

Supporting You, Supporting the Standards

AASL's Implementation Plan

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How does an association prioritize the needs of its members as it introduces new professional standards? What strategies ensure a smooth transition from one set of standards to another? How can a school librarian use new standards to spark and maintain continuous professional growth?

Understanding Member Needs

One way to ease the transition and prioritize the needs of members is to start by asking what members value in the current standards and what they want in the refreshed standards. AASL did just that; the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board (EB) conducted extensive surveys and shared its findings with the AASL Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force (ITF), so the ITF knew early that AASL members and nonmember school librarians want:

- implementation resources for multiple audiences that are free of library jargon (AASL 2016, 10),
- a simplified, visual presentation with searchable text (AASL 2016, 11), and
- tools to support solo librarians who lack easy access to face-to-face guidance (AASL 2016, 12).

A Balancing Act

To meet member needs, the ITF has balanced simplicity with complexity. An important early insight was that “one size does not fit all.” If we were to create implementation resources for multiple audiences, that meant that our plan had to expand to support learning community members with different needs, as well as school librarians at all stages in their careers. Our strategic plan identifies resources for seven specific groups of people: school librarians who need

help, innovative school librarians, school library supervisors, educators of librarians, school administrators, teachers, and parents (see figure 1).

Developing messages for each group using a variety of media is complicated. But we also discovered that simple plans with distinct, concrete action steps are more compelling, memorable, and easier for users to implement (Heath and Heath 2010). We chose to manage the complexity by organizing our plan around four goals with two to four objectives for each (see figure 2).

To support librarians implementing the new standards, we plan to:

- **explain** the AASL Standards to school librarians, stakeholders, and partners;
- **engage** innovators in developing tools to explain the AASL Standards;

To personalize our stakeholders, we developed a cast of characters or personas.



Athena the academic librarian is a school educator who develops curriculum for pre-service librarians and conducts research on the impact of school library practices.



Noah needs help. He may be new to the career or facing a change in schools, principal, or professional standards.



Leon the lead learner, an administrator, is concerned with getting the best added value from each educator in his building. He doesn't quite know what to expect from his school librarian.



Inez the innovator is an early adopter; she learns by tinkering with standards and getting feedback through sharing her findings with others.



Tony is a teacher. He's competent and well respected for his strong instructional practice. He's not sure what collaborating with his librarian will add to his practice.



Margot the mentor is the school library supervisor. She is concerned with guiding librarians at all stages of their professional growth.



Patty is a parent. She has never used a school library before, so she doesn't know what to expect the library to do for her child.

Figure 1. Personas for whom resources have been developed.

- **equip** practitioners to use the AASL Standards; and
- **evaluate** progress and adjust for changing conditions.

A Three-Year Plan

The implementation task force offers support for librarians' adoption and implementation of the new standards through a three-year strategic plan, with specific actions before, during, and after launch. Introductory material in the plan explains the task force's vision (see figure 3), the guiding principles behind our work, the cast of characters for whom we planned, and the adult learning theory that guided our choices.

The current plan identifies 115 action steps, including the development of branding, learning resources, partnerships, and outreach. The action steps are organized in a spreadsheet format to allow a future standing committee to revise and adjust the plan as conditions in the educational landscape change in the years ahead. The strategic plan is available at <http://standards.aasl.org/implementation>.

Explain

To explain the structure, purpose, and value of the AASL Standards to school librarians, stakeholders, and partners, the ITF determined that we would need to develop brand identity and messages, introduce

the standards to school librarians and stakeholder groups, and create and sustain conversations about the standards (AASL 2017, 21, 22, 24). Members expressed a need for visual, searchable materials and resources for multiple audiences. AASL's designers developed colorful icons to represent each of the standards' Shared Foundations and Domains, and the implementation task force developed messages for each of our stakeholder groups. The ITF and AASL staff worked together to ensure that a complete set of printed materials was ready for distribution at the AASL National Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, in early November 2017, and all of these materials may be

Goal 1. Explain the structure, purpose, and value of the AASL Standards to school librarians, stakeholders, and partners beyond the school community.

OBJECTIVES

1.1 Develop consistent, sharable branding and messaging for the standards to be used across traditional and social media.

1.2 Introduce AASL Standards to key stakeholders, including state and regional school library leaders, national educational organizations, state departments of education, and school administrator organizations.

1.3 Create and sustain excitement and conversations about the AASL Standards.

Goal 2. Engage innovators in developing tools to explain the structure, purpose, and value of the AASL Standards to school librarians, stakeholders, and partners beyond the school library community.

OBJECTIVES

2.1 Identify and engage with “movers and shakers” in the school library profession.

2.2 Encourage practitioners to develop and share implementation models and metrics for AASL Standards.

2.3 Engage with stakeholders outside the profession.

Goal 3. Equip practitioners to understand, apply, and use the AASL Standards in their educational settings.

OBJECTIVES

3.1 Design professional-development opportunities for practitioners.

3.2 Foster building personal learning networks and crowd-sourcing of resources related to AASL Standards.

3.3 Ensure implementation support through AASL publications, websites, and online tools.

3.4 Prepare library and information science, and continuing-education faculty members to integrate the new AASL Standards in university programs of study.

Goal 4. Evaluate progress toward implementing AASL Standards and adjust for changing conditions.

OBJECTIVES

4.1 Document effectiveness of AASL Standards implementation efforts.

4.2 Review and adjust implementation strategic plan for continued relevance.

Figure 2. Goals and objectives of the ITF.



Successful implementation requires that all school librarians commit to:

- continual professional reflection and growth;
- adopting and applying the national standards;
- iterative, aspirational planning to lead and serve the learning community;
- advocating for all students; and
- advocating for the school library.

Figure 3. ITF vision.

accessed as PDF files from the AASL Standards Web portal.

Print resources include:

- infographics that highlight the essence of the Shared Foundations and top first steps for implementation,
- one-pagers that explain to school librarians how to read the standards and manage standards overload,
- one-pagers that explain to stakeholders the value of the new standards,
- message boxes that provide jargon-free talking points for librarians to use when explaining school library standards, and
- other free promotional items.

As school librarians look through the Shared Foundation infographics, they will see many places where the refreshed standards build on the *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* (AASL 2007) and the guidelines expressed in *Empowering Learners*:

Guidelines for School Library Programs (AASL 2009). Our goal in explaining the structure, purpose, and value of AASL's new *National School Library Standards* is to help practicing school librarians see what they are already doing and to show how student competencies, librarian competencies, and school library alignments are integrated into a coherent whole.

Social media offers a platform for creating excitement, and the ITF planned for Twitter chats in September 2017 to start conversations about the standards, with additional social media campaigns following launch.



Figure 4. Managing standards overload.

Engage

We intend to “engage innovators in developing tools to explain the structure, purpose, and value of the AASL Standards to school librarians, stakeholders, and partners beyond the school library community” (AASL 2017, 28). After learning the basics, some librarians will move quickly into innovating with the standards, and they will want to share their experiences and discoveries as part of their own learning process. One of our objectives is to “encourage

practitioners to develop and share implementation models and metrics for AASL Standards” (AASL 2017, 29). AASL will create, on its standards Web portal, message boards for individuals to:

- discuss ways to collect evidence to demonstrate progress toward meeting the AASL Standards,
- share their own self-reflection tools and...evaluation rubrics developed to align with the AASL Standards, and
- discuss and share models for connecting the AASL Standards to district ESSA initiatives. (AASL 2017, 29)

As school librarians invent, tinker, share with others, and get feedback, look for them to share what they are learning through AASL's Web portal, Twitter chats, and blog posts.

Another objective is to identify and engage with “movers and shakers” in the school library profession. We invited state affiliates to send two leaders each to a one-and-a-half-day preconference workshop in Phoenix to work with the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board and the Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force. Finally, we've invited a group of grassroots leaders to provide feedback and consultation about how local factors are affecting implementation. Their input will be essential in helping the association learn what works and consider how to adjust action steps to respond to local needs.

Equip

To meet our third goal and “equip practitioners to understand, apply, and use the AASL Standards in their educational settings” we grouped strategic actions under four objectives:

- design professional development,
- foster personal learning networks,

Shared Foundations, Shared Implementation

MARCIA MARDIS, *Chair, AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board*

Have you had a chance to get a good look at the new *National School Library Standards*? This fresh and exciting document's authors, the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board (EB), aimed to "remodel" the concepts and commitments of school librarianship through thoughtful reworking and injection of new material and language. The resulting document is dynamic, flexible, and interconnected—just like your daily practice!

As a quick reminder—or preview—of the AASL Standards' content, the six one-word Shared Foundations (Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage) form the education base that learners, school librarians, and school libraries share. Each Shared Foundation is interpreted in a Key Commitment, which is the main objective behind the Shared Foundation. For example, the Key Commitment for Explore is "Discover and innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection." Together, the Shared Foundation and Key Commitment provide a broad statement of the results of meeting the standards; we intend for school librarians and advocates to use these statements to communicate school library core values to various stakeholders.

Each Shared Foundation and Key Commitment is realized through development of Competencies that fall into the four Domains widely used and understood in current school librarian practice: Think, Create, Share, and Grow. The Competencies apply to learners of all ages; the developmentally appropriate action taken to demonstrate competency will depend on the grade level. Learners may build competency by progressing through the Domains, beginning with Think and culminating with Grow, or they may engage with the Domains most appropriate to their learning task.

By focusing on an environment in which learners and educators have unprecedented access to teaching and learning opportunities, school librarians create a mobile teaching and learning culture centered on innovation, collaboration, exploration, deep thinking, and creativity. School librarians are key to the success of this educational paradigm shift because they provide resources

and instruction to all learners through an inquiry-based research model that supports questioning and the creation of new knowledge focused on learners' interests and real-world problems.

This vision for teaching and learning is dependent on school librarians who embrace, lead, and model progressive pedagogies, including coteaching, personalized learning, and face-to-face and virtual active learning environments. To support learners' exploration, school librarians build virtual collections, encourage active collaborative learning, and create spaces and learning structures within flexible library spaces. School librarians are master educators who provide leadership for a vision of learning centered on learner voice and choice.

Though the EB conceptualized and authored the new AASL Standards, our writing benefited from our ongoing discussion with the AASL Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force (ITF). Through our close collaboration, we were able to, for example, view standards implementations from the personas' perspectives as we reflected on the standards' coherence and completeness—an approach that kept us grounded in ensuring that our standards were realistic and immediately useful. Inspired by a desire to sustain the ITF's important work and mission, we included discussion questions and learning scenarios right in the standards book to jumpstart your use.

We were also fortunate enough to provide input to the ITF about meaning and interpretation of various standards' elements. We want your understanding to be achieved as quickly and seamlessly as possible. This joint development carried through to our collaborative design of the learning sessions at the AASL National Conference and follow-up opportunities like *Knowledge Quest* blog posts, eCOLLAB webinars, and local presentations.

The joint efforts of the EB and ITF illustrate one clear message: we are one profession united by the *National School Library Standards*. We come to the standards as individuals, but we engage with them as colleagues. As the members of the EB and the ITF know, we are better together!



For more information about the AASL standards and implementation resources available, visit standards.aasl.org.

- ensure implementation support through AASL materials, and
- prepare library school faculty to integrate the standards into programs of study (AASL 2017, 32).

The ITF worked with the EB to develop and deliver conference pro-

gramming for the AASL National Conference in Phoenix in November 2017. Conference programming featured numerous opportunities to learn about the standards through three preconference workshops, an unconference, the general session, and three concurrent sessions

presented multiple times throughout the conference. A final concurrent session was designed to provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on their learning and make preliminary implementation plans of their own. Recordings of the concurrent sessions may be found

at <ecollab.aasl.org>. Following the conference, the ITF will develop, record, promote, and archive ten webinars to support learning about and implementing the standards.

AASL will also support standards implementation through print, media, and Web productions, and a mobile app. Many resources will be organized and accessed through the Web portal mentioned above. Other materials to explain or introduce the standards include articles (like this one), blog posts, and Twitter chats. In the years following launch, watch for updates on school library evaluation rubrics, a lesson plan database, and print publications.

Library school faculty will be among the first to adopt the *National School Library Standards* as they revise coursework for pre-service librarians and continuing-education offerings. A blended subcommittee, composed of members from the EB, the ITF, and AASL's Coordinating Committee for the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), has prepared a summary to assist AASL'S CAEP Coordinating Committee in updating accreditation materials to reflect the new AASL Standards.

Evaluate

Following launch, AASL will "evaluate progress toward implementing AASL Standards and adjust for changing conditions" (AASL 2017, 38). We know that implementation will vary depending on local conditions, and we plan to celebrate success in all its forms. As we transition from developing materials for launch to developing data-collection methods to monitor implementation, our focus will always be on supporting school librarians as they expand their competencies in the Shared Foundations. We expect that there will be adjustments to the strategic plan based on our experiences as we try strategies, share stories, and collect

and evaluate the evidence. As part of our evaluation process, we also plan to explore and document shifts in the educational landscape, conduct formal surveys and literature reviews, and develop and share annual reports with AASL members and partner organizations.

Summary

In closing, we'd like to welcome you to your new *National School Library Standards*! As we have developed implementation tools, each of the

task force committee members has considered how these standards affirm our core beliefs about school libraries and the young people we serve. As we considered the implications of the Shared Foundations, we have deepened our own expertise. We've also been challenged to imagine growing and leading in new ways. Finally, at every step of the way, we have devoted our work to imagining YOU and your needs. We hope you will accept the implementation resources as an invitation to discovery and professional growth.



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Marcia A. Mardis is associate professor and assistant dean, Interdisciplinary Research and Education, in the College of Communication and Information at Florida State University (FSU) in Tallahassee. A longtime member of AASL, Marcia is chair of the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board. Among her recent honors were receiving the 2016 FSU College of Communication and Information's Leadership Builder Award, a 2016 Michigan Association for Media in Education President's Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Profession, and several research and teaching awards from FSU. She is the author of the in-press article "The OER Curation Life Cycle: Closing the Loop for Our Learners" to be published in *School Library Connection* and coauthor of a number of in-press papers, including "Usage Data as Indicators of OER Utility" to be published in the *Journal of Online Learning Research*, and the recently published "Potential of Graphic Nonfiction for Teaching and Learning Earth Science" in *School Libraries Worldwide*.

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