance their lessons

**Additional Campaign Materials:**

This is a great video created by the New Jersey Association of Libraries explaining why libraries are essential. I would put a link to it on our School Library Website and Facebook page. I could also show it at a staff meeting or forward it to Governing Council members prior to the meeting at which we will present:

<http://www.ilovelibraries.org/school-libraries/why-are-school-libraries-essential>

This website has a brochure that highlights the important points for library advocacy. I would definitely print that out and put them in the staff lounge and maybe hand them out in our car line to parents to pique their interest. This site also has a good video that could be posted to our social media, website, and emailed to Governing Council members:

<http://www.lrs.org/data-tools/school-libraries/impact-studies/#colo>

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