

FEATURE

State Standards

REVISION

THE ARKANSAS WAY





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The stars were aligned, and the timing couldn't have been more perfect to update Arkansas's Library Media Standards, scheduled for the summer of 2018. The AASL Standards Framework for Learners had just been released at the AASL National Conference in Phoenix, AZ, in November 2017.

The Arkansas state standards needed a complete overhaul. They were more of a long checklist of skills, lending themselves to pacing guides and taught mostly in isolation. The AASL Standards are competency based, and Arkansas needed to move in that direction. Arkansas school librarians needed more flexibility and fewer standards that didn't overwhelm. We needed standards that lent themselves to being taught at the point of need and with a focus on inquiry. After participating in an AASL pre-conference introducing the standards at the 2017 national conference, it became obvious that the AASL Standards could provide the groundwork for a radical revision of our state standards.

Setting the Stage

Unpacking the standards is hard. To help us dig deeper into the standards, Ashley Cooksey, president of the Arkansas Association of Instructional Media (AAIM), our state's AASL chapter, and I made plans to attend a pre-conference session. Our goal was to acquaint ourselves with the new standards and how we could adapt them to our state standards. We also hoped to gain some tools and strategies that we could use when introducing the standards to Arkansas school librarians.

A significant part of my job as program advisor for school librarians for the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education is to provide professional development for school librarians during the summer. The state of

Arkansas school librarians needed more flexibility and fewer standards that didn't overwhelm. We needed standards that lent themselves to being taught at the point of need and with a focus on inquiry.

Arkansas has fifteen regional educational service cooperatives. Using what we learned, Ashley and I met and spent a day planning a six-hour workshop that would introduce the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* to school librarians during the summer professional development workshops at each cooperative.

To help refine our workshop, we offered a six-hour workshop as a pre-conference at the AAIM Annual Conference, held in April. We made liberal use of the strategies, activities, and resources used in the AASL pre-conference to develop our AAIM pre-conference. Finally, we purchased enough copies of the standards at the AASL member discounted rate for each person who registered for the workshop. We set the cost of the workshop at \$99. We tweaked the plan for the summer workshops based on what we learned at this workshop.

The AAIM pre-conference and the workshops at the cooperatives contained many of the same activities:

- Guided table discussions of the Common Beliefs and share out
- A *National School Library Standards* manual scavenger hunt. Using the table of contents, we asked participants to explore the book and

answer the following questions: What stands out to you? What do you find immediately helpful? What questions or concerns do you have as you explore the Common Beliefs, frameworks, Shared Foundations, Key Commitments, Domains, and Competencies?

- Table discussions of the "Standards Structure" video and the Shared Foundation infographics. Each table was assigned one Shared Foundation and brainstormed on chart paper a list of what it could look like in action. We also provided time for a gallery walk of the charts.
- Table play of the standards card game, focusing on the Domains and Competencies.
- Identification of individual known stakeholders using the personas and discussion with table mates about how to introduce the standards to that particular stakeholder and possible activities that could benefit them.
- Evaluation of their school library. Using the building-level portion of the "School Library Evaluation Checklist," participants spent time evaluating their school library and identified three to five items on the checklist that could be part of an

improvement plan for the coming school year.

- Exploration of the AASL Standards website. Attendees were asked to consider what they could use in their district and school to share the standards with various stakeholders.
- Demonstration of how to add to a Padlet. Attendees were instructed on how to add two or more apps, sites, lessons, books, or other resources to a Padlet.
- Share out of one lesson learned during the day, one impact of the AASL Standards on attendees' school library, one way to use the AASL Standards to advocate for the school library or a growth goal.

Most teachers and school librarians spend their summers recovering from the previous school year, attending workshops, and preparing for the new school year. For me, it is my busiest time of year. Presenting at fifteen regional cooperatives plus larger school districts in the center of the state requires a lot of travel. Plus these standards workshops were not the only summer professional development I was responsible for. Fortunately, I was able to contract with Ashley to present the workshop at all the regional cooperatives. At one of the cooperatives, registration was even high enough to warrant scheduling a second day. More than 400 school librarians attended the workshops, and the response was very positive.

Preparation

At the same time Ashley Cooksey and I were planning the summer professional development summer standards workshops, I was planning for the revision of the state standards. The Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education has an established procedure for the

revision process. State law mandates a "schedule for periodic review and revision of academic standards to ensure that Arkansas academic standards are rigorous and prepare students for college, career, and community engagement" (Arkansas Code Title 6 2020). The law also requires the review and revision include the following elements:

- Review and input by Arkansas educators from elementary, secondary, and higher education
- Community members with professional experience related to the academic content area
- Study and consideration of academic standards at the national and international level
- Study and consideration of an evaluation of the academic standards from national groups or organizations
- Public dissemination of revised academic standards

The standards revision was scheduled for summer 2018, but preparations began in January 2018. Those preparations included forming the revision committee and making hotel, food, and meeting space arrangements for the eight workdays. Additionally, an expert needed to be identified in the school library field to review the current state standards in relation to the new AASL Standards and suggest changes. The process also requires a survey be sent to various stakeholders on the current standards and possible changes. Most important of all, there needed to be a plan for the work the revision committee was going to accomplish.

Forming a revision committee takes a considerable amount of time. The state requires representation from all grade levels, experience levels, and diverse populations. Other requirements include regional rep-

resentation in addition to school and district size and type. Representatives from higher education and administrators must also be recruited. In addition, committee members must be available to meet for eight days during the summer.

The first step was to put out a call for school librarians who were interested in participating in the process. A Google Form was used to create an application. In addition to contact and demographic information, some short essay questions were included to help learn more about the school librarians who applied. The essay questions asked why applicants wanted to participate and what they believed they could contribute to the work. I got a good response from the applications, but I still needed to reach out to others to fulfill the representation requirements. This involved a lot of phone calls and e-mails to principals and superintendents. The committee members were finalized in April and notified of their acceptance.

The second requirement involved a survey to various stakeholders. Stakeholders included classroom teachers, administrators, higher education faculty, parents, and community members. The results are meant to be shared with the revision committee to inform their decisions. Traditionally, this survey focused on the current state standards. However, I knew we needed to make significant changes to the current standards and wanted to get a sense of how these stakeholders reacted to the new AASL Standards. Therefore, this survey focused on the *National School Library Standards*. A few additional questions addressed format and suggested changes needed. Approximately 800 people responded to the survey, and 96 percent agreed that each of the Competencies in the new standards were important, very important, or extremely important

for students to be able to perform. (The survey and its results can be obtained by e-mailing Cassandra.barnett@arkansas.gov.)

The law also requires an evaluation of the current academic standards from a national group or organization. This has been interpreted to mean a review by an expert in the school library field. Generally an expert reviewer is asked to review our current standards. More specific instructions to the reviewer include:

- **Content Coverage:** Examine the content coverage of the current document and make recommendations from a content analysis perspective based on current research and best practice.
- **Developmental Appropriateness and Progression:** Examine the standard strands and student learner expectations for progression of learning and developmental appropriateness at each grade level.
- **Alignment with Internationally and Nationally Recognized Standards:** Include citations of international and national standards in a list of references so

that the revision committee may consult these documents during the revision process.

- **Level of Specificity:** Examine the level of specificity for depth and breadth based on current research and practice.
- **Clarity and Coherence:** Examine the progression of standards and coherence in terms of student learning and instructional concept progression and sequencing. Provide specific comparisons from other standards documents that will be useful to the revision committee.
- **Rigor:** Examine the progression of standards and level of difficulty of standards in terms of student learning expectations; make recommendations for exemplary standards documents that may be used as examples in the revision process.
- **Relevance:** Examine how students are expected to apply new knowledge and recommend strategies for assuring relevance of knowledge and skills.

- **Other Suggestions:** Provide any other strengths, concerns, or suggestions.

I chose Kathryn Roots Lewis as my expert reviewer for several reasons. First, I have known her for a number of years, and we have worked together in AASL. Second, she was on the task force that wrote the AASL Standards. This gave her a deep knowledge of the learning standards, as she examined our state standards. Finally, I knew that her expertise in inquiry would provide a valuable lens in her review. That focus on inquiry was definitely missing in our state standards. Kathryn made the following recommendations for the revision committee to consider:

- Place a greater focus on knowledge creation, growth mindset, complex learning, computational thinking, and authentic learning and less on a consumption model.
- Consider a greater emphasis on collaborative, personalized, and global learning.
- Consider the need to expand traditional information literacy skills to include higher-order thinking skills.
- Expand the idea of identifying, locating, and retrieving appropriate resources to the idea of resource curation.
- Expand connections when considering other curricular areas.
- Focus on school libraries as places for innovation, creation, and inquiry.
- Focus more on student voice and choice in learning.
- Focus more on inclusiveness, diversity, emotional, and social growth.

The work doesn't end with the state board of education's approval. Although the board approved the new state standards in October 2019, preparations for introducing the standards to school librarians began in early spring 2019.

- Emphasize co-teaching rather than merely collaboration.
- Think about your role in the broader school community. Consider including it in your work.
- Consider a framework less like a library curriculum and more like standards of practice.
- Focus on the processes of learning.

Revision Committee Work

The final preparations for the work of the committee were complete in the summer of 2018. The agenda, slide decks, activities, copies of the AASL Standards Framework for Learners, and supplies were ready. Lodging, meals, snacks, and meeting rooms had been secured. The committee was scheduled to meet four days in June and four days in July.

The first day started with logistics. Committee members receive a stipend of \$50 plus six hours of professional development per day. That requires paperwork. After that, we reviewed the process and requirements for the completed work. Not everyone on the committee had participated in the Arkansas Summer 2018 workshops about the standards, so the rest of the first day was spent exploring the AASL Standards Framework for Learners. We used some of the same activities we used in the summer standards workshops to begin unpacking the standards.

Day two started with a discussion of the takeaways from the first day. The rest of the day was spent in small groups identifying the takeaways of Kathryn's expert review and the survey results. Prior to the meeting, committee members were given articles to read, and these were brought into the conversations. Finally, we moved back into the larger group to share the takeaways

and examine them in relation to the current state standards.

Day three was a day for making decisions. After much discussion, the committee decided that it should recommend adoption of the AASL Standards Framework for Learners as the basis for the rest of the work of the committee. The major focus of the work would result in grade-level benchmark documents (K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–10, 11–12) that would include the Competencies with examples. Other decisions made that day included what other resource documents would be created to support the standards documents, the development of a high school research course, and how the work was going to be organized. On the last day of the first week, the committee divided into grade-level groups and began the actual work.

When the committee returned for the July session, they picked up where they left off. As groups finished the benchmark documents, one group checked them for vertical alignment. Then they began work on the supporting documents. These included a philosophy outlining the differences in the new state standards compared to the old and a suggested resource list. The high school group also created a research course that could be taught in a classroom setting, as an online course or as an independent study.

The committee finished its work, but there was still plenty to do. All the documents were final drafts, but they still needed to be edited and put in the proper format. Once the editing was complete, the documents were submitted to the state board of education's agenda for approval in October 2019. The presentation to the board went smoothly and the newly revised standards were adopted. The benchmark documents and other supporting documents

are available at <<https://tinyurl.com/yyla4pud>>.

The Rollout

The work doesn't end with the state board of education's approval. Although the board approved the new state standards in October 2019, preparations for introducing the standards to school librarians began in early spring 2019. (The standards and the grade-level benchmark documents can be found at <<http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/learning-services/curriculum-support/humanities/library-media-services/library-media-services-standards-and-courses>>.) School librarians were expected to use the 2019–20 school year to develop curriculum and plan implementation of the newly revised standards. Full implementation was expected in the 2020–2021 school year.

We started planning for the 2019 summer professional development in anticipation of the approval. Seven members of the revision committee who showed leadership in the revision process were contracted to lead professional development workshops at the educational cooperatives. We met for a day in the spring to plan the workshop. Our goal was to introduce participants to the new Arkansas Learning Standards for School Libraries. We wanted participants to dig into the Competencies, taken directly from the AASL Standards, and explore the "what it looks like" grade-level benchmark documents found on the DESE webpage, which also houses the new state standards. We also wanted participants to explore the curated resources housed in a Google Folder (<<https://tinyurl.com/yxgw38b2>>) that we hoped would prove helpful in developing their curriculum.

The agenda developed for the workshop looked like this:

Shared Foundations and Domains

- Share a paragraph describing the process for the revision committee choosing to go with the AASL Standards.
- Show “Standards Structure” intro video.
- Use the Shared Foundations and Domains graphic as a visual (see image below) on a slide, choose a Shared Foundation as an example, talk through what that looks like in the participant’s library.
- Make sets of the *National School Library Standards Card Game* using the template from the AASL Standards website.
- Divide participants into six groups. Each group will spend time examining their assigned Shared Foundation along with the Domains and Competencies, then discuss and determine how they’re going to teach what they learned.

- For the Inquire and Include groups, use chart paper to create a Twitter post about an activity that demonstrates what the Shared Foundation looks like and share with participants.
 - For the Collaborate and Curate groups, provide an overview and use one of the following activities to demonstrate what the Shared Foundation looks like: act it out in up to one minute, animated video, Flipgrid response, sing it/rap, Bento Box, write a haiku.
 - For the Explore and Engage groups, choose any one of the same activities listed above to demonstrate what the Shared Foundation looks like.
- Develop sample lessons (including resources)
 - Give a brief description of an activity and what it might look like at three different grade levels and scaffold the competencies/skills. Put these descriptions

on chart paper for all participants to review.

- Choose a partner who teaches at the same grade level and create the beginning of a lesson plan using one of the activities from the charts.

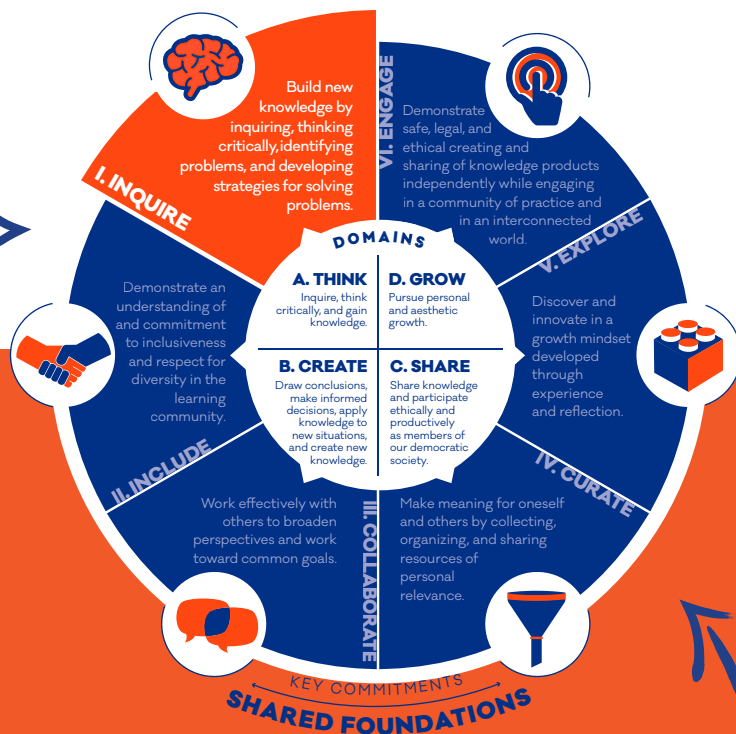
Assessment

- Review formative and summative assessment and provide examples using lesson plans built around the Competencies. Share handouts that include articles about developing formative assessments and types of assessments that can be used in a school library setting. Ask participants to add an assessment piece to their lesson. Participants will upload their lesson plans into a shared Google Folder so that all participants have access to them.

Documents from this workshop are available at <<https://tinyurl.com/yxgw38b2>>.

Arkansas is a local control state, which means that individual school districts are responsible for developing their own curriculum based on the academic standards provided by the state. The Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education has now recognized a need for more support in helping school districts develop their curriculum. So the plan for the 2020 summer professional development was to focus on helping school librarians build their curriculum. The 2019 state standards were significantly different from the previous set of standards.

Turning standards into curriculum requires unpacking the standards and being thoughtful about what students need to know to be successful in achieving competence in meeting the standards. I started preparation for this process by working with two school districts



to identify what strategies would be most helpful for school librarians to develop their curriculum. Most of the work revolved around unpacking the standards. Over the course of my work with the districts, a task analysis template for unpacking the standards gradually evolved into one that would be used in the 2020 summer workshops. Two other components came out of this work that I felt were important in helping districts develop a curriculum: using the task analysis template to build a lesson plan and incorporating formative assessments into lesson plans. This task analysis template has been made available to Arkansas school librarians in a shared Google Folder at <https://tinyurl.com/y9h9z56x>.

Plans for summer professional development were set in motion, and then the pandemic reared its ugly head. Now we had to find alternative ways to deliver the professional development. I am convinced that face to face is the most effective way to get the most out of professional development. Interacting with other participants creates better work. However, for the coming summer, face to face was not going to be possible. In thinking about how to deliver professional development, I decided to use two approaches: Zoom webinars and a Canvas course. The two-part Zoom webinars were designed to deliver information and resources tailored for elementary, middle, or high school librarians. The Canvas course was designed to provide resources and an opportunity to actually walk through the process of unpacking a standard and Competency using the task analysis template, create a lesson plan based on the template, and incorporate a formative assessment into the lesson plan. A separate webinar was created to help high school librarians implement the new research course approved by the state board of education (<https://tinyurl.com/y459zfbx>).

While I still believe that face to face is the best way to go, there were silver linings to our virtual offerings. I didn't have to travel, and I tripled the number of participants. The total number of participants attending my summer professional development webinars was a little over 2,000 attendees, compared to the average 450 attendees. That is significant. In the future, webinars are going to be added to my toolkit for professional development.

Next Steps

I will continue to support school librarians as they build their curriculum and implement it. The resources connected to the 2020 summer workshops were made available to participants (<https://tinyurl.com/y9h9z56x>). I am currently working through all the lesson plans that were created in the Canvas course and will curate those in a shared Google Folder for all Arkansas school librarians to access. Plans for the 2021 summer professional development will focus on incorporating inquiry and formative assessment into lesson planning.



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Education in Little Rock, Arkansas. She is a board member of the Arkansas Association of Instructional Media. She is a member of AASL and is a past president of AASL. She also serves on the Knowledge Quest Editorial Board. She contributed a chapter to the book Radical Collaborations for Learning: School Librarians as Change Agents (Librarians Unlimited 2020).

Helping Arkansas school librarians transform the AASL Standards Framework for Learners into a building-level curriculum is not a quick or easy process. It requires incremental steps and years to get there. In Arkansas, we have made progress but still have work to do.

Work Cited:

"Arkansas Code Title 6 – Education Subtitle 2 – Elementary and Secondary Education Generally Chapter 15 – Educational Standards and Quality Generally Subchapter 29 – Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act § 6-15-2906." 2020. Academic Standards.

Resources:

AASL Standards Framework for Learners: <https://standards.aasl.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/AASL-Standards-Framework-for-Learners-pamphlet.pdf>

AASL Standards website: <https://standards.aasl.org/>

National School Library Standards Card Game: <https://standards.aasl.org/project/card-game/>

National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries: www.alastore.ala.org/content/national-school-library-standards-learners-school-librarians-and-school-libraries-aasl

"School Library Evaluation Checklist": <https://standards.aasl.org/project/evaluation/>

"Shared Foundation Infographics": <https://standards.aasl.org/project/foundations/>