



I Love My  
Librarian!  
2013 Award

**Nominations for: Jennifer Jamison**

School Library Media Specialist  
Atlantic City High School  
Atlantic City, N.J.

**Nominator: Donna Haye**

**1. Please tell us in 2-3 sentences why your nominee should win this award. What sets him/her apart?**

Nurturing, innovative, and passionate. All of these are qualities I would use to describe Mrs. Jennifer Jamison, School Librarian in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The combination of her strength and energy has made every school library in our school district she developed a model for our elementary libraries. As a result of her creative programming, Mrs. Jamison was awarded the prestigious AASL 2013 National School Library Program of the Year award for Pennsylvania Avenue School. Jamison's passion to build the Pennsylvania Avenue school library program centered around the diversity of the students and faculty. By working together, the strength of Jamison's school library program recognized the uniqueness of the power of community. The reason her library flourishes is because the students want to be part of something bigger than themselves. My fondest example is how Jamison targeted a group of "disadvantaged youths" and turned them into leaders within the school. Jesus, 5th grader, labeled a troubled child, grew into a successful leader admired by staff and students within the school. He provided peer tutoring, led technology workshops using library resources, and spoke at board meetings. His desire translated to a feeling of accomplishment of which Jamison is responsible for fostering.

**2. How has the nominee helped you and/or students at school?**

Mrs. Jamison's mission, in combination with innovative teaching, is to source and provide educational and knowledge based resources to our varied student population to optimize and impact student educational growth and achievement. Alongside providing high quality, creative, research based instruction, Mrs. Jamison has established three school-facility library programs within the district, and brought to the forefront of district policy, the importance of well-funded and maintained library centers as essential and key to improving and sustaining student learning and achievement. The libraries' high functioning is founded upon collaboration with teachers and administrators, broad understanding of curricular program initiatives and an encompassing assessment and utilization of available educational resources to meet and address the needs of individual students and the broader student population, preparing them for employment, career and college.

As teacher-librarian, Mrs. Jamison actively introduces students to school and external library resources at developmentally appropriate grade levels. Via layering of exposure to library resources through grade levels, students acquire critical thinking skills, the ability to hypothesize, and to investigate, all in order to develop, expand and deepen their educational experience and understanding, preparing them for the rigors and expectations of independent learning in high school and beyond.

A source of district pride is Mrs. Jamison's Active Reading Project. It began with a small grant as she set out to acquire e-readers for use as tools to help, encourage, and transform our reluctant

readers into avid readers by offering the opportunity to read and explore with the latest technology. Its success led our administration to expand the project to include seven elementary schools, the high school and our special education program. The availability of e-readers empowers students, parents, and teachers by broadening book selection and providing exciting applications to boost independent reading and critical thinking.

Through the exemplification of the highest quality instruction and guidance, Mrs. Jamison's goal always is to develop in her students the desire to become life long readers and seekers of knowledge. Program initiatives she has established towards her goal:

- Summer Reading Buddies – through the year she solicits donations of gently used books and stuffed animals from the community, staff and parents. In June, the PreK-3rd grade students leave for summer with a bag containing a stuffed animal, an Atlantic City Public Library card application, Summer Reading Program newsletter, Summer Reading List, and a book to “read to their buddy.” This project supports the Language Arts Literacy program and reinforces younger students’ independent reading skills.
- R.E.A.D. – Reading Education Assistance Dogs program utilizes therapy animals to help students improve their reading and communication skills and also teaches the love of books and reading.
- Guest Readers: Once a month local and regional community members volunteer to visit our school and read to Pre-K students Restore Our Shore Schools Through Literacy: In light of the tragedy of Hurricane Sandy, Pennsylvania Avenue School Library has partnered with Usborne Books to host an author visit and provide free books to student families to begin the rebuilding of their home libraries. Mrs. Jamison actively and consistently collaborates with teachers via electronic lesson plan sharing, classroom visits, email and phone. Additionally, teachers can communicate lesson objectives and subject study areas through a library collaborative form, created in Google Docs. This important interaction between our school librarian and teachers ensures that higher-level thinking, assessment, and quality instruction are embedded within best practices. Lessons are thus designed to accommodate and address both varied learning styles and learning difficulties. Atlantic City recognizes Jamison's exemplary talent in her use of a variety of pedagogical strategies to engage students in the learning process. This high quality instruction employs the use of direct instruction, modeling and guided practice, independent practice, and reflection and sharing.

### **3. How does the nominee make the school a better place? Please be specific.**

Through her respect for the individual and their life journey, Mrs. Jamison has a keen ability to shape and mold one's understanding, thus enhancing motivation and the desire to explore learning. A “nurturing environment” resonates in my mind as a feeling and uniquely apt description of the library program she has created. It is one that is warmly inviting to students, staff, parents and our community. Children need a place to feel safe, free from the obstacles and challenges associated with attending school in an urban district. This very important “sense of place” in a safe physical location is enhanced through her efforts to impart it also as a state of mind for our students.

Jamison's positive, people oriented energy is recognized and regarded highly. It fills and defines our library, impacting our school and our community. Mrs. Jamison was recognized nationally for her exemplary library program by American Association of School Librarians and is the 2013 recipient of the National School Library Program of the Year award winner. On the American Library Association website, Katherine Lowe stated that “Jennifer has made the library a place where students want to be whenever they have a spare moment,” said Katherine Lowe, award committee chair. “She is remarkable in her passion and tirelessness and has the broad support of her colleagues.

Her advisory committee has become the desirable 'club' of educators interested in being on the front line of change and growth. Jennifer is a model of the role of the school librarian and what a school library program should be."

The combination of Mrs. Jamison's strength and passion has made every school library in Atlantic City that we have placed her in to rebuild and invigorate has been exemplary. Students, parents, and administration desire her expertise to build an exemplary program that can create a safe and nurturing space for our urban students. Jamison's school library programs are conducive to project-based, inquiry led, participatory learning.

#### **4. How has the library, and the nominee in particular, had an impact on students and the learning process?**

Mrs. Jamison combines passion, compassion and expertise when interacting with students, teachers, administrators and community members. A special teacher can and will inspire students yet in Mrs. Jamison, we also have a leader, one who encourages and empowers students to reach beyond themselves and, instills the desire and knowledge of how to give back to their community. The overall program objective for our library is to prepare our students for career and/or college. This outcome is achieved through the high quality instruction, collaboration, and work of Jamison with classroom teaches and her goal and deeply held belief and premise that preparing our students for career/college, begins at the elementary classroom level, as it works in tandem with a high functioning library media program. At Pennsylvania Avenue School this is accomplished as our library, under Mrs. Jamison's direction, introduces our students to resource databases at a developmental appropriate level, via the use of the Destiny Library Manager. Of the program goals, one is to bring students to mastery using an online catalog to locate books, resources, and digital materials in support of their learning. Jamison instructs her students in the use of Destiny OPAC to search effectively for print and digital resources, communicate responsibly through MY Quest by completing book reviews and recommending books to other students within the district confines, and utilize resource lists to help them organize and manage the extensive information they gather.

Jamison's stated goal of students having the skill background in preparation for the degree of independent learning and study at all higher levels of education, is ensured through her developing and implementing a network process that students move from kindergarten through eighth grade, acquiring grade level library media knowledge, thus leaving the elementary school/library environment prepared to enter high school with the necessary critical thinking, questioning, and investigative skills. Students entering our high school are expected to be proficient in the use of Destiny to search for books. Using relevant key terms, Jamison instructs students in the use of Powersearch. Students are taught to incorporate our learning management system, eChalk, to communicate with teachers, and to save and safely store information and completed projects. Through collaboration with classroom teachers, students are taught to evaluate web, database and print information using a project-based platform. They are guided through the process of gathering, summarizing and synthesizing this information, ultimately communicating through oral, print or digital mediums their mastery and understanding. The goal of her instruction has and will be to engage and empower learners.

Jamison understands and communicates that the traditional library as a place for research and access to print materials is in stark contrast with today's expectations. As Mrs. Jamison presents often, access to knowledge, information and ultimately the entire educational experience, (witness the rapidly expanding MOOC curriculum) is now fluid, fine-tuned, specialized, encompassing and growing exponentially. Jamison was at the forefront in the shifting and moving from merely a keeper of the books to an information media specialist, and acknowledging and embracing the 21st

century librarian's required skill level that has followed the path of technological innovation. She recognizes that our students must utilize available resources in the most effective and efficient manner, and the success of her library program lies in nurturing communication; sharing and using information to solve complex problems. These skills as possessed by Mrs. Jamison coupled with the vast amount of digital resources, materials, and applications are passed along through her instruction to students, teachers and fellow educators, thus elevating the learning and educational process far beyond the scope of the traditional. Under Jamison's direction the school library at Pennsylvania Avenue adopts and implements programs, activities, and instruction that directly embed the dispositions that are critical to the 21st century learner.

The school's proficient literacy achievement scores were 27%. As the program progressed and library and literacy initiatives were coupled, the scores have risen to 65.4% proficiency in Language Arts Literacy. Even greater is the impact at the Atlantic City High School in which LAL proficiency reached 75.8% in 2012.

Since beginning the school library program in September, Pennsylvania Avenue library has circulated over 10,000 books among our student population in 4 ½ months of operation. Under Mrs. Jamison's direction, each school in which she implemented and directed her library program, achievement was noted through district and state testing inventories. Student achievement has been noted through the school based Scholastic Reading Inventory program that showed marked improvement in reading from September to the present day at Pennsylvania Avenue School. For me, acting Superintendent of Schools for Atlantic City, Jamison has successfully supported my vision that the library be the heart of the school!

## **5. How has the individual demonstrated leadership in the school community?**

Jamison has demonstrated exemplary educational practices since entering our district. A major reason for the success of her library programs is advocacy. It is the belief of the district that speaking up and positively influencing our community, school board, parents, and students is essential to building and maintaining a successful program. She has proven to be a strong advocate for the school libraries as evidenced through her many library outreach programs and activities. Highly valued, her efforts in researching and pursuing funding from a variety of resources to support multiple literacies stand as an important accomplishment. As a result of Jamison's extraordinary work in the funding arena, recent awards have provided the avenues to obtain exceptional and high quality resources for our students. Over the past few months Mrs. Jamison wrote three grant applications with positive results:

\*Funds to rebuild a new elementary school library damaged by Hurricane Sandy

\*10,000 book donations and distribution to students to rebuild their home libraries

\*Author visit and book donations for Pennsylvania Avenue students and Atlantic City Teachers United

One of her far-reaching advocacy projects was in the writing, directing and creation of a DVD entitled Atlantic City Schools 21st Century Libraries. This DVD aired on local Channel 2 and was viewed by our community and school board members. It has been submitted to the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) for posting on their website. In addition, it was shown at two presentations of the New Jersey Association of Federal School Administrators on December 3, 2011. This past November 2012, at the New Jersey Association of School Librarians, Jamison presented with me on Advocating to Administrators on Behalf of School Libraries. In the

presentation, Jamison relayed key examples of ways school librarians can advocate to administrators and improve participation of school stakeholders involved in preserving school libraries. Jamison presented at the 15th National AASL Conference showcasing the Active Reading Project in October 2011 in Minneapolis bringing further recognition to the district and its best practices. For the school year, 2013-2014, she will present to her peers at NJASL, AASL, MSLA (Massachusetts), and TSLA (Texas) school library conferences on Exemplary School Library programming. She participates in the annual articulation meeting at the Atlantic City High School, which includes representatives from the four (4) sending districts. The articulation meeting's function and goal is to determine improvements in programs for incoming freshmen. Mrs. Jamison employs many avenues of communication in her role as library advocate. She has created brochures advertising the school library, and established the Pennsylvania Avenue School library website along with sending invitations to Board of Education members to visit the libraries and their programs. She communicates regularly with the Atlantic City Public Library, ensuring that it supports our students' educational needs. Jamison participates on the school and district literacy leadership teams as well as the committee for the unified plan. While serving on these committees, she is able to gather input and feedback while promoting her program as an integral part of education, teaching and learning. She is an active participant at grade level meetings with the teachers and principal and often presents at the Parent Advisory Council's meetings in support of the library programs. She supports her school in the Battle of the Books by readying the school's winning team to participate in the annual district championship before the community. She contributes to the Asst. Superintendent's annual presentation to the school board, to highlight the school library program and the advances in student achievement.

Through research and placing into practice the knowledge, experience, expertise and wisdom of various professional organizations in order to enhance her instructional abilities, Jamison's impact is evident in her accomplishment of highlighting the great and very real importance of school library programs, at a time in our society and in many communities when they are not seen as critical. In Atlantic City, Jamison has successfully elevated the school library program to be seen and recognized by administrators and the school community as essential to district initiatives. Beginning this September, Mrs. Jamison will take her expertise to the high school level and we believe will raise the stakes for our urban high school students and establish successfully a exemplary school library program that she has been recognized both nationally and locally.