

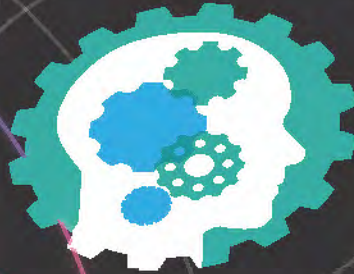
# *The Start of Something New*

*A Relationship between the AASL  
Standards Framework for Learners  
and IB Approaches to Learning*

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After spending the summer aligning the *AASL Standards Framework for Learners* with our state standards and county learner profile, I have a new passion for the impact school librarians have in teaching students the workplace skills employers desire. According to research conducted recently for the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the learning priority of executives who are hiring is increasingly becoming workplace skills (like communication, critical thinking, and collaboration) over content knowledge and technical capabilities (IBO 2014); see figure 1.

I work in a middle school that offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme. Being new to the IB community, I was offered the opportunity to attend a workshop in the fall of 2018, conducted by Heather Lapper, covering the Approaches to Learning (ATL) that the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) endorses. This organization has long believed skills are just as important to develop and assess as content knowledge is. In support of that end, the IBO offers educational programs for schools worldwide aiming to create a better,

## What Is IB?

Conceived in Geneva after World War II as a way to create peace through education, IB is currently celebrating its fiftieth year (IBO 2018a). In December 2018, there were 6,453 IB programmes in 4,964 schools in 153 countries. And the number of programmes is growing. Between 2012 and 2017, the number of IB programmes offered worldwide has grown by 39.3 percent. There are 70,000 educators, teaching more than one million students worldwide (IBO 2018b). School systems chose to implement the IB programme because of its unique academic rigor and emphasis on students' personal development. Students take responsibility for their own learning and are encouraged to try different approaches to learning by asking challenging questions, thinking critically, and developing research skills. IB programmes also encourage students to share their education with their communities (IBO 2018a). Wow! That sounds like what school librarians encourage, too.

## What Are the Approaches to Learning?

ATL are deliberately taught skills permeating the content as it is taught, but ATL are only formatively assessed. IB has always believed that a student's education is not only the content learned but also the ways it was learned; however, recently, "IB is providing more explicit support for teaching these skills....Focus on ATL will improve the quality of teaching and learning across the programmes and may result in more engaged teachers and students" (IBO 2014, 1). The five categories of ATL are: 1) thinking skills, 2) communication skills, 3) social skills, 4) self-management skills, and 5) research skills (IBO 2014, 1); see figure 2.

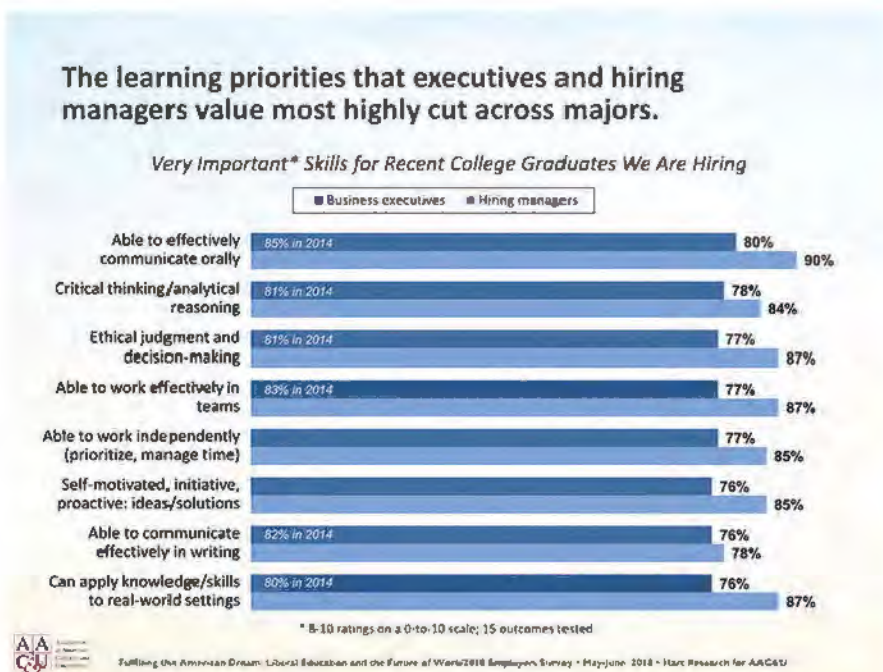


Figure 1. Skills very important to executives and hiring managers (Hart Research 2014, reprinted with permission).

If our goal is to create graduates who are ready for citizenship and careers, our students must learn more than the content needed to pass standardized assessments. Students must practice desired workplace skills, including the ability to adapt to new technologies and to communicate, collaborate, and think, while maintaining a high level of research skills. But how do we help learners develop these skills? How do we assess them?

more peaceful world. By the end of day one of the workshop, I saw a strong correlation between the *AASL Standards Framework for Learners* and the IB's ATL. The vast and tested resources available from the IB community to help educators and learners develop and assess ATL skills have opened a new toolbox of resources to me, serving as a catalyst of assessment ideas to apply to our new framework.



ATL skill categories	MYP ATL skill clusters
Communication	I. Communication
Social	II. Collaboration
Self-management	III. Organization
	IV. Affective
	V. Reflection
Research	VI. Information literacy
	VII. Media literacy
Thinking	VIII. Critical thinking
	IX. Creative thinking
	X. Transfer

Figure 2: Categories of ATL skills (IBO 2017, reprinted with permission).

During the workshop, as I developed explicit lessons and formative assessments for each of these categories, I saw many connections between these categories and the Shared Foundations of the *AASL Standards Framework for Learners*. One example of a comparison is the Key Commitment for AASL's Shared Foundation of Curate—"Make meaning for oneself and others by collecting, organizing, and sharing resources of personal relevance" (AASL 2018, 37)—and IB's ATL of Research—"Finding, interpreting, judging and creating information; Collect, record and verify data; Access information to be informed and inform others; and Make connections between various sources of information" (IBO 2017, 112).

One of the new resources I have discovered this year are the IB workshops and webinars available throughout the year. These workshops are practical workplaces to connect with other educators to learn best practices, create lessons, and evaluate assessments. An IB network of Twitter users and bloggers also keeps me connected and aware of effective ways other educators are applying ATL to benefit learners. One of my favorite blogs is *Excited Educator* <[www.excitededucator.com](http://www.excitededucator.com)>

by Lenny Dutton, who is currently the digital innovation coach and personal project coordinator at the Atlanta International School. She has previously worked as a school librarian and IB Middle Years Program teacher. She has innovative classroom teaching strategies as well as practical advice for implementing ATL.

A personal learning network (PLN) closer to home is my school division's IB Advisory Board, which includes school librarians, classroom teachers, students, administrators, and parents representing five IB schools. We meet quarterly to discuss the newest trends in education such as technology in the classroom,

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learn about opportunities such as scholarships and about trends in what college admission evaluators are looking for, and debate issues including plagiarism and cheating. These meetings are a welcome way to connect with other librarians in IB schools across the district but also to receive feedback on my own practice. These meetings are also a place to share the importance of the school library in community. In my school, I now feel more confident to reach out to collaborate with classroom teachers who are using the IB Planner to create lesson plans across the curriculum.

## What Are Some Practical Applications?

Here are just a few examples of strategies I have learned from this new IB PLN of educators. I was able to explicitly teach the skills as well as assess several of the AASL Standards through these strategies.

### *Fishbowl Discussion*

A fishbowl discussion requires a circle of chairs and enough room around the circle for the remaining students to observe what is happening in the "fishbowl." Typically, ten to fifteen chairs in the "fishbowl" allow for a range of perspectives while still giving each student an oppor-

tunity to speak. The students on the outside of the fishbowl take notes or make observations. After ten minutes, students switch, at which point the listeners become speakers, and speakers become listeners. At the end of the discussion, students write a reflection about their roles as contributors and as listeners. In physical science, students learn about the periodic table and then create a podcast discussing the importance of an assigned researched element. After students have listened to their peers' podcasts, students in the fishbowl discussion format argue for which elements are most important to human survival.

During the discussion I evaluate the AASL Include Shared Foundation's Share Domain Competencies: "Learners exhibit empathy with and tolerance for diverse ideas by: Engaging in informed conversation and active debate" (Learner II.C.1) and "Contributing to discussions in which multiple viewpoints on a topic are expressed" (Learner II.C.2). I also assess IB's ATL of "Communication: Exchanging thoughts, messages and information effectively through interaction; give and receive meaningful feedback; use a variety of speaking techniques to communicate with a variety of audiences; negotiate ideas and knowledge with peers and teachers" (IBO 2017, 108).

### *Reflection 3-2-1 Exit Ticket*

At the end of a class session, have each student record three things he or she learned from the lesson, two things the learner found interesting and wants to explore more, and one question the student still has about the material. In a communications/video production class, students at my school are tasked with creating a personal feature story that is five minutes long and addresses a problem at the school. Throughout the semester I have been using

the 3-2-1 exit ticket as a way to get feedback from students about their progress after each part of the design cycle. This assessment has created a quick routine that allows my students an avenue for self-reflection and gives me an opportunity to see the progress they are making along the way with their creations.

This formative assessment strategy assesses students in AASL's Explore Shared Foundation's Create Domain Competencies: "Learners construct new knowledge by: Problem solving through cycles of design, implementation, and reflection" (Learner V.B.1) and "Persisting through self-directed pursuits by tinkering and making" (Learner V.B.2). Learners are also assessed in Thinking for ATL: "Generating novel ideas and considering new perspective: Use brainstorming and visual diagrams to generate new ideas and inquiries; Create novel solutions to authentic problems; Apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products or processes; Create original works and ideas; use existing works and ideas in new ways" (IBO 2017, 114).

### *Note-Taking with Annotations*

Educators at our school have had lengthy discussions about the best note-taking strategy to teach students as well as about which subject area is responsible for teaching students ways to take notes. Our final conclusion: The best practice is to teach students a variety of styles so they have a choice about which to use. Part of this instruction is demonstrating why some subject areas may lend themselves to certain types of notes over others. The note-taking strategies our school's staff has focused on using with students this year are sketchnotes, Cornell notes, and the FLIRT method. Sketchnotes are visual notes created with a mix of handwriting and drawing (Rohde 2012). The Cornell method provides

a systematic format by dividing the paper into two columns; the note-taking column is twice the size of the questions/key word column. After notes have been taken, students then interact with the two columns as described at <http://lsc.cornell.edu/notes.html>. The FLIRT method is primarily for analyzing text and involves students taking notes about form, language, imagery, rhythm, and topic.

The most important part of note-taking teaching and learning is making assignments that require students to interact with the notes. One of the strategies I am using is walking notes to record a "lecture" on making best use of databases. I have printed out the Google Slide/PowerPoint presentation and posted it on the walls. Students "attend the lecture" by walking around the room, viewing the slides and taking notes by hand in two columns: one for the notes and one for follow-up questions. Once students return to their seats they exchange the notes with each other in a small group discussion of two then four then the whole group. If students still have questions after the large group discussion, the teacher or librarian can follow up with guided inquiry.

Another interactive note-taking strategy is the fact check method. Give students a copy of notes similar to ones they would take during a lecture, but have several incorrect details within the notes. Students become investigators and collaborate to correct the notes.

With both techniques, students get to work at their own pace and interact with each other. Such formative assessment can be used to evaluate the Curate Shared Foundation's Think Domain Competencies: "Learners act on an information need by: Determining the need to gather information" (Learner IV.A.1); "Identifying possible sources of

information” (Learner IV.A.2); and “Making critical choices about information sources to use” (Learner IV.A.3). These techniques can also be used to assess IB’s ATL of “Self-Management: Keep an organized and logical system of information files/notebooks; Use appropriate strategies for organizing complex information; Understand and use sensory learning preferences (learning styles)” (IBO 2017, 109).

### *Big Paper Silent Conversation*

A “big paper” silent conversation starts with prompts: several questions, quotes, primary sources, excerpts, or images. Each group gets a sheet of big poster paper and several markers. Centered on each group’s paper is one of the prompts (a different one for each group) that will be used to spark the group’s discussion. Silently, students read the prompt, comment on the text, and ask questions by writing on the big paper. The written conversation must begin focused on the prompt but can stray wherever the students take it. If someone in the group writes a question, another member of the group should address the question by writing on the big paper. Students can draw lines connecting a comment to a particular question.

Still working in silence, students leave their groups after fifteen minutes, taking their markers with them. They then travel to each group to read the prompts, write comments, and ask questions. After visiting all the big papers for a few minutes each, the original group reassembles back at their original prompt. They should look at any new comments written by others. Now students can have a free oral conversation about the text, their own comments, what they read on other papers, and the comments their fellow students wrote for them, first in their small group, and then in the larger group.

This can be the perfect strategy for working with students on annotating literature. I used this formative assessment to evaluate the Explore Shared Foundation’s Think Domain Competencies: “Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by: Reading widely and deeply in multiple formats and write and create for a variety of purposes” (Learner V.A.1); “Reflecting and questioning assumptions and possible misconceptions” (Learner V.A.2); and “Engaging in inquiry-based processes for personal growth” (Learner V.A.3). These strategies are also effective for formative assessment of IB’s ATL of “Thinking: Evaluate evidence and arguments; Recognize and evaluate propositions; Draw reasonable conclusions and generalizations; Test generalizations and conclusions; Revise understanding based on new information and evidence” (IBO 2017, 113).

### **What Now?**

Although I am relatively new to the IB philosophy of education, the



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County, Virginia. Since 2009 she has been a school librarian in both a high school and a middle school. She was Norman (OK) High School Teacher of the Year in 2013 and served as Oklahoma Library Association president in 2015–2016. She was also an instructor in the Library Media Education Program at the University of Central Oklahoma before moving to Virginia in 2016. Follow her on Twitter at @calypsoGilstrap.

world-wide network of experienced IB educators who believe in teaching students the same skills school librarians are now striving to teach has helped me re-evaluate my lessons and assessments to measure our new *AASL Standards Framework for Learners*. I recommend you also reach out to make connections for your PLN outside of your division. I hope you will find it through AASL, but I also recommend Twitter #ATLSkills #MYPChat to inspire ways to innovate within your community.

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