



The standards challenge us to work to ensure opportunities for students to develop the skills, dispositions, responsibilities, and self–assessment strategies that will enable them to meet the standards and learn how to learn.

Developing the Vision:

ENHANCING YOUR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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AASL's *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* (2007) and *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (2009) remind all educators to look at learning as a lifelong enterprise. AASL has branded the implementation of the standards and guidelines as Learning4Life (L4L).

In the last issue of *Knowledge Quest*, the L4L Task Force and Affiliate Coordinators presented a sample job description focused on the requisite skills and characteristics needed by effective school librarians in order for the vision represented in the standards and guidelines to become a reality. In this issue we continue that effort by asking school librarians to consider Learning4Life not only as a focus for our students, but also for ourselves.

The standards challenge us to work to ensure opportunities for students to develop the skills, dispositions, responsibilities, and self–assessment strategies that will enable them to

meet the standards and learn how to learn. Similarly, we must reflect on what effective practice looks like and how we can evaluate whether we are rising to the challenge of best serving our students and school communities.

To that end, we have fine-tuned and updated a sample evaluation system as a companion to the sample job description. This system can serve as a professional pathway to continuous improvement, and assist you and your evaluator to determine:

- What professional skills might you need to hone?
- What professional and personal dispositions do you need to ensure success?
- What professional responsibilities must you assume and carry out?
- How do you self-assess to move forward?

This system is based on a continuous cycle of assessment and evaluation within four domains of teaching

responsibility presented by Charlotte Danielson in the first and second editions of *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* (1996, 2007) and has been developed with Danielson's permission.

Danielson's four domains are: *Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities*. The L4L evaluation system parallels her domains, but replaces her second domain with Library Environment. Many of the elements and the components parallel Danielson's; however, when necessary, they have been adapted to the role of the school librarian when it differs from the teacher's role. All elements represent principles of best practice in teaching and school librarianship. Each domain has specific, measurable components to evaluate performance. As a result of self-assessment and conferencing with evaluators, the school librarian's professional development goals reflect and align with the elements of these evaluative criteria.

Summary of the Domains

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

Both directly and indirectly, the school librarian plays an important role in planning for instruction. Supporting instruction requires having necessary resources available; achieving availability requires knowledge of curriculum and knowledge of students. The school librarian is involved in ensuring that units of instruction help students develop and practice:

- information literacy skills (the ability to define the task/problem/need for information; develop a search strategy; locate, evaluate, and use information effectively)
- the research process
- media and digital literacy and technology skills

This integration requires that school librarians collaborate with teachers in planning, implementing, and assessing some units of study.

Domain 2: The Library Environment

In this domain many elements and components are similar to those of the classroom environment. The components of managing classroom procedures and organizing the learning environment have been adapted to meet specific needs within the library. Traffic flow—the ability to move freely and easily within a space—and the importance of self-directed use are important concepts to consider in the organization of the library as a flexible learning environment capable of simultaneously supporting a variety of groups and activities.

Domain 3: Instruction

The components in this domain have been adapted to show how the school librarian is involved in instruction. The research process, as well as information, media, and digital literacy and technology skills are emphasized when working with classes, small groups, or individuals. Additionally, much one-on-one teaching occurs in the library.

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

Within this domain, components dealing with reflection, communication, contributing to the school and school district, and growing professionally are much the same as the teachers' components documented by Danielson. Included in the L4L sample evaluation system are additional components unique to librarianship and professional responsibilities involving the management of the library:

- developing and administering the budget
- keeping accurate records regarding collection, circulation, and use
- analyzing data for planning and decision making
- supervising staff
- developing and maintaining a collection of resources

Additionally, enhancement of professional knowledge in the specialty and service to the profession are in this domain.

As professionals, we are also Learning4Life. In doing so, we help make our students and school communities aware of what distinguished practice looks like, its benefits to them, and why they should insist on it. So while space does not permit us to provide you with the complete evaluation system, here's a sample of one of the components of Domain I to provide a sense of what the system looks like. All domains and components will be available at www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/learning4life/index.cfm.

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DOMAIN I: PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Component Ia: Demonstrating Knowledge of Content Curriculum and Process

Elements: Knowledge of curriculum • Knowledge of information, media, and digital literacy • Knowledge of the research process

Distinguished—School librarian displays extensive knowledge of the curriculum, resources, various literacies, and the research process, and is able to develop meaningful connections.

Proficient—School librarian displays knowledge of the curriculum, resources, various literacies, and the research process, and is able to develop connections.

Basic—School librarian is familiar with the curriculum but cannot articulate connections with literacies and the research process.

Unsatisfactory—School librarian is not familiar with the curriculum and does not understand the connections to the resources, literacies, and the research process.

American Association of School Librarians. 2007. "Standards for the 21st-Century Learner." <http://ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/learningstandards/AASL-LearningStandards.pdf> (accessed December 18, 2009).

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