NEW SCHOOL LIBRARIAN PREPARATION STANDARDS

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Introduction

Last year, AASL announced the newly released *ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards*. These standards are used to guide programs preparing future school librarians for Master's degrees that include school library licensure. If you think back to your Master's courses, you might have seen AASL professional standards embedded in the course syllabus or aligned to assignments. These were the school librarian preparation standards. Prior to these new standards being approved and released in 2019, the last set of preparation standards were released in 2010. A school librarian preparation program that wants to receive national recognition by the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) and ALA/AASL must implement these standards and go through the CAEP accreditation process.

Aligning with the *National School Library Standards*

The AASL-CAEP Coordinating Committee developed the 2019 *School Librarian Preparation Standards* over a two-year period. We sought input from practicing school librarians, school library program faculty, and other educators. (For more information about the development, please read the *Knowledge Quest* blog post "What Exactly Are the School Librarian Preparation Standards?" at <https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/what-exactly-are-the-school-librarian-preparation-standards/>.) We wanted the school librarian preparation standards to reflect the language and intent of the *National School Library Standards* since the AASL Standards were released as the committee began its work in developing the new preparation standards.

One of the biggest areas of focus for our committee was maintain-

ing our commitment to the core skill of reading. The *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* identified reading as a Common Belief central to the school librarian profession. Common Belief 4 states, "Reading is the core of personal and academic competency." The explanation of the belief expands on this by explaining the role of the school librarian in motivating readers, using story to engage learners, and incorporating technology and digital and print materials in their collections (AASL 2018, 13). In developing the new school librarian preparation standards, CAEP required the committee to include a standard on what content knowledge school librarians should gain before entering the profession as well as the application of that content knowledge in their teaching.

How Does Reading and Literacy Fit in the New Preparation Standards?

Of the five standards in the new *School Librarian Preparation Standards*, reading is included in Standard 3, Knowledge and Application of Content. This standard states:

> Candidates in school librarian preparation programs are knowledgeable in literature, digital and information literacies, and current instructional technologies. Candidates use their pedagogical skills to actively engage learners in the critical thinking and inquiry process. Candidates use a variety of strategies to foster the development of ethical digital citizens and motivated readers. (AASL 2019, 10)

The standard includes three components: reading engagement, information literacy, and technology-enabled learning. It mirrors

Common Belief 4 from the *National School Library Standards* and recognizes that reading is the foundational skill needed for learners to grow both personally and academically.

In the 2010 *Standards for the Initial Preparation of School Librarians*, reading also played a major role. In those standards, literacy and reading stood alone as a single standard. The old standard (which was standard 2) stated:

> Candidates promote reading for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment. Candidates are aware of major trends in children's and young adult literature and select reading materials in multiple formats to support reading for information, reading for pleasure, and reading for lifelong learning. Candidates use a variety of strategies to reinforce classroom reading instruction to address the diverse needs and interests of all readers. (AASL 2010, 18)

The standard included four elements: literature, reading promotion, respect for diversity, and literacy strategies.

Differences between the 2010 and 2019 Standards Related to Reading

When comparing the 2010 and 2019 reading/literacy-focused standards, there are several notable differences. First, the 2010 content standard includes a specific element related to diversity in collection development, which the 2019 content standard appears to omit. However, diversity is actually much more omnipresent in the 2019 standards as a whole. Diversity is included in 2019 standard 1, The Learner and Learning, which addresses learner diversity and learner differences. Additionally, diversity in collection development is also included in

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standard 4, Organization and Access. This standard notes: "Candidates demonstrate their ability to develop, curate, organize, and manage a collection of resources to assert their commitment to the diverse needs and interests of a global society" (AASL 2019, 12).

Second, the 2019 standards also appear to omit literacy strategies, which were included in the 2010 standards. This omission was a deliberate reinterpretation of the role of school librarians in reading and literacy instruction. While school librarians are prepared to support reading instruction, our primary role is to encourage the development of motivated readers and learners who can engage with information and use it critically and ethically. This new interpretation places less emphasis on school librarians as reading instructors.

Third, the 2019 standards place a new emphasis on information literacy and the development of critical-thinking skills and inquiry. In the 2010 standards, literacy is primarily interpreted as the ability to read. The new standards broaden the concept of literacy and specifically

include multiple literacies and the inquiry process.

Finally, the 2019 standards place technology front and center as a central content area for school librarians to master. In the 2010 standards, technology was included in the standard related to information that primarily dealt with access to multiple formats (physical, digital, and virtual). In the 2019 standards, technology has been moved to the content standard, which indicates school librarians should be knowledgeable about appropriate uses of technology and should be able to design and adapt learning to better engage all learners through technology. The new component also uses the term "technology-enabled learning," which we believe emphasizes learning instead of technology.

How Were the New Standards Influenced by Other Reading/ Literacy Standards?

A strong relationship between school librarians and student success in reading and writing exists. Keith Curry Lance and Deb Kachel state that in statewide achievement studies,

"the most substantial and consistent finding is a positive relationship between full-time, qualified school librarians and scores on standards-based language arts, reading, and writing tests, regardless of student demographics and school characteristics" (2018). The connection between school librarians and literacy was taken into consideration in the development of the 2019 standards. The International Literacy Association's (ILA) 2017 *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals* were reviewed and are reflected in the 2019 standards. Themes of foundational knowledge, curriculum and instruction, assessment and evaluation, diversity and equity, learners and the literacy environment, professional learning and leadership from the overarching ILA standards can be found in the school librarian preparation standards. Since school libraries and school librarians can have a defining impact on the literacy of students, there is a natural relationship between the two standards.

ALA/AASL/CAEP Standard 3, Knowledge and Application of Content, demonstrates one of the most substantial relationships

Table 1. AASL CAEP Standards at a glance.

ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards (2019)

Standard 1: The Learner and Learning

Candidates in school librarianpreparation programs are effectiveeducators who demonstrate anawareness of learners' development. Candidates promote cultural competence and respect for inclusiveness. Candidates integrate the National School Library Standards considering learner development, diversity, and differences while fostering a positive learning

1.1 Learner Development. Candidates demonstrate the ways learners grow within and across cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and developmentaldomains. Candidates engage learners' interests to think, create, share and grow as they design and implement instruction that integrates the National School Library Standards.

1.2 Learner Diversity. Candidates articulate and model cultural competence and respect for inclusiveness, supporting individual and group perspectives.

1.3 Learning Differences. Candidates cultivate the educational and personal development of all members of a learning community, including those with diverse intellectual abilities, learning modalities, and physical variabilities.

1.4 Learning Environments. Candidates create both physical and virtual learner-centered environments that are engaging and equitable. Thelearning environments encourage positive social interaction and the curation and creation of knowledge.

Standard 2: Planning for Instruction

Candidates in school librarianpreparation programs collaborate with the learning community to strategically plan, deliver, and assess instruction. Candidates design culturally responsive learning experiences using a variety of instructional strategies andassessments that measure the impact on student learning. Candidates guide learners to reflect on their learning growth and their ethical use of information.Candidates use data and information to reflect on and revise the effectiveness of their instruction.

2.1 Planning for Instruction. Candidates collaborate with members of the learning community to design developmentally and culturally responsive resource-based learning experiences that integrate inquiry, innovation, and exploration and provide equitable, efficient, and ethical information access.

2.2 Instructional Strategies. Candidates use a variety of instructional strategies and technologies to ensure that learners have multipleopportunities to inquire, include, collaborate, curate, explore, and engage in their learning.

2.3 Integrating Ethical Use of Information into Instructional Practice. Candidates teach learners to evaluate information for accuracy, bias, validity, relevance, and cultural context. Learners demonstrate ethical use ofinformation and technology in the creation of new knowledge.

2.4 Assessment. Candidates use multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth. Candidates, in collaboration with instructional partners, revise their instruction to address areas in which learners need to develop understanding.

Standard 3: Knowledge and Application of Content

Candidates in school librarianpreparation programs areknowledgeable in literature, digital and information literacies, and currentinstructional technologies. Candidates use their pedagogical skills to actively engage learners in thecritical-thinking and inquiry process. Candidates use a variety of strategies to foster the development of ethical digital citizens and motivated readers.

3.1 Reading Engagement. Candidates demonstrate a knowledge of children's and young adult literature that addresses the diverse developmental,cultural, social, and linguistic needs of all learners. Candidates usestrategies to foster learner motivation to read for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment.

3.2 Information Literacy. Candidates know when and why information is needed, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner. Candidates model, promote, and teach critical-thinking and the inquiry process by using multiple literacies.

3.3 Technology-Enabled Learning. Candidates use digital tools, resources, and emerging technologies to design and adapt learning experiences.Candidates engage all learners in finding, evaluating, creating, andcommunicating data and information in a digital environment. Candidatesarticulate, communicate, model, and teach digital citizenship.

Standard 4: Organization and Access

Candidates in school librarianpreparation programs model, facilitate, and advocate for equitable access to and the ethical use of resources in a variety of formats. Candidatesdemonstrate their ability to develop, curate, organize, and manage acollection of resources to assert their commitment to the diverse needs and interests of the global society.Candidates make effective use of data and other forms of evidence toevaluate and inform decisions about library policies, resources, and services.

4.1 Access. Candidates facilitate and advocate for flexible, open access to library resources and services according to the ethical codes of the profession. Candidates design and develop strategic solutions for addressing physical, social, virtual, economic, geographic, and intellectual barriers to equitable access to resources and services.

4.2 Information Resources. Candidates use evaluation criteria and selection tools to develop, curate, organize, and manage a collection designed to meet the diverse curricular and personal needs of the learning community. Candidates evaluate and select information resources in a variety of formats.

4.3 Evidence-Based Decision Making. Candidates make effective use of data and information to assess how practice and policy impact groups and individuals in their diverse learning communities.

Standard 5: Leadership, Advocacy, and Professional Responsibility

Candidates in school librarian preparation programs are actively engaged in leadership, collaboration, advocacy, and professional networking. Candidates participate in and lead ongoing professional learning. Candidates advocate for effective school libraries to benefit all learners. Candidates conduct themselves according to the ethical principles of the library and information profession.

5.1 Professional Learning. Candidates engage in ongoing professional learning. Candidates deliver professional development designed to meet the diverse needs of all members of the learning community.

5.2 Leadership and Collaboration. Candidates lead and collaborate with members of the learning community to effectively design and implement solutions that positively impact learner growth and strengthen the role of the school library.

5.3 Advocacy. Candidates advocate for all learners, resources, services, policies, procedures, and school libraries through networking and collaborating with the larger education and library community.

5.4 Ethical Practice. Candidates model and promote the ethical practices of librarianship, as expressed in the foundational documents of the library profession including the American Library Association Code of Ethics and the Library Bill of Rights.

between the two sets of standards. This standard requires school librarian candidates to demonstrate knowledge of literature that addresses the diverse needs of all learners. Component 1 of standard 3 states, "Candidates demonstrate a knowledge of children's and young adult literature that addresses the diverse developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of all learners. Candidates use strategies to foster learner motivation to read for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment" (AASL 2019, 10). This knowledge takes into account the varied literacy needs of students and requires that successful school librarian candidates use strategies to foster learner motivation for reading. Correspondingly, ILA standard 2, Curriculum and Instruction, and ILA standard 5, Learners and the Literacy Environment, are reflected in standard 3 of the school librarian preparation standards.

ILA standard 2, Curriculum and Instruction, states, "Candidates use foundational knowledge to critique and implement literacy curricula to meet the needs of all learners and to design, implement, and evaluate evidence-based literacy instruction for all learners" (2017). ILA standard 5, Learners and the Literacy Environment, requires that "Candidates meet the developmental needs of all learners and collaborate with school personnel to use a variety of print and digital materials to engage and motivate all learners; integrate digital technologies in appropriate, safe, and effective ways; foster a positive climate that supports a literacy-rich learning environment" (2017). These two components of the ILA standards demonstrate one of the strongest correlations between the two sets of standards. Both AASL and ILA focus on meeting the needs of all learners and providing a variety of materials, both print and digital, to engage and motivate learners. In

addition, "The concept of diversity and equity is demonstrated in both sets of standards and plays an equally important role in the development of collections, school library programming, and knowledge of literacy candidates to meet the needs of a diverse community"(AASL 2019, 36).

What to Expect from New School Librarians Based on the New Preparation Standards?

School librarian preparation programs have plenty of opportunity to embed reading and its importance in a variety of literacies throughout their programs, particularly in relation to the increased emphasis on diversity and the specific focus on reading engagement. This is a significant change—the emphasis on our role as motivator of reading for pleasure, rather than as reading instructor. The need for diverse texts to motivate reading will require candidates to read and review #OwnVoices texts and diverse voices and critically examine texts. Meanwhile candidates (and their instructors) will need to review their own assumptions about reading and readers, particularly their cultural biases that impact collection development, readers advisory, and reading promotion. Are we including diverse voices that students will gravitate toward, and what cultural messages are we providing? Reading provides us information about our larger world even when reading for pleasure. What are the stories that readers want and need?

The school librarian preparation standards offer an opportunity not only for programs, but for practicing school librarians to reflect on the school librarian's role in promoting reading for pleasure and reading promotion. Programs will have an opportunity to examine their

course offerings and assessments to determine their alignment to the new standards, and practicing school librarians will have the opportunity to explore areas of potential professional growth. The increased emphasis on diversity with a focus on developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of students will shift the educational experiences of new school librarians. The new preparation standards ask programs educating school librarians to address using literature from multiple perspectives to serve diverse student populations as a component of information literacy. Candidates will need to build cultural competence in order to effectively curate literature from multiple perspectives. As new school librarians enter the field their newly gained knowledge can be shared with more veteran school librarians, developing collaborative partnerships that help both professionals put theory into practice in a reflective manner.

The emphasis on the school librarian's role of motivating reading for pleasure found in component 3.1 suggests an opportunity for school librarians serving readers to focus on joy. Being in a school library can and should be fun. Learning can be joyful, and reading is learning. Veteran and new school librarians should share their experiences in bringing joy into learning by talking with readers and by immersing themselves in books. School librarians who share the joys of reading by immersing themselves in books bring new understandings of how readers are motivated and what reading experiences they seek. However, this shift in emphasis also requires school librarian preparation programs to develop candidates' understanding of non-readers, how to serve a population that may choose not to read, and how to advocate for reading when serving a population that may choose to avoid reading.

The change in emphasis on reading does not reflect a lack of focus on reading for information. Rather it reflects the goal that reading is embedded throughout a variety of classes in preparation programs. Reading is a foundational skill to a variety of literacies. As an example, information literacy instruction will require reading skills. In standard 2.3, Integrating Ethical Use of Information into Instructional Practice, lessons on evaluating information will require focusing on how to read for accuracy, bias, relevance, and cultural context (AASL 2019). Since reading is embedded throughout these standards, school librarian preparation programs will need to consider course learning objectives related to reading skills and development in a variety of courses. Candidate assessments should focus on developing a literacy of formats, as there is an increased emphasis on multiple literacies. Focusing on multiple literacies allows candidates to develop understandings related to different skills in reading fiction and non-fiction, graphic formats, and other media forms. The multiple formats expand the definition of text but recognize the many formats through which information is experienced and why reading matters.

Why should you care about the preparation standards if you already have your degree and your licensure? The 2019 standards show where the field is headed and the expectations that principals and other administrators will have for new professionals entering the field. As educators with years of experience, veteran school librarians can share pedagogical techniques as mentors, recognizing that new professionals will have understandings of how to implement theory into practice but will need support in implementation. Examining the new standards is a great way to make plans for future professional development. If you see an area in the new standards that needs work, make a plan to explore that topic more fully as part of your professional goals.

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