



ONTARIO SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

JOHANNA GIBSON-LAWLER, PRESIDENT

OSLA

As I sit down to reflect upon my year as the 2023 President of the Ontario School Library Association, my first thoughts are ones of being grateful and inspired. This year, we had a strong team of councillors and OLA staff who worked tirelessly in our advocacy efforts. Compounded by the recent pandemic, we continue to witness an erosion of our School Libraries and the professionals who teach and work in them. We know that many School Boards across this province do not spend Ministry of Education GSN School Library funding as intended and further, administrators at the school level may shift staffing and library resource funding as well. We also know that school libraries are practically extinct in the North, but northern Boards are still receiving this same GSN funding as all other Boards. We continued our focus on this inequity and poured ourselves into advocacy efforts this year.

Your OSLA Council engaged with the Ministry of Education numerous times over the year to amplify the issue and suggest [concrete steps to improve GSN reporting](#) by School Boards and ensure accountability moving forward. Under the guidance of Council of Public Affairs, we were able to connect personally with many Ministry of Education staff and MPPs from around the province at Queen's Park in November for "Library Day". We have also provided feedback to the Ministry in a [response to the revised elementary language curriculum and the Grade 9 English course](#). By keeping school boards accountable for the use of provincial funding for School Libraries, and thereby in conformity with new expectations set by the Ministry of Education, we can ensure that students across Ontario have equitable access to the support they need to excel in core academic skills and prepare for future success.

As OSLA President, I was very busy responding to media requests and interviews about a range of topics, but not limited to speaking about [book banning and shadow banning](#), the weeding process, selection and deselection policies and procedures, and policy development around the [use of the n-word](#). I was grateful to be included as a panelist in a [podcast by Noa Daniel](#) from the Mentoree on "Leading from the School Library". As an OLA Board member, I was able to collaborate with other Board members to create a strong response to [book banning and a child's right to read](#) as well as [OLA's stance on Book Banning and Restricting Books](#).

OSLA has lots to celebrate this year as well! OSLA has launched a fabulous document entitled, "A Guide to the Selection and Deselection of School Library Resources"

and the feedback has been nothing short of amazing. OSLA Council is grateful to those council members, writing team members, reviewers, and OLA Staff who contributed to this collaborative effort on the creation of this document. Please consider joining us on Thursday, January 25th @ 5:15 p.m. for a celebratory launch of the guide at OLA's Super Conference in Toronto.

OSLA Council will continue the celebration during that time at Super Conference as we honour some champions of School Libraries at our OSLA Awards Ceremony. This year will be exceptionally special as we are happy to announce the creation of a new award, the School Library Professional of the Year Award, which is intended for School Library Technicians. OSLA Council is very proud to have developed this award as we strive to be an equitable and inclusive association in making sure that there are opportunities for all to be recognized and celebrated.

We continued with #SchoolLibraryJoy as we supported OSLA members with our continued anti oppressive learning journey with Dr. Andrew B. Campbell (Dr. ABC). OSLA was the lucky recipient of an OSSTF Subject Association Grant of \$2500 to offset the speaking costs for Dr. ABC. Upwards of 50 members collected together through Zoom in May of this past year to engage in thoughtful and respectful discussion and learning through a session entitled, "The Changing Face of Your Classrooms: Being Intentional About Inclusion". We know as an association that equity work is never done or is a box to check and therefore the learning must continue.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as your OSLA President this year and I am in awe of the body of work that was accomplished by council. I leave inspired as we, as a collective, have proven that we are fierce when it comes to school library advocacy.... So, have those elevator speeches always ready, be courageous in promotion of school libraries, share your #SchoolLibraryJoy, and always be brave, bold, and bodacious.

I look forward to my continued role on OSLA Council as Past President and Treasurer, as well as serving on the OLA Board of Directors. I'd like to welcome Wendy Burch-Jones as the next OSLA President and Jennifer Angle as OSLA Vice President.

Johanna Gibson-Lawler