FEATURE

MAKING IT MATTER

National School Library Standards for School Administrators!

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Why do the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* matter to school administrators? How do we develop an administrator's knowledge of the role of the school librarian as articulated in these standards? Do we know what matters to school administrators and how that dovetails with our practice?

I am a periodical junkie; I love to read education literature. As a school librarian I believe it's very important for us to read what administrators are reading. So have you looked lately at what your principal, curriculum team members, or superintendent are reading? Well, I did, and the topics vary widely. In the last year themes of periodicals that administrators read included literacy instruction, comprehensive learning, mentoring, social media, the whole learning community, professional development, computational thinking, problem solving, coding, student voice, social-emotional learning, and learning itself. This is quite a comprehensive list of issues that impact, influence, and engage all educators. So looking through the lens of these topics, where do school libraries fit? I will share why and how school librarians in my district brought the standards alive for our administrators and related the standards to what educators do, day in and day out. The process I will outline can certainly be replicated for your school and district leaders.

In Norman (OK) Public Schools, we, as school librarians, work with incredible, thoughtful educators who care deeply about the whole child! When I say educators, I mean everyone in the school community at both the school and district level. Our school librarians knew that sharing the *National School Library Standards* with this group was incredibly important.

I was a member of the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board and was one of the trainers for the Affiliate one-and-a-half-day training session and one of the pre-conference sessions held in conjunction with release of the AASL Standards at the AASL National Conference in Phoenix in November 2017. Six school librarians from Norman Public Schools also attended and strategically divided themselves, two each, among the pre-conference sessions, which each highlighted one of the frameworks: learners, school librarians, and school libraries. For our district and state, this plan was perfect!

Upon returning home, the group who attended the standards sessions in Phoenix prepared and presented three training sessions for all school librarians in our district. These workshops helped participants develop an understanding and be prepared to implement the standards. After these presentations were concluded, it was time to start thinking about how to introduce the standards to administrators. I secured a date in the spring semester to provide standards training for all administrators and members of the curriculum team, which consists of all program directors and curriculum coordinators.

Introducing the Standards to Administrators

Planning

A self-selected group of school librarians and I met to design training specifically for school administrators and curriculum leaders. In full disclosure, this group is brilliant and provided creative, doable ideas and activities for this professional learning. Because we have found that attention to comfort and organization in the physical space is critical to the success of any professional learning, we planned for everything including the physical space. The large meeting room was carefully prepared with tables seating six to seven people. Participants sat with their school teams (school librarian and principal) with other school leaders mixed among the tables.

Opening

We began our session with introductions of all the school librarian presenters. These presenters shared as follows:

Name

School

Role

What are you bingeing on?

The "*What are you bingeing on?*" prompt is fun and definitely helps set the tone. After we shared, the presenters asked tables to do introductions using the same prompts. There was lots of laughter in the room; it seemed that we were off to a good start.

Making It Credible

Because we were acutely aware that educators often buy in to initiatives, new ideas, and programs if they are aligned to their daily practice, the decision was made to use a colleague, a highly respected high school principal, to share his view of the school library and its unique relationship to school climate and community. Dr. Scott Beck, Norman High School principal, opened the half-day workshop by sharing why the Norman High School librarians were important to the high school learning landscape. Dr. Beck is a passionate, charismatic speaker who

immediately captured participants' attention.

What Will We Learn?

As you would in any classroom, we began by sharing our ambitious goals/objectives for our work together:

- Establish an understanding of the rationale behind the content and structure of the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*.

- Understand how standards connect to the broader district vision and national educational landscape.

- Learn strategies for standards implementation for a variety of stakeholders and contexts.

- Consider examples of how standards look in action in everyday practice.

- Explore best practices for the standards.

- Develop action plans for standards implementation at your school.

Common Beliefs

To develop an understanding of the foundation on which the AASL Standards were envisioned, the Common Beliefs were numbered and displayed on plasma screens around the room. Giant numbers 1 through 6 were affixed to the walls spread out throughout the room. These numbers correlated with each of the six Common Beliefs:

1. The school library is a unique and essential part of a learning community.

2. Qualified school librarians lead effective school libraries.

3. Learners should be prepared for college, career, and life.

Strategies for Building Connections with Administrators about the AASL Standards:

1. Sometimes starting small is best. Look carefully at your school's or district's mission statement and/or strategic plan. Find one place where you think your school library can make a difference and start there to build a connection.

2. Read what your administrator reads about education. Stay abreast of the larger educational landscape. It will help you align the standards and your practice to what the larger school community may be focusing on.

3. Think about what keeps your administrator up at night. That may be a great place to start. If it is bullying, you could easily build on the Shared Foundation Include; if it is ensuring deeper learning for all learners, Inquire will be appropriate. If it is test scores, use the standards book to help you make a case for Inquire, Explore, Collaborate, and Curate.

4. Always, always approach things from a positive perspective. Suggest a solution; even it's is not the best solution, it will be a starting point and make your discussion easier.

5. Share the learner pamphlet (available on the standards portal) with your administrators. Make an appointment to review it. If your administrators are focused on the ISTE Standards or Future Ready Schools, show them the standards crosswalks developed by AASL (and available on the standards portal).

6. Invite your administrator to go through the building-level portion of the School Library Evaluation Checklist (available on the standards portal) with you. Have an honest discussion of a goal you would like to focus on.

7. Most importantly, always frame everything in the context of what it does for or how it affects learners. They are, after all, why we exist as educators!

4. Reading is the core of personal and academic competency.

5. Intellectual freedom is every learner's right.

6. Information technologies must be appropriately integrated and equitably available. (AASL 2018, 11)

After reading through the Common Beliefs, principals were asked to move to the number of the Common Belief that most resonated with them. After all administrators were in place by "their" Common Belief, we asked the school librarians in the room to do the same. We invited all participants to share in their Common Belief groups why they chose that particular Common Belief. Next we invited all participants to look around the room and see where their partner school librarian or administrator was and where all the curriculum leaders were. When people returned to their tables, they shared what they had observed about each other's choices.

Shared Foundations

Now that the ice was broken and everyone had an understanding of the beliefs that provide an underpinning for the standards, we moved to the *AASL Standards Framework for Learners*. Every attendee had a copy of the learner pamphlet. (The URLs for this and other resources are listed at the end of this feature.) We believed it was critical for school leaders to understand each of the Shared Foundations. To accelerate learning and make it authentic for school leaders, we created hands-on tasks around paired Shared Foundations.

We started with using the puzzle activity that was used at the AASL National Conference. Every table had a puzzle in an envelope; the puzzle had been cut into six pieces. Each participant had to look at

their piece and determine what it represented and share with their tablemates. The next task was putting the puzzle together. Each puzzle was a photograph of a historical scene familiar to all participants. After the puzzles were completed and the groups had talked about what they were looking at, we asked them to determine what this activity had to do with the Shared Foundations Inquire and Include, based on the corresponding Competencies in their learner pamphlets. Administrators identified that this activity allowed them to inquire, to question and be curious about what their piece brought to the puzzle as a whole. They also stated that the activity forced them to look at varying perspectives as well as the contributions the other members of their team made as they worked together to identify their photograph. As we moved through all the Shared Foundation activities, we asked school leaders to suggest ways that they might use each activity in a different professional learning setting.

Next we moved on to Curate and Collaborate. To facilitate an understanding of these two Shared Foundations, we used our own version of "breakout" bags. We purchased bags and filled them with noisemakers, edible treats, bookmarks, and standards tattoos. We secured each bag with a combination lock. Attendees were required to work as table teams to answer a series of questions that provided them with numbers that provided the "key" to unlocking their bag. Questions were related to Norman Public Schools; the answers could be found only by perusing our district website. After breaking into their bags, we asked each team to determine how this activity epitomized Curate and Collaborate. Administrators clearly understood the power of collaborating to open their breakout bags.

After reading the Learner Competencies for Curate, the group identified their need for information and making critical choices about which information sources to use as very important to their task.

The last Shared Foundations we covered were Explore and Engage. We gave table teams two plastic bags, one full of Legos and one of Keva planks and asked them to:

· Build a representation of the relationship between the school library and your school community, and

· Be able to explain and credit who contributed what.

Upon completion we asked participants to share at their tables how this activity depicted Engage and Explore. The adult learners easily identified their tinkering, problem-solving, and creating as Explore. They discussed Engage through the lens of honoring, respecting, and attributing each table's creative works as their own. Finally, participants did a gallery walk so that everyone could see everyone else's innovative representations (see figure 1).

Shared Foundations in Practice

Our next step was to focus on the practices already existing in each school library and how those elevate learning. Using the School Library Evaluation Checklist (which is available on the standards portal) school librarians, principals, and district leaders collaborated to determine which checklist items were currently present in their own school libraries and to brainstorm ideas for growth. Each team wrote one idea for growth for each Shared Foundation on a sticky note and put it on poster paper placed around the room and labeled with the name of the corresponding Shared Foundation. Finally, all learners engaged in a brief gallery walk.

The overview of the Shared Foundations was complete, and an understanding of how each might look in real-life practice had been established. Building on Dr. Beck's introduction, we wanted both school librarians and administrators to determine how the standards relate to the larger educational landscape. We asked table teams to have a laptop ready to use for this activity. In the middle of the tables we placed two things: 1) a copy of our district's mission and strategic plan, and 2) five educational periodicals from recent years such as *Educational Leadership, Phi Delta Kappan,* and *District Administration.* We invited participants to look at the covers and table of contents of the periodicals on their table, the Norman Public School Strategic Plan, and the AASL learner pamphlet, and determine what themes and topics overlapped.

We then gave participants the link to an Answer Garden, an easy-to-use online feedback tool. The question in our Answer Garden was: *What connections did you make?* During the table discussion, one person at each table entered the connections into the Answer Garden. As you can see in figure 2, teams identified connections to personalized learning, career readiness, equity, voice and choice, STEAM, critical thinking, partnerships, technology, and more. This exercise clearly illustrated how the AASL Standards accelerate aspects of learning throughout the school community.

Librarian Evaluation

It was imperative to us that all leaders, school librarians, school administrators, and curriculum team members understood how the standards and our teacher evaluation process aligned. On each table were several copies of our Marzano teacher evaluation elements. We asked table teams to examine three elements: the teacher evaluation learning map, the chapter in the standards book on librarian evaluation, and the AASL *Standards Framework for School Librarians.* We invited teams to consider how the competencies in the school librarians framework connected to teacher evaluation. A whole-group discussion followed this activity. Table teams readily identified connections to most Marzano elements such as "Helping students examine their reasoning," "Engaging in cognitively complex tasks," and "Helping students process new content," just to name a few.

Connecting to Stakeholders

Next, we wanted all school leaders to understand how the standards connected to stakeholders. Large copies of persona graphics were on each table for three of the personas in the standards book: Leon, Tony, and Patty. These graphics can be found on the AASL Standards portal. We asked each team to select one and answer the question below about their respective persona.

Figure 1. One team's representation of the relationship between the school library and school community.
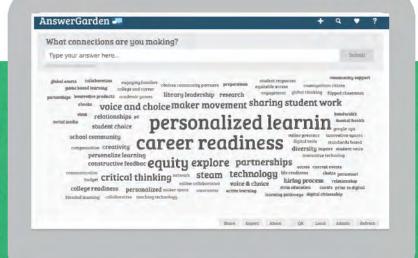

Figure 2. Powerful connections! Trainees' connections between Shared Foundations, themes of education publications, and district's strategic plan.
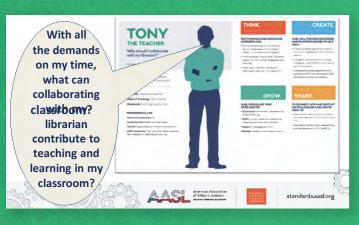
Figure 3: Stakeholders Matter! One of the personas useful for thinking about engaging with the standards.

Figure 4. Form used by school librarians and their principals to outline a standards implementation plan.

National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries Implementation Plan

Objective:
Develop a plan to create a culture of innovative teaching and learning in your school community.

Goals for Creating a Culture of Innovative Teaching and Learning by Shared Foundation:

Inquire:
Include:
Collaborate:
Curate:
Explore:
Engage:

Implementation Steps

Action Step	Implementation Date

Patty the Parent: How has the role of the librarian changed since I was in school?

Leon the Lead Learner: How can we work together to inspire innovative teaching and learning?

Tony the Teacher: With all the demands on my time, what can collaborating with my librarian contribute to teaching and learning in my classroom?

The whole group shared their responses to these questions. Table teams identified how standards would impact stakeholders. For example, one point participants made was how critical Collaborate is on so many levels in a school with parents, classroom educators, and administrators all having a stake in learners' success.

Reflection and Next Steps

Finally, we asked all teams to reflect and aspire using the guiding questions below.

- How do we build a culture of innovative teaching and learning?

- As a school team, how will you work together and to what end?

Our prompts for this discussion suggested using the work they had done during the in-service to answer this question: What do you aspire to?

School teams shared with their larger table groups.

At the end of our day, we asked every school team to develop an implementation plan. Figure 4 shows the form we used.

Happening Now

What is happening now, a year later? This year school librarians have taken a deep look at their evidences of practice for each of the Shared Foundations. As I write this in January 2019, they are providing a progress update on their implementation plan, which they are

submitting using a Google form that asks them to:

- describe what you have done during the fall semester of the 2018–2019 school year to implement the standards,

- create a goal for each Shared Foundation that will lead to the creation of a culture of innovative teaching and learning in the school library,

- describe action steps for two of these goals, and

- list what supports you need to reach your goal.

School librarians are observing two other district librarians of their choice this year. We are debriefing these visits using the standards to identify best practices that can amplify the impact of the school librarian.

I asked several school librarians and principals to reflect on this professional learning; here is what they shared:

> In thinking back, I liked the activities that were designed, very hands-on to help us grasp the standards. Our plan was very much aligned to NPS vision of learning and met the needs of our staff. —Olivia Dean, elementary principal

> Even though my principal has always been supportive of the library, it was great to have a dedicated time to sit down, as a team, and work through the new standards together. We "played" with Legos and Keva planks and dreamt about what our library could look like in the future and how the new standards could help us accomplish our goals. —Martha Pangburn, high school librarian

> By making a plan for standards implementation, we were able to see the ways in which the standards seamlessly integrated into our mission, vision, and values as both a site and a district. The action steps we generated helped our staff see the value of the standards beyond the walls of the library for implementation into their own classrooms as well. The AASL Standards have value and a power that is relevant in learners' day-to-day lives, and by working together as a team, our principal and I were able to make those connections and share that relevancy in a meaningful way with our staff that didn't seem like "one more thing to do" but instead gave them focus in the things they were already trying to accomplish. —Teresa Lansford, elementary school librarian

> The experience gave our principal team a rare gift, the time to sit down with our school librarians and truly collaborate around the new standards. In doing so, we were able to discuss ways we were already implementing the standards in strong ways while also exploring new ideas, like working with school librarians to assist in assessing concepts like creativity in student work. —Dr. Scott Beck, high school principal

Our work to implement the standards is ongoing and continues to evolve as our district grows and changes. It is exciting to imagine what the future holds for our learners as we transform teaching and learning! You've got this, learner-ready school librarians!

Kathryn Roots Lewis *is the 2018–2019 president of the American Association of School Librarians. She serves* as the director of libraries and instructional technology for Norman (OK) Public Schools. She served on the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board. Kathryn is the director of an IMLS grant project: Learning in Libraries: Guided Inquiry Making and Learning in School Libraries.

Work Cited:

American Association of School Librarians. 2018. *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*. Chicago: ALA.

Resources:

Among the resources available on the standards portal: <standards.assl.org>

- Common Beliefs: <https://standards.aasl.org/beliefs>
- Learner Pamphlet: <https://standards.aasl.org/learner>
- AASL School Library Evaluation Checklist: <https://standards.aasl.org/project/evaluation>
- Personas: <https://standards.aasl.org/project/personas>

Answer Garden: <https://answergarden.ch>

American Association of School Librarians. 2018. *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*. Chicago: ALA

Good News from the Author

I am very excited to report that the Oklahoma State Department of Education worked with AASL to adopt the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* as our state school library standards. In fall 2018 several of our school librarians and I assisted the state director with standards training across Oklahoma.