ENGAGING ADOLESCENT LITERACIES WITH THE STANDARDS

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As classroom teachers face continued pressure due to prescriptive standards and high-stakes testing, school librarians continue to look for ways to make learning more dynamic and authentic for the diverse students in our schools. However, adolescent literacy research as a field operates largely apart from the research about school libraries and vice versa. Consequently, adolescent literacy research often ignores the impact that school librarians can have on the literacy instruction happening in classrooms and the school librarians' critical role in engaging students with multimodal literacies. In the research, discussions about "new literacies" (Lankshear and Knobel 2013) and "multimodal learning" (Alvermann 2017b) are often set in the context of the work of classroom teachers (specifically English language arts), but school librarians operate with many of the same goals.

The AASL Standards reinforce that vision with a more layered and authentic approach to literacy learning that happens in school libraries. Like past iterations of the standards, the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* have practical implications for the work tradi-tionally done to support the work of classroom teachers in reading, writing, and research. However, the AASL Standards also have the potential to influence the way school librarians foster and support adolescent literacies in school libraries and through the literacy instruction already taking place in the classroom.

The school library has always been a space devoted to literacy, but with new standards comes an opportunity to re-evaluate what literacy learning looks like for our students and how adolescent literacies continue to evolve. School librarians must

think of their role beyond offering a service to teachers or suggesting a flashy tech tool. Rather their goals and expertise make them an integral part of the literacy learning and instruction (broadly defined) that happens across the curricular areas. Staying knowledgeable about the research and trends in literacy research is imperative as we try to meet the needs of the diverse learners in our schools.

Adolescent Literacies Research

"Adolescent literacy" is a familiar phrase, but what it means is changing and evolving all the time. In the early 1990s, literacy research took a turn toward a study of more than one literacy. Rather than a focus on the discrete skills of reading and writing that have been historically privileged in schools, scholars suggested that, with the rise of digital media in a more globalized society, a more complex study was needed, giving attention to the specialized ways that ado-lescents are engaged with media both inside and outside of schools (Alvermann 2008). Therefore, "adolescent literacies" refers to a shift from recognizing literacy as reading and writing school-sanctioned texts toward an acknowledgment of the myriad ways that young people make sense of text, images, and other media in many different contexts in their everyday and (often) online lives.

Theorizing about "new literacies" was a consequence of this shift, and a new body of work recognized that focusing on print-based media was no longer relevant as digital tech-nologies were (and continue to be) on the rise. Along with a focus on digital technologies was an emphasis on the participatory and collaborative nature of literacy learning. This shift also acknowledged that adolescents were not engaging with text in the

same way that they had before—and that they never would again. The skills that educators who work with adolescents had grown up being taught and using were not going to be relevant in the same way for our learners. Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel (2013) have defined "new literacies" as those literacies that are influenced by the rise in digital media—but also by the way all literacy learning is impacted in a digital and global society.

In their assessment of emerging trends in adolescent literacy research, Kathleen A. Hinchman and Deborah A. Appleman (2017) identified several areas of focus for educators and researchers moving forward, including fostering "out of school literacies," "new literacies" that involve working in multiple modalities, and the connection between literacy learning and identity work. Although the language of the AASL Standards reflects many of the activities and initia-tives that are familiar to school librarians (teaching research skills and supporting the reading culture in schools), my goal is to highlight a few areas within the standards that provide opportunities for engaging with these trends in adolescent literacy research.

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For example, when classroom teachers approach school librarians about working together on a research project, what kinds of suggestions can librarians make to acknowledge the multimodal nature of literacy? What formats, tools, and options can students be given that could harness their own interests, expertise, and experiences? In what way can the school library add value to the literacy development work being done in classrooms?

The AASL Standards—with their focus on the work of school librarians to ensure access, the inclusion of diverse perspectives, and engagement in meaningful collaboration—are aligned with the focuses and best practices recommended in the literacy research.

Incorporating Adolescent Literacies and Standards

Inquire and Explore

Taking Advantage of Learners' Interests

The Shared Foundations of Inquire and Explore both ask students to generate authentic questions, follow their personal interests and curiosities through their learning, and question assumptions. This focus on personal interests is in line with recommendations from the literacy research about recognizing and incorporating learners' out-of-school literacies and experiences into the tasks they are assigned in the classroom. We know that many students are experts in literacy practices in which they engage outside of school. For example, school and public librarians have been on the forefront of inviting comics and graphic novels into library spaces even when these publications were considered outside the scope of "literature." However, now we know—and literacy research

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continues to advocate—that reading graphic novels and comics actually incorporates far more literacy skills than traditional text-based reading as students are asked to interpret images, space, color, and dialogue. This same line of research also recommends capitalizing on other out-of-school literacies like adolescents' already established engagement with social media tools and popular news sources.

Fostering Critical Inquiry in a "Post-Truth" Era

Work in the field of literacy (as well as other disciplines) in this current political climate, is particularly concerned with how students read, decipher, and draw on sources of information in a "post-truth" era (Alvermann 2017a). School librarians have long considered how they can address "fake news" and misinformation in the media through information-literacy instruction that employs the use of evaluative criteria to determine the author, purpose, and accuracy of information. However, school librarians have opportunities to continue to engage in this work in ways that engage multiple literacies in addition to information-literacy skills. A more layered approach to evaluating sources of information for accuracy resides in interpreting the kinds of modalities that are employed through social media, like

images, memes, tweets, videos, etc. Determining the accuracy of information then means that students are able to determine intent, and the way that different modalities elicit emotional responses.

School librarians and other educators continue to ask students to evaluate sources of information for accuracy, purpose, bias, etc., and authentic social media texts can be used to practice these skills. When students engage in research about social issues like immigration, criminal justice reform, and public policies, they can use politicians' (and other stakeholders') social media posts as important sources of inquiry. This type of information can be used as fodder for critical inquiry as learners consider questions like how do creators of social media posts use images, texts, and sounds to convey messages, and for whom?

Collaborate and Include

Broadening Learners' Perspectives

Collaboration continues to be a cornerstone of the AASL Standards and the work of school librarians and, more specifically, the focus with collaborative efforts is in including diverse and varied perspectives. The standards emphasize the need for collaborative work to broaden perspectives and to recognize that

learning happens socially. The Include Shared Foundation asks school librarians and learners to consider whose voices are heard, and whose are left out, and asks school librarians to "[design] opportunities that help learners to illustrate diverse viewpoints (School Librarian II.B.3).

Challenging Perspectives through Digital Remixing and Creation

English language arts teachers create opportunities for, among other outcomes, learners to develop appreciation for and express diverse viewpoints. These educators allow students to use multimodal forms of response in their classrooms as a strategy for engaging with literature (Miller and McVee 2012), giving learners an opportunity to enter into the text, speak back to elements they find problematic, and reimagine the events in the story (Beach, Castek, and Scott 2017). Multimodal response provides learners with an opportunity to engage with diverse perspectives, share new perspectives, and participate in a community of learners. Furthermore, an important component of digital literacy lies in students' abilities to remix—or the

act of combining different multimodal texts (e.g., sounds, images, video) and using them to create something new.

While the school librarian or "media specialist" is sometimes mentioned in these studies as a resource, the description of expertise that school librarians bring to instructional partnerships is often absent. However, school librarians are important partners in this work—not just because of their interest and expertise with technology—but because of their focus (as outlined in the standards) on helping learners to locate tools to illustrate and engage with diverse perspectives and modalities and to consider the ethical principles of information use and remixing.

For example, as many students continue to be required to read canonical texts like *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Romeo and Juliet* despite suggestions that they are not relevant for the diverse readers in our classroom, multimodal response can be used for students to question, complicate, and speak back to parts of the text that conflict with their personal values and experiences. Students can expand on and rewrite using comic strip generators; remixing of popular

videos, images, and music; or creating new texts and fan fiction to share in online communities. They can also respond to multimodal texts (e.g., graphic novels, films) by composing reflections in different modalities—reflecting on how different formats offer different possibilities for expression.

Curate and Engage

Including Learners in an Important Process

Curation, a mainstay of any school librarian's practice, is no longer simply a service provided to students or other educators in the form of a list of resources or a book display. Rather, curation is a reciprocal process happening on many levels in an effort to critically select and organize information. Notable to the 2018 standards is that curation is an expectation for learners in the library as well. Furthermore, the Shared Foundation of Engage asks students to ethically consider how information is presented, shared, and even withheld from some audiences.

Supporting Student-Driven Curation

Adolescent literacies research is interested in the connection between literacy work and adolescent identities. However, this research has focused primarily on how different identities are taken up and portrayed through composition practices and literature learning. In the school library learners have opportunities for engaging with this kind of identity work on a broader scale through curation.

School librarians can look for ways to include students in the process of selecting resources for instructional purposes and collection development. For example, the librarian could work with members of the school's Gay-Straight Alliance to bolster LGBTQ collections. School librarians can work collaboratively with students to analyze the collection for gaps, missing award-winning titles, and areas in which some learners will identify lack of representation. Students can read book reviews and other selection resources with peers and question the conventions of these resources: How do they evaluate books? What do they assume about youth audiences? Students can then be encouraged to consider why materials on some subjects are often lacking in school library collections and consider how the school librarian makes selection decisions. School librarians and learners can collaborate to examine selection and reconsideration policies and examples of censorship and self-censorship of LGBTQ resources in school libraries and communities.

Conclusion

In my own experience as a school librarian, I considered myself something of a technology integration specialist and an instructional coach, but when those positions became formalized (and compartmentalized as I'm sure has also happened in many other districts) new people were hired to do that work. While I (and other school librarians) continued to integrate technology and think about instructional best practices, I realize the real value in the work of a school librarian goes beyond these distinct roles. School librarians are an integral part of the literacy culture of a school and, therefore, must address the multiple literacies that are a part of our students' lived realities today.

With changing school library standards comes the opportunity to assess and re-evaluate priorities in school libraries and collaborative partnerships in schools, taking into consideration the priorities that are reflected in the research in other disciplines. We cannot only be critical of other disciplines for not understanding the power of a school library program; we have to understand the priorities of those disciplines to contribute to them. Adolescent literacies research is full of potential for the role of school librarians in literacy instruction across the curriculum. The AASL Standards can provide new directions for school librarians to position themselves to meet many of the learning needs of today's students.

As a researcher in the field of adolescent literacy, I see a need for scholarship that makes this connection between school librarians and literacy instruction clearer. School library educators can not only incorporate adolescent literacies research into their coursework (scholarship that lies outside of the school library research world), but researchers can look for examples of powerful collaborative partnerships that can be used as examples in the school library literature to show what is possible.

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