

School Librarian Preparation and Practice: An Exploration of the AASL National School Library Standards and ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards

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Abstract

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) recently released standards to guide the practice of school librarians. The National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries (2018) were put forward as a single text with integrated frameworks. One year later, the ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards (2019) were adopted to inform the preparation of school librarians. Using a one-way crosswalk

RELATED LITERATURE

Understanding the extent to which the *ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards* and *AASL Standards Framework for School Librarians* align or have common purpose is a first step to examining a common goal within the school library profession to prepare and support school library professionals. One Common Belief central to the profession is “Qualified school librarians lead effective school libraries” (AASL 2018, 12).

Earlier studies have shown that coursework and preparation across programs is not always consistent and can emphasize different roles and dispositions (Harada 1996; Shannon 2004; Moreillon, Kimmel, and Gavigan 2014). Programs that prepare school librarians may vary according to delivery model, required activities, and coursework expectations such as practical assignments and internships (Shannon 2004). Additionally, the amount of emphasis on teaching and integrated or collaborative instruction versus more-traditional library tasks varies (Moreillon, Kimmel, and Gavigan 2014). Many of these factors are influenced by whether the program is accredited and aligned with the standards established by ALA/AASL/CAEP.

Previous research conducted on the use and implementation of standards in school librarianship can be divided into two categories: standards that guide practicing school librarians and standards that guide the education and preparation of school librarians. Prior to the 2018 publication of the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, practicing school librarians were guided by various sets of standards that were revised over time. With the adoption of each new set of standards, studies have been conducted to explore the roles or perceptions of school librarians. In 1989 Selvin W. Royal examined the then newly released *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Programs* (1988) for the implications that those standards might have for the curriculum of school librarian preparation programs. Royal indicated that the guidelines provided evidence on the changing roles of school librarians—changes that would require preparation programs to change their curricula. In 2001 Delia Neuman used the newest standards of the time, *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* (AASL and AECT 1998), to conduct focus-group interviews about implications that those standards had for changes needed in the preparation of school librarians.

Roles and perceptions of school librarians have also been studied through job advertisements and job descriptions, and compared to the prevailing standards for school librarians. In 2018 Aaron J. (1988) for the

agreed to merge into a new accrediting body: CAEP (Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation).

Studies related to the preparation standards have explored how these standards have been used to guide the education of future school librarians but are rarely about the standards themselves or a comparison of the preparation standards to the practicing standards. The preparation standards have been used as a framework to provide guidance to preparation programs in developing and revising courses, assignments, and learning outcomes (Baker 2016; Schultz-Jones et al. 2018). Violet Harada's 1996 study examined ALA-accredited programs that provided preparation for school librarianship to determine the extent to which their curricula covered the competency areas from the 1988 ALA/AASL/NCATE *Competencies for the Initial Preparation of School Library Media Specialists*. Additionally, a dissertation study has used the preparation standards as a framework to explore how principals and practicing school librarians perceived the roles of school librarians (Novotny 2017).

Two publications have examined both the standards for practicing school librarians and the standards for the education and preparation of school librarians. While Donna Shannon's literature review on the education and competencies of school library media specialists examined standards for both practicing school librarians and the preparation of school librarians, it did not provide a comparison between those sets of standards. Shannon noted that much of the research in both areas has been descriptive studies that explored perceptions and attitudes of school librarians (2004). The only previous study that compared standards for practicing school librarians and standards for the preparation of school librarians was published in 2012. In that paper, three sets of standards that impact school librarians are compared: the 2009 *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs* (the guidelines for school libraries), the 2010 *AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians*, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards *Library Media Standards* (2001). In 2012 Audrey P. Church et al. noted that each of those sets of standards were intended for different audiences: The ALA/AASL/NCATE Standards were written for preparation program educators who teach future school librarians, *Empowering Learners* was for practicing librarians at the building level, and the NBPTS teaching standards were for accomplished and experienced school librarians. The research by Church et al. outlined common themes between the sets of standards, including access, advocacy, collaboration, inquiry, leadership, ethics, and management. This current study addresses the gap in school library literature exploring school library preparation standards aligned to standards of school librarians in practice.

Purpose and Research Questions

Understanding the relationship between expectations for school librarians as expressed in preparation programs and as competencies displayed in practice will help inform preparation goals and strengthen instructional practice. This study seeks to determine to what extent the *AASL Standards Framework for School Librarians* and the *ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards* align. To explore the extent of this alignment, the project was guided by the following questions:

1. Do the AASL Standards Framework for School Librarians and the ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards reflect similar content?
2. If there are gaps

two documents. Findings also discuss attempted mapping of the Best Practices from the AASL Standards and Candidate Action examples from the School Librarian Preparation Standards.

ALIGNMENT OF CONTENT

A high rate of alignment was found across the documents with 86 percent (n=57) of the AASL School Librarian Competencies mapped to at least one Component of the School Librarian Preparation Standards. This alignment occurred across all Shared Foundations and within each learning Domain. Competencies aligned most frequently within the Think Domain of all the Shared Foundations (N= 34) and least frequently within the Share Domain (n=19). However, this level of frequency was not consistently represented as a trend across all Shared Foundations.

The analysis showed the greatest frequency of alignment to occur in the Shared Foundation of Engage (N=31). Each Competency of the Engage Shared Foundation was aligned at least once to a Component in the School Librarian Preparation Standards and this Shared Foundation displayed the greatest number of multiple uses of a single Competency (see table 1). While sixteen Competencies (24 percent) across all Shared Foundations within the *AASL Standards Framework for School Librarians* aligned three or more times to Components of the ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards, only four Competencies aligned four or more times, and all of these were found within the Shared Foundation Engage, as documented in table 1.

Table 1. AASL Standards Competencies with four or more occurrences of alignment with

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

The School Librarian Preparation Standards document identifies “cross-cutting themes” within those standards. The CAEP guidelines for creating the School Librarian Preparation Standards required the inclusion of two specific cross-cutting themes focused on diversity and digital learning. Our research revealed alignment along the cross-cutting theme of diversity. The School Librarian Preparation Standards front matter identifies cultural competence as a grounding theory in the context of diversity (ALA/AASL/CAEP 2019, 40). This emphasis is evident in language and scope. Two Components of the School Librarian Preparation Standards, Learner Development and Learner Diversity, aligned at the broader Shared Foundation level of Include rather than at the AASL Standards Competency level for this cross-cutting theme.

School Librarian Preparation Standard 1.2 Learner Diversity aligned to several AASL Standards Competencies for school librarians, but we saw this standard as also being aligned to the broad Shared Foundation of Include.

The other significant “cross-cutting theme” discussed in the *ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards* is digital learning (2019, 40). While technology is addressed thd(u)-10(s)-ld(u)-10(TT2 1

Table 3. Alignment of Leadership, Advocacy, and Professional Responsibility preparation standard with AASL Standards Competencies.

ALA/AASL/CAEP Standard and Component	AASL Standards Shared Foundation, Domain, and Competency
5.1 Professional Learning.	I.D.1 Leading learners and staff through the research process III.B.2 Cultivating networks that allow learners to build on their own prior knowledge and create new knowledge
5.2 Leadership and Collaboration.	VI.D.3 Championing and modeling safe, responsible, ethical, and legal information behaviors
5.3 Advocacy.	III.B.2 Cultivating networks that allow learners to build on their own prior knowledge and create new knowledge

Mapping Practice

Creators of crosswalks inevitably find areas of strong and weak alignment and even omissions. With the differing purposes of the two documents examined here, full alignment would be unrealistic. Several areas in the two sets of standards documents *did* show strong alignment. As

would be considered to be within the school librarian roles of program manager or information specialist. The lack of alignment here is also a result of the differing purposes of these documents. The School Librarian Preparation Standards and their Components are intended to measure what pre-service librarians should know and be able to do, although they might not have opportunities to demonstrate that mastery prior to obtaining employment as school librarians. The AASL Competencies are intended to measure what practicing librarians demonstrate in their day-to-day working environment.

Additionally, most assessment and evidence-gathering expected of a school librarian is also documented in the *AASL Standards Framework for School Libraries* instead of within the framework of Competencies for school librarians. The AASL Standards book *does* explicitly state that the frameworks are integrated elements and no “standards setq -1.65 Td [(A)t-6(an)-4(d)-4(ar)-1(d)-4r

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Appendix: One-Way Crosswalk of ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards and AASL National School Library Standards

Preparation Standards	AASL National School Library Framework for School Librarians
AASL Preparation Standard Component	AASL Shared Foundations, Domains, and Competencies
STANDARD ONE	
<p>1.1 Learner Development. Candidates demonstrate the ways learners grow within and across cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and developmental domains. Candidates engage learners' interests to think, create, share, and grow as they design and implement instruction that integrates the <i>National School Library Standards</i>.</p>	<p>I.A School librarians teach learners to display curiosity and initiative when seeking information</p> <p>I.B School librarians promote new knowledge generation</p> <p>V.A.1 Encouraging learners to read widely and deeply in multiple formats and write and create for a variety of purposes.</p> <p>V.B.2 Providing opportunities for tinkering and making</p> <p>V.C.1 Providing strategies for acting on curiosity about a topic of personal interest or curricular relevance.</p> <p>V.C.2 Assisting learners to co-construct innovative means of investigation</p>
<p>1.2 Learner Diversity. Candidates articulate and model cultural competence and respect for inclusiveness, supporting individual and group perspectives.</p>	<p>II.C School librarians facilitate experiences in which learners exhibit empathy and tolerance for diverse ideas</p> <p>II.D School librarians explicitly lead learners to demonstrate empathy and equity in knowledge building within the global learning community</p> <p>II.A.1 Engaging learners to articulate an awareness of the contributions of a range of learners</p> <p>II.A.2 Guiding learners as they adopt a discerning stance toward points of view and opinions expressed in information resources and learning products</p> <p>II.A.3 Differentiated instruction to support learners' understanding of cultural relevancy and placement within the global learning community</p> <p>II.C.2 Guiding learners to contribute to discussions in which multiple viewpoints on a topic are expressed</p> <p>III.C.2 Advocating and modeling respect for diverse perspectives to guide the inquiry process</p>
<p>1.3 Learning Differences. Candidates cultivate educational and personal development of all members of the learning community, including those with diverse intellectual abilities, learning modalities, and physical variabilities.</p>	<p>II.A.1 Engaging learners to articulate an awareness of the contributions of a range of learners</p> <p>II.D.1 Creating an atmosphere in which learners feel empowered and interactions are learner-initiated</p> <p>II.D.3 Showcasing learners' reflections on their place within the global learning community</p> <p>III.A.1 Challenging learners to work with others to broaden and deepen understandings</p> <p>III.A.2 Scaffolding of learning group roles to enable the development of new understandings within a group</p>

	<p>III.B.2 Cultivating networks that allow learners to build on their own prior knowledge and create new knowledge</p> <p>V.D.2 Helping learners to recognize capabilities and skills that can be developed, improved, and expanded</p>
<p>1.4 Learning Environments. Candidates create both physical and virtual learner-centered environments that are engaging and equitable. The learning environments encourage positive social interaction and the curation and creation of knowledge.</p>	<p>III.D.1 Stimulating learners to actively contribute to grouped discussions</p> <p>III.D.2 Creating a learning environment in which learners understand that learning is a social responsibility</p> <p>IV.C.1 Facilitating opportunities to access and evaluate collaboratively constructed information sites</p> <p>V.D.3 Fostering an atmosphere in which constructive feedback is openly accepted for positive growth</p> <p>VI.D.1 Structuring a learning environment for innovative use of information and information technologies</p>
<p>STANDARD TWO</p>	
<p>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.</p>	<p>I.D.1 Leading learners and staff through the research process</p> <p>II.A.3 Differentiating instruction to support learners’ understanding of cultural relevancy and placement within the global learning community</p> <p>VI.D.3 Championing and modeling safe, responsible, ethical and legal information behaviors</p>
<p>2.2 Instructional Strategies. Candidates use a variety of instructional strategies and technologies to ensure that learners have multiple opportunities to inquire, include, collaborate, curate, explore, and engage in their learning.</p>	<p>I.A.1 Activating learners prior and background knowledge as context for constructing meaning</p> <p>I.D.1 Leading learners and staff through the research process</p> <p>I.D.2 Constructing tasks focused on learners’ individual areas of interest</p> <p>II.A.3 Differentiating instruction to support learners’ understanding of cultural relevancy and placement within the global learning community</p> <p>II.B.2 Devising learning activities that require learners to evaluate a variety of perspectives</p> <p>II.C.2 Guiding learners to contribute to discussions in a safe and respectful manner</p>

IV.A.3 Guiding learners to make critical choices about information sources

IV.B.2 Encouraging the use of information representing diverse perspectives

IV.B.4 Providing tools and strategies to organize information by priority, topics, or other systematic scheme

IV.C.2 Devising pathways for learners to contribute to collaboratively constructed information sites by ethically using and reproducing others' work

IV.D.2 Formulating tasks that help learners to integrate and depict in a conceptual knowledge network learners' understanding gained from resources

V.A.1 Encouraging learners to read widely and deeply in multiple formats and write and create for a variety of purposes

V.A.2 Challenge learners to reflect and question assumptions and possible misconception

V.B.1 Teaching problem solving through cycles of design, implementation, and reflection

V.C.1 qpl eob

V.3.2

V.A.2 Challenging learners to reflect and question assumptions and possible misconceptions

VI.A.1 Directing learners to responsibly use information, technology, and media for learning, and modeling this responsible use

VI.A.2 Modeling the understanding of ethical use of information, technology, and media

VI.A.3 Teaching learners how and why to evaluate information for accuracy, validity, social and cultural context, and appropriateness for need

VI.B.1 Showing a variety of strategies to ethically use and reproduce others' work, and modeling this use

VI.B.2 Relat3(I)-2.Ph-1.7(nd)10(l)-4.6(i)6.2(ng t)6.3(hi3(y)-1.3(t)6.)-2.3()68r3(I)-2.3(L

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.

III.C.2 Advocating and modeling response for diverse perspectives to guide the inquiry process

IV.A.1 Modeling the response to a need to gather and organize information

IV.A.3 Guiding learners to make critical choices about information sources to use

IV.B.3 Fostering the questioning and assessing of validity and accuracy

STANDARD FOUR

4.1 Access. Candidates facilitate and advocate for flexible, open access to

needs of all members of the learning community.	
<p>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.</p>	<p>VI.D.3 Championing and modeling safe, responsible, ethical and legal information behaviors</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>III.B.2 Cultivating networks that allow learners to build on their own prior knowledge and create new knowledge</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>VI.A.1 Directing learners to responsible use information, technology, and media for learning, and modeling this responsible use</p> <p>VI.A.2 Modeling the understanding of ethical use of information, technology and media</p> <p>VI.A.3 Teaching learners how and why to evaluate information for accuracy, validity, social and cultural context and appropriateness for need.</p> <p>VI.B.1 Showing a variety of strategies to ethically use and reproduce others' work and modeling this ethical use</p> <p>VI.B. 2 Requiring complete attribution to acknowledge authorship and demonstrate respect for the intellectual property of others</p> <p>VI.B.3 Promoting the inclusion of elements in personal-knowledge products that allow others to credit content appropriately</p> <p>VI.D.3 Championing and modeling safe, responsible, ethical, and legal information behaviors</p>

