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# Maryland's Journey
## toward New State School Library Standards

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MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF
**EDUCATION**
**EQUITY** AND **EXCELLENCE**

NEW JERSEY

DELAWARE

# Ours is a story of cooperation, collaboration, and consensus.

Over the last year, many stories have been shared of adopting and implementing the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* at the school and district level. What does that process look like at the state level? This is the story of the adoption journey in Maryland.

In Maryland, national standards in any discipline are reviewed and revised with student and educator needs in mind. The approval process for all standards includes stakeholder review and revision followed by a public comment period. Comments are then considered and used to inform further revisions. Finally, guidance, supporting documents, curricular frameworks, and professional learning are developed to support the new standards.

Ours is a story of cooperation, collaboration, and consensus. From the first perusal of the new AASL Standards, through the alignment with content standards, to the input of district supervisors, and the preparation to present the standards to the Maryland Board of Education (MBOE), this process has been carefully choreographed to ensure curricular alignment and statewide acceptance. The intent of this article is to detail the steps and timeline that have been implemented at the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Office of Instructional Technology and School Library Media to submit the standards for review and acceptance by the state board of education.

## Process

Anyone who has worked in or with state governments knows that processes for approval and/or adoption are very detailed and involve multiple sequential steps that must be followed. With that in mind, those involved understand that getting documents approved all the way up the chain to the top is neither quick nor simple, and plan their timeline accordingly. To be accepted as Maryland standards, national standards must be reviewed—and revised if necessary—to ensure that they are appropriate for Maryland students and address the knowledge and skills our students need. This process includes establishing a review committee, soliciting input from stakeholders, and posting the standards for public comment. The new standards are then presented to the MBOE for approval and adoption. If nothing else, this process teaches patience.

The path to adoption began early in 2018 following the November 2017 AASL National Conference in Phoenix. In our state, the Education Specialist for School Library Media position was vacant until February 2018, so the process to adopt the new standards didn't begin until after it was filled. To begin the process, input was solicited from Local School System (LSS) school library supervisors at a statewide meeting in February. The LSS boundaries are drawn along the borders of the twenty-four counties in Maryland; therefore, each supervisor represents a county and its school librarians. These supervisors were asked to review the *National School Library Standards* through the lens of the *Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards* and other state content standards.

Using the supervisors' comments and suggested edits, some wording on the standards was revised by the Education Specialist for School Library Media, and then the revised version of the standards was published for public comment. The changes were very minimal, but had to be tracked and noted so that comments could address the unedited and edited versions. In the spring of 2018 a survey was created and the revised standards were posted on the MSDE School Library Media Program website for public comment. Input was requested for each of the frameworks, and broken down further by each Shared Foundation.

Once these steps had been completed, the next step in the process was to request approval from the MBOE (the governing body for the MSDE) to adopt the standards. The approval process has very defined steps, language, documents, and timelines. First, a written request is submitted to be put on the agenda to present the proposed new standards at an MBOE meeting. The request requires approval by the Division Director and Deputy Superintendent for the

Office of Teaching and Learning. The request must contain the reasoning behind adopting the new standards, including background information, an executive summary, and any action requested. The materials that accompany the presentation to the MBOE have to be compiled and submitted in advance, including hard copies for board members and public attendees, and copies of any presentation slides. All of the accompanying materials must be accessibility compliant.

When a date and time to present is set, the agenda will indicate the amount of time that will be allotted for the presentation and any discussion or questions. Writing a request to present to a state board of education is much more than just adhering to the forms, language, and timeline. The board members' prior knowledge must be taken into account as well as what information they will need to be able to understand the topic and take action. Anticipating answers to questions in advance contributes to a positive outcome.
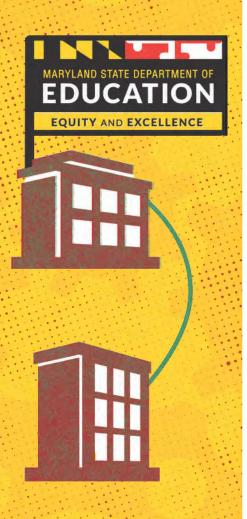
After a successful presentation to the MBOE, the board votes to approve moving the standards forward to the Administrative, Executive and Legislative Review Committee (AELRC) for a fifteen-day review period. If the AELRC does not hold up the process for further review of the standards, the standards then go out for a thirty-day public comment period.

Following the public comment period, the MSDE reviews and summarizes the comments and either presents the MBOE with a recommendation to accept the standards document in its original form, adopt a revised form based on comments (as long as the changes are not substantive), or begin the process again with the supervisors to revise,

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get comments, and resubmit it to the MBOE because of a substantive change.

The MBOE then votes to adopt the final form of the standards. Having been officially adopted, they become state standards and can be published, shared, and built upon at the state level.

## Involvement of Stakeholders

Throughout the process of adopting standards for the entire state to follow, participation by stakeholders must be ensured. In this case, the primary stakeholders are the school librarians and their supervisors at the district level. The meeting with the supervisors near the beginning of the process provided them with the opportunity to spend time closely examining the standards and discussing alignments with the state *College and Career-Ready Standards*. Extremely rich discussions surrounded the process of standards approval and implementation. As part of the goal to solicit public feedback, each supervisor was encouraged to share the survey with their school librarians, central office staff, and parent teacher groups. Some even proposed time during professional development meetings for school librarians to record their responses on the survey. Getting as much feedback as possible during the process was vital.

An analysis of the responses to the survey found that all the comments were positive. They extolled the virtues of very well-crafted standards. One respondent commented that it would be very beneficial to current and future school librarians to work with just one set of standards that apply to learners, librarians, and libraries instead of dealing with state standards, national standards, and sometimes different local standards. Other comments revealed enthusiasm for the fact that the

standards encourage collaborative teaching, emphasize scaffolding information-literacy skills, and articulate the connection between creativity/innovation and the teaching/learning process.

## Next Steps

As I write this in December 2018, the subsequent steps in the approval journey will involve alignment with other content standards and producing supporting documents and training materials. First, the standards must be published in a simplified format for the district and state curriculum specialists. Front-loading some of that work can be accomplished immediately by transcribing the standards from a tabular format to a list format and soliciting feedback from the specialists at the MSDE as to the standards' usability in their content areas.

The next step will be to produce resources to promote implementation. Many quality resources are already available to promote implementation, so careful examination will be required to avoid unnecessary duplication. AASL has a goldmine of materials accessible from the standards portal at <standards.aasl.org>. These resources include infographics, one-pagers, templates, and webinars. The Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL) sent two members to the 2017 standards implementation pre-conference training in Phoenix, and MASL also has materials that can be added to a repository of training resources. One plan is to create credit-bearing classes on implementing the standards that will allow school librarians to work toward recertification while they learn.

Another resource that must be updated is the crosswalk that aligns the state and *National School Library Standards*. The current matrix compares the last two versions of the state curriculum, the state

technology standards for students, and the previous AASL standards for students and librarians. All of these standards are at least eight years old. With the adoption of the new Maryland School Library Standards, a new matrix will be created that aligns them with the most recent national technology standards. AASL has crosswalks on its standards portal that align the *National School Library Standards* with the *International Society for Technology in Education Standards for Students and Educators* and the *Future Ready Framework*. These will be useful templates for our new Maryland crosswalks.

Finally, attention must be given to aligning the current evaluation instruments for school librarians and school libraries with the newly adopted standards. It would be very powerful to be able to give assistant superintendents and building-level administrators a checklist that shows the alignments in a very concise way. Once again some of that work has been done by the authors of the AASL Standards book with the chapters in Part III: Assessment and Evaluation and the Evidence of Accomplishment appendix.

Other areas of focus for implementing the standards at the state level include strategic planning, implications for collaborative relationships, locally produced teaching documents, and alignments with current teaching strategies.

The MSDE School Library Media Program does not currently have a published strategic plan. Adoption of the new Maryland standards would provide the perfect opportunity to develop a comprehensive, collaboratively produced plan that can be shared on the School Library Media Program webpage. Sharing the plan publicly fosters a sense of responsibility to actively work toward meeting the goals of the plan. Working collaboratively on developing the plan

establishes stakeholder voice and investment.

A successful implementation plan for standards at the state level must address multiple access points to the standards. One area that is often overlooked is the collaborative relationship between the state department of education and the institutions of higher education that have educator preparation programs. Well-prepared school librarians will have a thorough knowledge of the new state standards and be confident integrating them into their lessons, practices, and library administration.

Maryland recently launched an Open Educational Resources (OER) Hub at <oercommons.org>. To populate the OER Hub, master teachers were tasked with creating standards-aligned resources in multiple content areas. The new school library standards will provide another opportunity to employ master school librarians to create quality resources specifically for the Library Media Group.

Another area of focus for future work with the new standards will be to adapt previously created, leveled learner competency documents. Numerous lessons, lesson seeds, and curriculum documents include the standards and competencies that were adopted ten years ago. A quick reference chart that aligns the Competencies of the standards with key words of the previous curriculum would encourage ease of implementation by making it very easy to see the continuum from the old to the new.

In conclusion, this journey to adapt the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* to be accepted as Maryland School Library Standards has been a growth and learning experience for me. I find myself thinking of

these standards for practice in many different ways. I looked at them from the practitioner point of view when we were aligning them to current state content standards. I looked at them from a stakeholder point of view when designing the survey for public comment. I then had to adjust my focus to look at them from a state agency point of view. This process required crafting a proposal that not only conveyed the importance of these revolutionary standards to the profession, but also clearly explained how they would transform teaching and learning across the state. It's almost as if the standards are the Earth, and I am looking at it as terrain, a map, a globe, and a view from space. I would encourage all of you to think of the AASL Standards that way and look at them from many different angles to truly know them and infuse them completely in your practice.

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*She provides leadership in the area of school libraries to school districts and other organizations, and speaks for school libraries on state governing boards and committees. Leveraging her experiences in school and public libraries toward leadership roles in local, state, and national organizations has earned Laura her current positions as the AASL Region 2 Director and an At-Large Member of ALA Council.*