The National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries are anchored by six Shared Foundations—Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage—which highlight the standards’ core educational concepts. Think of these as the big ideas that provide a compass for teaching and learning with students, teachers, and communities. A one-sentence Key Commitment then describes the essential understandings for each of the six Shared Foundations.

Each Shared Foundation is broken down into three to five Competencies for each learning category or Domain: Think (cognitive), Create (psychomotor), Share (affective), and Grow (developmental). The Competencies are measurable statements describing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential for learners and school librarians. The Competencies are expressed as Alignments for school libraries.

Shared Foundations, Key Commitments, and Domains appear across all three standards sets for learners, school librarians, and school libraries. This parallel structure helps articulate how student learning relates to school librarian practice and to the overall school library environment.