

# FEATURE



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# AN APPEALING MENU OF DIGITAL LITERACY TOOLS & RESOURCES

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Nothing is more fulfilling than a school library full of students hungry to learn—especially when they have all the tools and resources they need and, more importantly, a school librarian ready to help them gain the knowledge and understanding they need to apply technology to become fully digitally literate citizens. Therefore, it was very satisfying when an insightful first-grader recently came into my library class with a happy glow on his face and exclaimed, “Mrs. O’Connor, coming in to your library is like coming to a restaurant...you seat us, greet us, tell us what’s on the menu, serve us, and even let us go up for seconds and dessert!”

### Value of an a la Carte Digital Menu

My student was referring to the way educational content is now being served through an inclusive menu of a la carte choices called “Digital Literacy Tools & Resources for K–5 Learners.” I developed the menu during spring of 2018 as a digital companion to the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*. [Editor’s note: The URL for the author’s menu and for other online resources mentioned in the feature are listed at the end.] I created the menu to provide a handy resource that includes links, information about grade-level appropriateness, and descriptions for colleagues to explore, choose from or sample, and serve up when teaching and guiding their students (see figure 1).

The *AASL Standards Framework for School Librarians* provided the template. Menu items are categorized under the four Domains: Think, Create, Share, and Grow. The digital offerings reflect the values articulated in the Key Commitments for the Shared Foundations: Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage (AASL 2018).

School librarians serve as change catalysts, shaping curriculum and nurturing developmentally appropriate expectations of our learners. Guiding me in the development of this initiative were the “chefs” at Common Sense Media with their “EdTech Reviews and Resources” (which provided guidance on tools’ capabilities and age-level appropriateness) and their Digital Citizenship lessons (which provided inspiration).

Another “chef” who guided me was author Chip Wood. His book *Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom, Ages 4–14*, 3rd ed. (Center for Responsive Schools 2015), provides concise, bulleted, universal characteristic charts of cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development for children ages four through fourteen.

As a team, my district’s school librarians have a history of supporting students working towards competencies now articulated in the *AASL Standards Framework for Learners*. We developed and aligned our district’s *K–12 Library Media Curriculum Standards* with our *AASL Standards* and *ISTE Standards for Students*. Based on our district’s *K–12 Library Media Curriculum Standards*, we created our own AASL Standards-aligned “Student I Can Statements and Evidence of Assessment Opportunities” posters for students to see and connect with during library class time.

The posters also serve to guide our interactions with colleagues, our school communities, and other stakeholders. Our district standards drive our work with students and are interwoven with our district’s vision statement for our graduates: “Each graduate demonstrates engaged learning and citizenship through the ability to solve problems independently and collaboratively with perseverance and resilience, communicates solutions with confidence and empathy” (NHSAU16 2019).

### Menu in Use

Here’s one example of how I use the menu to support student work towards the Competencies. Let’s say our task is choosing a favorite book and doing research to answer questions about the author. I’d like to offer a specific menu to my students (see figure 2). I’ll explore and choose from the variety of digital literacy tools and resources listed for the Shared Foundations and Competencies on which I’d like my students to focus. These tools and resources are learner-determined “ingredients” that will be blended together for a hearty “meal” featuring a balance of tastes, textures, colors, and temperatures. I then build a separate Symbaloo page where my personalized weblinks and resources are ready for diners to sample.

The tools I offered for each Shared Foundation for this assignment include:

Think Domain of Inquire Shared Foundation: Our school’s Alexandria Catalog, EBSCOHost, Epic!, PebbleGo, Reading Rockets, Wolfram Alpha, World Book

Create Domain of Engage Shared Foundation: Book Creator, Diink, Google Slides, iMovie

Share Domain of Curate Shared Foundation: Padlet

Share Domain of Engage Shared Foundation: Seesaw

Grow Domain of Explore and Engage Shared Foundations: Seesaw

I create and share videos and screenshots using Screencast-O-Matic to record instructions linked to the activity. This preparation enables students to readily access their projects independently for reinforce-

ment at any time and place before or after our class lesson.

### Students Intuitively Interact with the Menu

Presenting digital literacy tools and resources in a restaurant menu format makes sense. Young learners know what it is to sample new foods at a restaurant, and my students already had familiarity with this concept because I had always offered advice on different themes to my students by saying, “Think of life as a menu; trying new things is how you will discover interests, genres, strengths, weaknesses, friends, talents—and these can grow into career choices.” Providing learners with a menu of options encourages students to make choices and help drive their own learning. From my perspective, I’ve helped them develop AASL Competencies; one is “Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by: Engaging in inquiry-based processes for personal growth” (V.A.3).

Class periods are fifty minutes each on a six-day rotating schedule with five classes each day. Each class period (regardless of the time of day) begins with an engaging “morning meeting” that includes social behavior and academic class expectations. This routine includes menu-style options with instructions that are reinforced visually, aurally, and tactilely. Each student has a school network log-in and password with access to the daily menu via a Chromebook computer and other technology resources. Students are hungry to explore, brainstorm, collaborate, and create around a themed lesson. Behavior expectations of being safe, fun, and kind are emphasized.

The menu item choices I offer vary by grade level and topic of the current project rotation. I design projects after conferring with grade-level

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Referencing the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) National School Library Standards, 2018

Included are resources learned at conferences, professional journals and research.

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	Think	Create	Share	Grow
<b>Inquire</b> Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.	<a href="#">SMS Learning Resources, PreK-5</a> <a href="#">SMS Recommended Apps, PreK-5</a> <a href="#">OnCourse System for Educators-Reading Comprehension</a> <a href="#">U.S. Dept. of Education Reading Resources</a>	<a href="#">Curiosity Machine</a> , Grade 3 & older (for class and family learning together, and the power of children to lead our future) <a href="#">Buncee</a> , Content Creation Tool-All Ages-Students can document, visualize and communicate learning. <a href="#">BrainPop Jr.</a> , Grades Kindergarten through	<a href="#">Buncee</a> , Content Creation Tool-All Ages-Students can document, visualize and communicate learning. <a href="#">Our Global Classroom</a> <a href="#">Eljigrid Teacher</a> Initiated as Topic Designer (Additional Global Connections avail) <a href="#">Mentimeter</a> , Professional (to create interactive lessons for real-time instant responses)	<a href="#">SMS Learning Resources, PreK-5</a> <a href="#">SMS Recommended Apps, PreK-5</a> <a href="#">OnCourse System for Educators-Reading Comprehension</a> <a href="#">U.S. Dept. of Education Reading Resources</a> <a href="#">Alexandria - Our Stratham Memorial School Library</a>

Figure 1. Homepage of menu of digital literacy tools and resources curated by the author.

**Menu**

**Stratham Memorial School Cafe**

**Favorite Book and Author Study**

Choose from:

- Digital Resources: Think-Inquire**  
Check all that apply.
  - Alexandria -Our SMS Catalog
  - EBSCO HOST
  - EPIC
  - Pebble go Authors
  - Reading Rockets Authors
  - Wolfram Alpha
  - World Book Student
- Digital Resources - Create-Engage**  
Check all that apply.
  - Book Creator
  - Do Ink
  - Google Slides
  - imovie
- Digital Resources- Grow-Share + Engage**  
Check all that apply.
  - Upload your creation and add audio to introduce it.
  - Upload your creation and add text to introduce it.

Figure 2. Main menu-style assignment for a lesson in the school library.

Figure 3.

The menu of building instructions for Stinky Cheese Man activity.

**MENU**

Design and Create a Stinky Cheese Man

**Building Material Choices**

- Marshmallows
- Modeling clay
- Pom-poms
- Cardboard
- Straws
- Craft sticks
- Pipe cleaners
- Markers
- Googly eyes
- Construction Paper



**Resources for Author Jon Scieszka (rhymes with Fresca)**

- Book Collection on Cart (includes his favorite books when he was a kid)
- BrainPop Jr- Jon Scieszka
- Jsworldwide.com -Jon Scieszka's webpage
- Reading Rockets- Authors

**Digital Reflection Choices**

**Seesaw Steps:**

1. Scan your class code using an iPad
2. Choose your name
3. Do one of the following:
  - Take a selfie using an iPad or
  - Partner up and photograph a friend then switch
4. Add your photo, choose audio, record your voice to describe your Stinky Cheese Man's character traits design.



**AS PROJECTS ARE COMPLETED, STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO COLLABORATE AND COMMUNICATE FEEDBACK ON A CLASSMATE'S WORK. THE EXPECTATION IS FOR OUR DIGITAL LEARNERS TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR ABILITY TO BE DIGITALLY SAFE, KIND, RESPONSIBLE, AND SAVVY.**

classroom teachers. Some are library-only projects, while others are part of bigger projects that also involve classroom time. All projects are designed with Common Core and library standards in mind.

I circulate while learners are working in the library during class time, performing check-ins of learning choice samplings, teaching small groups who are ready for a next step, and coaching progress on activities. It's important to note that class times include a blend and balance of digital, traditional, and makerspace activities. "Stinky Cheese Man" is one example. An author study of Jon Scieszka included a comparison between the traditional fairy tale "The Gingerbread Man" and Scieszka's modern version "The Stinky Cheese Man" (Scholastic 1992). Next, students dug in for a hands-on collaboration of a fairy tale curriculum tie-in to design and create their own Stinky Cheese Man based upon his character traits they

determined. A menu of building materials was available to choose from as well as digital reflection choices (see figure 3).

### **The Value—and New Freedom—of Digital Choice**

Students take happy pride and feel empowered in choosing what, where, and how they want to create, share, and reflect on their learning creations. This approach provides more freedom than being assigned a specific topic, a must-use digital learning tool, or an assigned seat. The digital choices come into play during different portions of the learning process and are used to best support learners' work toward the Competencies. Menu options for a recent "My Favorite Book and Author" study, for example, included the opportunities to create a green screen movie, iMovie, timeline, drawings, or a stop-motion video to be uploaded to Seesaw, our student-driven creation portfolio and school

community communication platform. Students could record themselves reflecting on what they've learned and what they're thinking about and add their creations to our library class on their own class profile.

Once I approve all the work, it is shared with family and classmates, who are able to see it immediately and can comment and provide feedback. (At the start of the school year, I am added to the Seesaw account for each grade-level class as a teacher and given a library class folder.)

### **Lesson in Digital Citizenship**

As projects are completed, students are expected to collaborate and communicate feedback on a classmate's work. The expectation is for our digital learners to demonstrate their ability to be digitally safe, kind, responsible, and savvy.

Digital citizenship and safety lessons provided a multitude of ways for learners to practice and demonstrate this. An example of inquiring was learning how to T.A.G. (tell one positive thing they like, ask a question, and give one gentle suggestion) in Seesaw. T.A.G. is a strategy students must have in their toolkits prior to getting started with menu sampling, since the Shared Foundations students interact with on this assignment are Include, Collaborate, Explore, and Engage. When collaborating and communicating feedback, it's presumed students will tell one positive thing they like, ask a question, and give one gentle suggestion.

### Valuable Lessons: Positive Survey Responses

A survey asked students, "What do you specifically like about interacting with the digital menu options during library time?" Their responses were positive. Here's a sample:

"It's more independent and free handed." —Felix

"I like how it's very do-your-own-thing, and I like getting to make my own decisions." —Brynn

"It's a great way to help kids find what they like and learn in a fun way!"—Bailey

"One thing I like about the menu choices is how many different options there are to choose from."—Darren

### Satisfying Approach for Everyone Involved

The "Digital Literacy Tools & Resources for K–5 Learners" menu is getting positive reviews from students and teachers alike, and is a templated tool designed to evolve over time to accommodate the

changing needs of learners and educators and the evolving digital landscape.

Student choice empowers our students to take charge of their learning. My library menus and restaurant-style learning environment, driven by our AASL Competencies, provide growth opportunities for student choices that lead to good self-awareness skills and foster deeper learning levels than those achieved when students have no choices. I hope you find this flexible approach as useful as I do!



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Committee for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. In addition to her MSLIS degree from Simmons College, Mary Lou also earned an MEd at the University of Massachusetts. She holds Experienced Educator Certifications in Massachusetts and New Hampshire: Technology Integrator, Media Generalist, and Elementary Educator. She is a member of AASL and a member of the New Hampshire School Library Media Association (NHSLMA) and the Massachusetts School Library Association. She was a conference presenter at the 2019 NHSLMA Spring Conference. You can follow her on Twitter @MrsOReading.

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- New Hampshire School Administrative Unit 16. 2019. "Superintendent's Report." <[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Rzsqq\\_FIdlP-z6VIOmqcfalkew-1GBj3/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Rzsqq_FIdlP-z6VIOmqcfalkew-1GBj3/view)> (accessed February 3, 2019).

### Recommended Resources:

- Common Sense Media <[www.common sense.org/education](http://www.common sense.org/education)>
- Digital Literacy Tools & Resources for the K–5 Learner <<https://moboces.libguides.com/standards>>
- ISTE Standards for Students <[www.iste.org/standards/for-students](http://www.iste.org/standards/for-students)>
- K–12 Library Media Curriculum Standards <<https://sites.google.com/a/sau16.org/library-media-curriculum>>
- Responsive Classroom for Music, Art, PE, and Other Special Areas. 2016. Turners Falls MA: Center for Responsive Schools.
- Tech Tools & Resources: AASL Standards for the Learner by Allison Mackley <<https://vanmeterlibraryvoice.blogspot.com/2018/02/tech-tools-for-aasl-standards-for.html>>