

# ***Action Item***

***Lincoln Trail Libraries System  
September 24, 2007***

***Action Item No.:*** 2008-8

***Subject:*** SKILLS Act

***Recommended by:*** Staff

***Adopted:***

## **Background**

Multiple studies including a study undertaken in 2005 of Illinois school libraries have affirmed that there is a clear link between school library media programs that are staffed by a school library media specialist and student academic achievement. Across the United States, research has shown that students in schools with good school libraries learn more, get better grades, and score higher on standardized test scores than their peers in schools without libraries.

In June, 2007 bi-partisan legislation was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate to ensure that students across American have the library resources and support they need for a Twenty-First Century education. The Strengthening Kids' Interest in Learning and Libraries or SKILLS Act guarantees that students across America will be served by highly qualified, state-certified school library media specialists and will have the library resources they need to succeed.

The SKILLS Act is sponsored by Senators Jack Reed (RI) and Thad Cochran (MI) and by Representatives Raul Grijalva (AZ) and Vernon Ehlers (MI). It will ensure that library funds will be available to serve students in elementary, middle and high schools though out the nation; that appropriate books and materials will be available for students at all grade levels including those with special learning needs and those learning English as a second language; and that highly qualified school library media specialists will be available to assist and support all students with their learning needs.

The SKILLS Act reauthorizes and strengthens the Improving Literacy through School Library Programs of the No Child Left Behind Act.

## **Action Item**

On October 8, 2007 the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor will begin considering reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The SKILLS Act which is HR 2864 in the House and S 1699 in the Senate is critical to the future of school libraries around the nation and especially in Illinois. In order for the SKILLS act to be included in

NCLB--that is to place a state certified school library media specialist in every school, members of the House must be contacted and made aware of the importance of passage of the SKILLS Act.

It is recommended that the LTLS Board of Directors pass the attached resolution and send it to all members of the U.S. House and U.S. Senate who represent the area within the System boundaries with the fervent request to House members to co-sponsor this bill. LTLS Board members are urged individually to contact their U.S. Representatives with the same request.

The ALA Washington Office has suggested that the best communication strategy for legislators is via FAX followed up in a day or two with a phone call. U.S. Mail goes through extensive screening and is delayed. E-mail messages are so abundant that most Representatives and Senators cannot respond to them all.

# *Resolution of the Board of Directors of Lincoln Trail Libraries System*

*Whereas*, at the September 2007 monthly board meeting, the Lincoln Trail Libraries System (LTLS) Board of Directors expressed strong support for the LTLS school community, both libraries and librarians, by passing a resolution that urged the inclusion of school library media specialists in the “highly qualified” category of “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) legislation; and

*Whereas*, the Strengthening Kids’ Interest in Learning and Libraries (SKILLS) Act before Congress would amend the provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 regarding school library media specialists; and

*Whereas*, the bill calls for the reauthorized NCLB to include school library media specialists as highly qualified; and

*Whereas*, the bill directs local educational agencies to ensure, to the extent feasible, that each school in their district is served by a highly qualified school library media specialist; and,

*Whereas*, the bill would allow state and local professional development funds to be used to assist in recruiting and training highly qualified school library media specialists; and

*Whereas*, the bill would ensure the highest quality of library service to the students attending LTLS member schools,

*Now, therefore be it resolved*, that the Lincoln Trail Libraries System Board of Directors, representing over 123 school libraries, urges the passage of the SKILLS Act with provisions to be included in any reauthorization of “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB). The provisions are (1) to include school library media specialists who meet the criteria established by the state educational agency as highly qualified in NCLB; (2) to require school districts, to the extent feasible, to ensure that every school within the district employs at least one highly qualified school library media specialist; (3) to allow state and local professional development funds (Title II) to be used to assist in recruiting and training highly qualified school library media specialists; and

*Be it further resolved*, that the Lincoln Trail Libraries System Board of Directors communicates this resolution to the system legislative representatives in Washington, D.C., and hereby encourages the system legislative representatives to sign on to the bill as a co-sponsor.

*Lincoln Trail Libraries System Board of Directors and Staff*

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James Quisenberry, President

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Jan Ison, Executive Director