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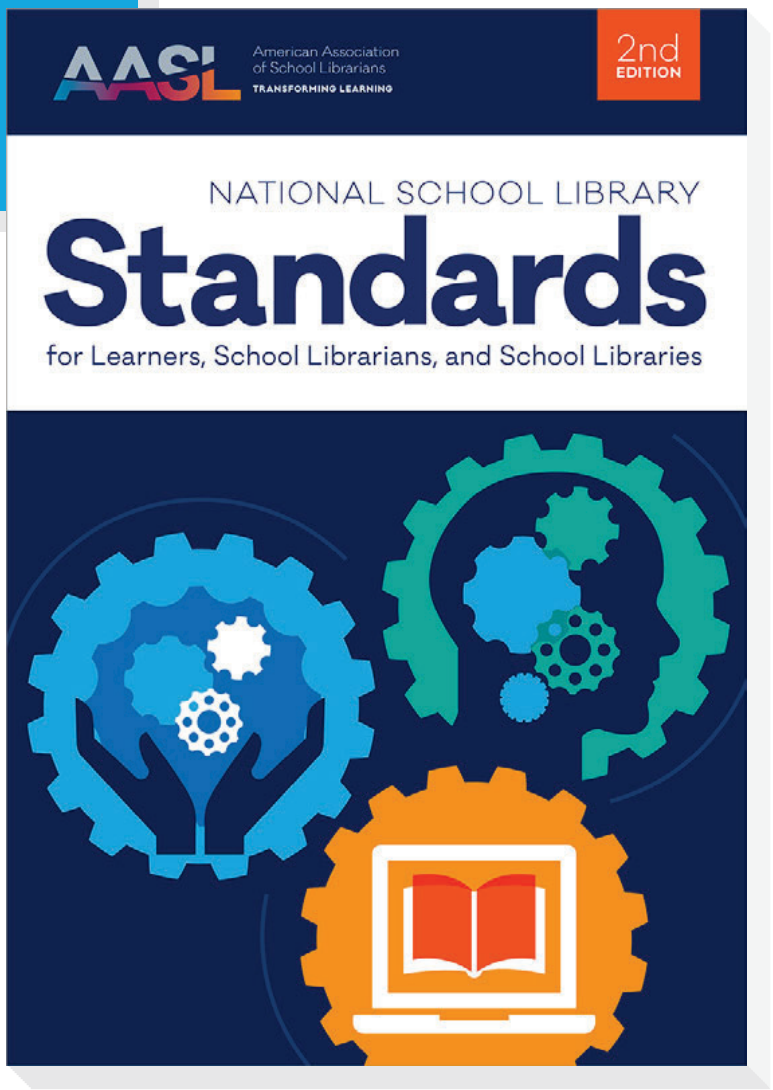
An Update We ALL Can Use



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BY **DEBORAH RINIO**

When I first heard they were coming out with a second edition of the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, I thought it was a waste of time and money.

Keep in mind, I was on the committee that wrote the first edition of the book, and we worked hard on that! I didn't want to ask my learners in the Library Media Certificate Program at Montana State University to buy a new book. I didn't want to have to adjust my curriculum to new readings. I have better things to do, I thought.

But once I got a copy of the book, I completely changed my tune.

A Practical, Practitioner-Focused Resource

The second edition of the standards book truly does what I had hoped the first would: offer practical ideas and actionable examples to make it useful in daily practice. Tables and charts sprinkled throughout the text offer examples of setting learning objectives at different grade bands, the roles of the school librarian as they relate to each shared foundation, and parallel support examples so librarians can see how each framework (learner, school librarian, and school library) is interrelated.

This edition is written with the practitioner in mind. It's not just a philosophical treatise on what school libraries could be—it's a guidebook for what they can be, starting today. The organization of content, the structural refinements, and the implementation tools make it a resource that school librarians can return to again and again. It's not just a one-time read; it's a reference manual, planning guide, and professional development tool all rolled into one.

Transforming Teaching Practice

As an instructor of preservice librarians, I am already making changes to my classes to incorporate the new book starting in the upcoming semester. I'm excited to use the chapters as readings in my class, and the charts and tables as templates for assignments for my learners. For example, in my Inquiry-Based Learning course, the preservice

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librarians already practice writing objectives based on the standards, but now they will have examples embedded right in their text to help guide them. They will be able to take that work a step further, going from writing objectives for one grade level to writing them across grade bands for the same standard.

This kind of scaffolding is essential for new librarians who are still developing their understanding of how to support learners across developmental stages, as well as a helpful guide for long-term librarians new to the American Association of School Librarians standards, competency-based learning, or working with a new grade level. The book's examples help bridge the gap between theory and practice, giving librarians a clearer picture of how to implement the standards in real-world settings. It also helps them see the standards not as a checklist but as a flexible framework adaptable to diverse learners and communities.

Evaluation Tools That Empower

Another aspect of the second edition that is vastly improved are the evaluation tools for the school librarian and school library. In the first edition, guidelines and ideas for how to evaluate were presented but specific tools were not. The second edition provides rubrics that school librarians can use independently and with their administrators to help explain librarian roles, measure library impact, and advocate for improved support. The tools use developmental stages as benchmarks, making them adaptable to different contexts and levels of experience.

These rubrics are a game-changer. They provide a shared foundation for school librarians and administrators to talk about goals, growth, and impact. They also help librarians articulate the value of their work in ways that align with broader school and district priorities. In a time when school libraries are often underfunded or misunderstood, having concrete tools for evaluation and advocacy is not just helpful—it's essential.

Scenarios That Reflect Real Challenges

The gem of the book, however, are the scenarios. Four chapters are dedicated to scenarios for common challenges: one each focused on learners, collaborators, administrators, and community members. These chapters present practical, realistic scenarios that school librarians face, including struggling learners, book challenges, insufficient funding, and scheduling concerns. These chapters not only offer advice but also provide a methodology that school librarians can use to solve problems in their schools and frame their work with the standards.

The scenarios are more than just case studies—they're conversation starters. They invite reflection, discussion, and problem-solving. I plan to use them in my courses to spark dialogue among learners, encouraging them to think critically about how they would respond in similar situations—even having them write their own scenarios modeled after the ones in the book.

A Renewed Vision for School Libraries

What I initially dismissed as an unnecessary update has turned out to be a transformative resource. The second edition of *National School Library Standards* doesn't just revise—it reimagines how school librarians can engage with the standards in meaningful, actionable ways. It bridges theory and practice, offering tools that are immediately usable and deeply relevant. As both a former contributor and a current educator, I now see this edition as essential—not just for my learners, but for the profession as a whole. It's a book that empowers school librarians to lead, advocate, and grow, and I'm proud to be integrating it into my teaching and professional practice.