

Wayne State University (WSU) School of Information Sciences (SIS) will partner with two urban school districts (Harper Woods and River Rouge) that have each experienced extensive school library closures. Project RUSL (Restoring Urban School Libraries) is a three-year **master's level/ project** grant seeking \$246,000 to provide education and professional development for 8 diverse classroom teachers to become certified school librarians and to **build capacity** to restore the school libraries at each of their respective schools (3 Elementary; 2 Middle; 2 High Schools; 1 K-8 STEM Academy). After year one, each school will receive a research report containing a strategic plan for restoring their school library programs. The newly hired school librarians will receive onboarding and professional development modeled after The Lilead Project (IMLS #RE-40-16-0166-16). This project falls within the **Lifelong Learning program** category as the school librarian/graduates will establish a peer coaching/professional development model for maintaining strong school library programs after the grant period ends. During their graduate coursework, Project RUSL participants will learn how to curate open access multicultural book resources designed for lessons co-taught with teachers and shared publicly on [#MIGoOpen](#) lesson plan database. Participants will plan a cultural program for their school library's grand opening to showcase how librarians make literacy connections between students' culture, history and everyday digital media practices.

**Statement of Need:** Evidence suggests that the neediest learners may benefit the most from trained librarians and quality library programs.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the very kids who have the most need often attend urban public schools where they do not have access to adequate books or credentialed librarians in their school or local branch libraries. Only 8% of schools in Michigan have a school librarian on staff and urban schools have severely widespread vacancies.<sup>2</sup> A study ranked school library programs based on certified staffing, library accessibility, resources, and technology and found that "the one key factor distinguishing high-performing high-poverty schools from low-performing high-poverty schools is a quality library program."<sup>3</sup> Yet, school administrators often do not have professional guidance and concrete data upon which they can make decisions about whether and/or how to restore their closed school libraries. With no school library supervisors in place at either participating district, the new school librarians can benefit from the professional development model and network built through The Lilead Project. Project RUSL also addresses the need of school libraries to redefine themselves in ways that leverage youth's everyday literacies, which are heavily influenced by digital media and Hip Hop culture.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Performance Goals and Outcomes:

**Goal 1:** Attract teachers from two urban school districts to become certified school librarians

- Enroll 8 new students in the WSU SIS Experimental School Library Certification Program

**Goal 2:** Build capacity for self-sustaining professional development & program administration

- Establish an urban school library advisory board; provide practitioner/mentors; provide a strategic plan report for each district that will be shared with school board and PTOs and disseminated widely
- Secure donors and sponsors for maintaining the new school library via innovative fundraising strategies

**Goal 3:** Educate school librarians on their role in digital curation and Hip Hop education

- Teach future school librarians on how to curate open access collections and design cultural programs and collaborative lessons with teachers based on PI Kumasi's INFLOmation model<sup>4</sup>

**3. Diversity Plan:** Project RUSL has a two-part diversity plan which includes: 1) Targeted recruitment of master's students from historically under-represented populations; 2) Showcase the role of school librarians in supporting social justice education (see [sample student projects](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> Lance, K.C. & Kachel, D.E. (2018). Why school librarians matter: What years of research tell us. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99 (7), 15-20.

<sup>2</sup> Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2018-2019 school year.

<sup>3</sup> Coker, E. (2015, April). *The Washington state school library study: Certified teacher-librarians, library quality and student achievement in Washington state public schools*. Seattle, WA: Washington Library Media Association.

<sup>4</sup> Kumasi, K. (2018). INFLOmation: A Model for Exploring Information Behavior through Hip Hop. *The Journal of Research on Libraries and Young Adults*, 9(1).

**4. Project Team:** This project is in a **piloting phase** as it builds on the work of The Lilead Project, a national leadership development program for school library supervisors. The lead PI, Dr. Kafi Kumasi, is an Associate Professor in the School of Information Sciences at Wayne State University. Dr. Kumasi served as a mentor in project LILEAD and spearheads [a new Experimental School Library Media Certificate Program](#) at Wayne State. Confirmed advisory board members: Dr. Jeffrey DiScala, Assistant Professor, Old Dominion University; Research and Planning Director, the Lilead Project; Carolyne Foote, (District Librarian/High School Librarian Westlake High School, Fellow, The Lilead Project); Kathy Lester (Advocacy Chair, Past-President 2014, Michigan Association for Media in Education); Confirmed district administrator partners: Steven McGhee (Superintendent, Harper Woods School District) and Derrick Coleman (Superintendent, River Rouge School District). Confirmed project dissemination & impact partners: Chaka Johnson (Community Parent Liaison & Community Relations Director, Harper Woods School District); Tarence Wheeler (Director of Community Outreach and Parent Engagement, River Rouge School District).

**5. Relevance and Impact:** This project supports the essential idea outlined by IMLS-LB21 *to broaden participation in the library and archival field and enhance diversity in the workforce*. This project will help supply a much-needed pool of diverse certified school librarians for two urban school districts that have experienced extensive school library closures. The 8 scholarship recipients will form a cohort that becomes a vast support network that has far reaching impact beyond just the people that are being funded. The consistent presence of people of color in the field through diversity-based scholarship programs has been shown to make a positive impression on other people of color who not have considered librarianship as a career.<sup>5</sup>

**6. Sustainability:** The school librarian participants will receive mentorship from members of local and national school library organizations and adapt The Lilead Project model of professional development sustained within the rank of new school librarians. Through an approved Memo of Understanding (MOU), the participating districts will make a commitment to move the graduates into school library positions and/or use their newly acquired skills effectively as classroom teachers for a limited period after grant. The collaborative lessons will be shared publicly on the #MIGoOpen platform. Ongoing support for the continuance of the library program will be garnered by the district's community liaison partners through tiered sponsorship, crowdfunding and adopt-a-book shelf opportunities established and disseminated leading up to the grand-opening events.

**7. Budget:** IMLS funding in the amount of \$246,000 is sought to provide the following:

- Full tuition for 8 students to earn the School Library Media Certificate – 4 per school district (94K)
- Honorariums for 3 advisory board members (6K)
- Honorariums for 8 practitioner/mentors-1 per school building (16K)
- Stipends for cultural programs to coincide with 8 school library grand openings (40K)
- Travel support for 8 student participants to attend MAME 47 conference in Oct 2020 (2K)
- Fees for [Open Library Management](#); [Hip Hop vocabulary](#) software for 2 High Schools (8K)
- Stipend for 2 parent/community liaison personnel to disseminate project goals and impact (2K)
- 37% federally negotiated indirect costs (66.4K)
- 5% of PI's Salary (9.2K) and fringe benefits (2.4K) for two years

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<sup>5</sup> Sands, A.E., Toro, S., DeVoe, T., Fuller, S., and Wolff-Eisenberg, C. (2018). Positioning Library and Information Science Graduate Programs for 21st Century Practice. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Museum and Library Services.