



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

STANDARDS FOR THE 21st-CENTURY LEARNER IN ACTION



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INTRODUCTION

Learning in the twenty-first century has taken on new dimensions with the exponential expansion of information, ever-changing tools, increasing digitization of text, and heightened demands for critical and creative thinking, communication, and collaborative problem solving. To succeed in our rapid-paced, global society, our learners must develop a high level of skills, attitudes and responsibilities. All learners must be able to access high-quality information from diverse perspectives, make sense of it to draw their own conclusions or create new knowledge, and share their knowledge with others.

In recognition of these demands, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has developed learning standards that expand the definition of information literacy to include multiple literacies, including digital, visual, textual, and technological, that are crucial for all learners to acquire to be successful in our information-rich society. The new learning standards, entitled *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*, take a fresh approach and a broad perspective on student learning standards in the school library media field by focusing on the learning process. The *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* lay out underlying common beliefs, as well as standards and indicators for essential skills, dispositions, responsibilities, and self-assessment strategies for all learners.

These learning standards represent high expectations for today's learners because the skills, dispositions, responsibilities, and self-assessment strategies represented by these standards will provide the foundation for learning throughout life. The standards and indicators will serve as guideposts for school library media specialists (SLMSs) and other educators in their teaching because these skills and dispositions are most effectively taught as an integral part of content learning.

The focus of these standards is on the learner, but implicit within every standard and indicator is the necessity of a strong school library media program (SLMP) that offers a highly-qualified school library media specialist (a term used interchangeably with librarian), equitable access to up-to-date resources, dynamic instruction, and a culture that nurtures reading and learning throughout the school.

Foundation of Beliefs

Strong beliefs among SLMSs undergird the new standards and offer essential points of connection with other educators. The nine beliefs in *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* feature two core approaches to learning that are embedded in SLMPs—reading and inquiry. Students who can (and do) read and inquire with thoughtfulness and curiosity are empowered to push their own learning to deeper levels and wider vistas.

Implicit within the nine common beliefs is recognition of the importance of skills that lead to productive behavior. Information literacy, the use of technology, critical thinking, and ethical decision making all have a basis in skills and an actualization in the behaviors that students choose to exhibit—from seeking diverse perspectives, to evaluating information, to using technology appropriately, to applying information literacy skills, to using multiple formats.

Finally, the beliefs outline the responsibilities that SLMSs and other educators accept for providing environments that support and foster successful learning. Students must have equitable access to resources and opportunities for learning. The environment must enable students to share and learn from each other because learning is enhanced by a social context. Most importantly, every child in our schools must have access to a vibrant school library.

Organizational Structure

The *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* and supporting documents have been organized hierarchically to enable many levels of use. An understanding of the overall framework will help SLMSs focus on the level of detail needed to communicate with different audiences and for various purposes.

The highest level is, of course, the four **Standards** themselves. The standards provide a framework for academic and personal learning in today's information-powered world. This level could be used by SLMSs to broaden the perspective of other educators, parents, school board members, and community members about the school library realm—that it goes beyond the simple accumulation of information for class assignments to in-depth academic learning, collaboration, and personal learning.

The second level consists of four **Strands** within each standard: Skills, Dispositions in Action, Responsibilities, and Self-Assessment Strategies. SLMSs are in an ideal position in each school to address the needs and to develop the abilities and attitudes of the whole child, not just the student's academic performance on specified content. The school library media center serves as a laboratory of active learning where students may develop their skills, hone their attitudes, practice their responsibilities independently, and regulate their own learning. SLMSs may use this level of detail when they are communicating about the focus of the library on the full development of each student.

The third level offers **Indicators** under each strand. These indicators delineate actions that students might take to demonstrate their competencies in Skills, Dispositions, Responsibilities, and Self-Assessment Strategies. The indicators are appropriate for students of any age, although the way that students demonstrate their competency will vary by grade level. The indicator level can be used as a framework for a school's program of teaching 21st-century learning skills as an integral part of learning throughout the school.

The final two levels **Benchmarks** and **Action Examples**, are outlined in great detail in the latter sections of this publication. The benchmarks offer specific skills that students can be expected to achieve by grades 2, 5, 8, 10, and 12. The action examples provide models of instructional situations that can be adopted or adapted for teaching the related skills. Both the benchmarks and action examples are grade-level-specific to provide a detailed picture of the development of competencies over years of the school experience. The benchmarks are focused on the development of skills, and SLMSs may use this level of detail to connect and collaborate with classroom teachers to develop specific instructional units that interweave the teaching of skills with the learning of content.



STANDARD 1: Inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge.

STRAND 1.1: SKILLS

INDICATOR 1.1.1:

Follow an inquiry-based process in seeking knowledge in curricular subjects, and make the real-world connection for using this process in own life.

GRADE-LEVEL BENCHMARKS

- GRADE 2** – Form simple questions and begin to explore ways to answer them.
- GRADE 5** – Generate questions and practice different ways to locate and evaluate sources that provide needed information.
- GRADE 8** – Use a critical-thinking process that involves asking questions, investigating the answers, and developing new understandings for personal or academic independent-learning activities.
- GRADE 10** – With guidance use an inquiry-based process for expanding content knowledge, connecting academic learning with the real world and pursuing personal interests.
- GRADE 12** – Independently and systematically use an inquiry-based process to deepen content knowledge, connect academic learning with the real world, pursue personal interests, and investigate opportunities for personal growth.

INDICATOR 1.1.2:

Use prior and background knowledge as context for new learning.

GRADE-LEVEL BENCHMARKS

- GRADE 2** – Connect ideas to own interests.
– Identify one or two keywords about a topic, problem, or question.
– Share what is known about a topic, problem, or question.
- GRADE 5** – Connect ideas or topics to their own interests.
– Articulate what is known about a topic, problem or question.
– With guidance generate a list of keywords for an inquiry-based project.
– Identify and use appropriate sources to acquire background information.
– Predict answers to inquiry questions based on background knowledge and beginning observations or experiences.
- GRADE 8** – State and support what is known about a topic, problem, or question, and make connections to prior knowledge.
– Observe and analyze an experience, demonstration, or source that introduces a topic, problem, or question to gather background information.
- GRADE 10** – Read background information to discover the key components of the problem or question.
– Identify keywords or synonyms to use in further research.
– Develop a schema or mind map to express the big idea and the relationships among supporting ideas and topics of interest.
- GRADE 12** – Explore general information sources to increase familiarity with the topic or question.

(continues on page 20)

STANDARD 1: Inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge.

INDICATOR 1.2.1:

Display initiative and engagement by posing questions and investigating the answers beyond the collection of superficial facts.

SAMPLE BEHAVIORS

- Develop questions that relate to the essential or overarching question in the inquiry.
- Develop questions that explore the larger topic or issue to gain essential background knowledge.
- Develop questions that focus on “How do we know what we know?”
- Develop questions that require making connections between ideas and events.
- Develop questions that challenge previous thinking.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

- STAGE 1** – Pose questions but largely at the factual level.
- STAGE 2** – Pose questions at both the factual and higher levels of thinking with considerable guidance from the teacher or SLMS.
- STAGE 3** – Pose questions at both the factual and higher levels of thinking with minimal assistance from the teacher or SLMS.

INDICATOR 1.2.2:

Demonstrate confidence and self-direction by making independent choices in the selection of resources and information.

SAMPLE BEHAVIORS

- Preview resources to decide which best meet information needs.
- Apply evaluation strategies and criteria to select resources.
- Revise searches based on information found.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

- STAGE 1** – Seek continual assistance from teacher, SLMS, and peers in selecting resources and information.
- STAGE 2** – Use strategies and criteria provided by the teacher or SLMS to select appropriate resources.
- STAGE 3** – Work independently in evaluating resources and information and in revising search strategies as needed.

INDICATOR 1.2.3:

Demonstrate creativity by using multiple resources and formats.

SAMPLE BEHAVIORS

- Collect needed information from resources in a range of formats.
- Experiment with new ways to communicate information.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

- STAGE 1** – Use the same types of resources and formats for all information needs.
- STAGE 2** – Use an expanding range of resources and formats that have been suggested by the teacher or SLMS.
- STAGE 3** – Use a range of resources and formats, and try different ways to appropriately present information.

6.A.1

ACTION EXAMPLE: KINDERGARTEN

GRADE: K

LIBRARY CONTEXT:

- Fixed
- Flexible
- Combination
- Individualized instruction
- Stand-alone lesson
- Lesson in a unit
- Multiple lessons in a unit

COLLABORATION CONTINUUM:

- None
- Limited
- Moderate
- Intensive

CONTENT TOPIC:

Community Helpers

ESTIMATED LESSON TIME:

30 Minutes

Standards for the 21st-Century Learner Goals

STANDARD 1: Inquire, think critically and gain knowledge

SKILLS INDICATOR:

1.1.2 Use prior and background knowledge as context for new learning.

BENCHMARKS:

- Connect ideas to personal experiences.
- Share what is known about a topic, problem or question.

DISPOSITIONS INDICATOR:

3.3.5 Contribute to the exchange of ideas within and beyond the learning community.

RESPONSIBILITIES INDICATOR:

2.3.1 Connect understanding to the real world.

SELF-ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES INDICATOR:

2.4.3 Recognize new knowledge and understanding.

SCENARIO:

When meeting with the kindergarten teachers during their monthly planning meeting, the SLMS participates in the planning of an upcoming unit on community helpers and what they do for our community. The curriculum objectives state that students should not only be able to name various community helpers, such as the doctor, nurse, policeman, firefighter, teacher, and principal, but also identify what helpers contribute through their actions to make them a vital part of our community. The SLMS states that several available literature choices will support these objectives and volunteers to work with the teachers to create a lesson. The SLMS goes on to brainstorm with the teachers on this lesson idea. They agree that the SLMS will identify appropriate resources for the team, select literature for the lesson, and design a graphic organizer that will be used on the interactive whiteboard during the lesson. The teachers plan to introduce the unit and then visit the media center for a lesson during the second week of the unit. Following the lesson, the teachers will continue to build on what students have learned and also identify areas where students might need further assistance. Since flexible scheduling is in place, each teacher will sign up for a time that works for her class.

CONNECTION TO LOCAL OR STATE STANDARDS:

Content Standards for Grade K Social Studies: The student can identify various workers and their jobs in the community.

Content Standards for Grade K Health: The student can name people in the school and community who provide health support for others.

Content Standards for Grade K Language Arts: The student can use knowledge of the conventions of language and texts to construct meaning for a range of literary and informational texts for a variety of purposes.

OVERVIEW:

In a theme unit on community helpers, kindergarten students will name a range of community helpers and be able to describe how they perform their major roles. The essential questions for this unit include: Who are community helpers? How do they help us?

FINAL PRODUCT:

Students complete an SLMS-created graphic organizer that connects community helpers with the tools they need to do their jobs. Each student will choose one helper to explain how he or she uses tools in the role played in the community.

LIBRARY LESSON:

Students will learn that they need to recall prior knowledge from their own experiences and classroom learning.

ASSESSMENT

Product: SLMS and teacher assess the completed graphic organizers looking for correct match of helpers with tools; the SLMS and teacher also use a checklist to assess each student's understanding of how the chosen community helper uses tools to make a contribution to the community.

Process: SLMS and teacher observe students as they work on their graphic organizers and listen as they describe the connection between the tools their chosen community helpers use and the helpers' roles in the community.

Student self-questioning:

- Did I understand my task?
- Did I listen carefully enough to find the information I need?
- Did I use information I already knew?
- Did I participate and contribute to the group learning activity?

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Resources students will use:

- Online subscription database(s)
- Websites
- Books
- Reference
- Nonprint
- Periodicals/newspapers
- Other (list):

INSTRUCTION/ACTIVITIES

Direct instruction: As class comes in, engage students by showing on the interactive whiteboard a rotating display of the covers of books chosen for the lesson and of photographs of community helpers. Begin with a discussion about what students know about community helpers from personal experience or from classroom instruction. SLMS and teacher review with students what they have been learning in their classroom to make connections and identify purpose for the lesson. The SLMS then reads the literature selection, questioning and emphasizing key points throughout the story.

Modeling and guided practice: SLMS explains the graphic organizer and demonstrates how to use it and the interactive whiteboard by modeling an example with the teacher.

Independent practice: To demonstrate what they have learned by accurately completing the graphic organizer, students volunteer to come up to the whiteboard and connect the community helper picture with the tools needed to do his or her job.

Sharing and reflecting: Students each chose one helper and explain to the group how the helper uses those tools to play his or her part in a community.