American Association of School Librarians
TRANSFORMING LEARNING

NATIONAL SCHOOL LIBRARY STANDARDS

Getting Started With the AASL Standards

A Framework for Competency-Based Learning in School Libraries

What Are the AASL Standards?

The ***National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*** provide a competency-based framework centered on the learner. These standards support inquiry, critical thinking, collaboration, and ethical information use—essential skills for lifelong academic and personal success.

Competency-Based vs. Standards-Based Education

- **Competency-Based Education (CBE)** focuses on mastery, allowing learners to progress at their own pace, based on needs, strengths, and interests.
- **Standards-Based Education** emphasizes fixed grade-level expectations in a linear progression.

The AASL Standards follow a competency-based approach, giving school librarians flexibility to personalize support of learner growth over time. By focusing on competencies, not rigid grade-level benchmarks, you can design meaningful, responsive learning experiences that help all learners grow and thrive.

Why Do the AASL Standards Matter?

They empower school librarians to:

- **Support Personalized Learning** – Adapt instruction to meet individual learner needs.
- **Promote Collaboration** – Align with schoolwide goals, initiatives, and content curriculum.
- **Ensure Equity & Inclusion** – Provide adaptable and accessible strategies for all learners.
- **Align with Educational Policy** – Establish a foundation that informs state-level standards and supports broader educational goals .
- **Validate Librarian Roles** – Advocate for library staffing, policies, resources, and learning across the school community.

STANDARDS-BASED ADVOCACY: CONNECTING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

With Educators: Show how you support curriculum goals through research, media literacy, and inquiry-based learning.

With Administrators: Highlight your role in advancing schoolwide goals like digital citizenship and interdisciplinary learning.

With Families & the Community: Share how the library builds future-ready, civic-minded learners.

How Are the AASL Standards Structured?

Three Integrated Frameworks

These powerful frameworks guide learners, librarians, and libraries and work together to shape meaningful, learner-centered experiences.

Learner Framework
Defines what learners should know and be able to do.

School Librarian Framework
Outlines how librarians guide, model, and support learners and learning activities.

School Library Framework
Focuses on how the library environment, policies, and resources align to support learning.

Core Components of the Frameworks

SHARED FOUNDATIONS & KEY COMMITMENTS

Six Shared Foundations represent the core values that guide learners, school librarians, and school libraries. Their Key Commitments define the essential learning behaviors they promote.

Shared Foundation	Key Commitment
INQUIRE	Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.
INCLUDE	Demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the learning community.
COLLABORATE	Work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals.
CURATE	Make meaning for oneself and others by collecting, organizing, and sharing resources of personal relevance.
EXPLORE	Discover and innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection.
ENGAGE	Demonstrate safe, legal, and ethical creating and sharing of knowledge products independently while engaging in a community of practice and an interconnected world.

DOMAINS & ROLES

Each Shared Foundation is explored through four Domains, representing the stages in the learning process:

THINK – Question, evaluate, and analyze

CREATE – Produce new knowledge and ideas

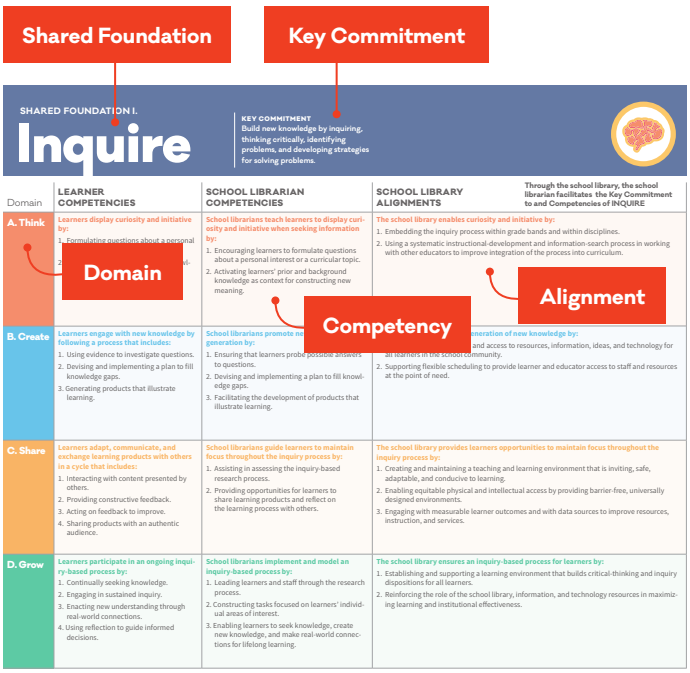
SHARE – Communicate learning effectively

GROW – Reflect and improve over time

School Librarians serve in multiple roles—**Leader**, **Instructional Partner**, **Teacher**, **Information Specialist**, and **Program Administrator**—often simultaneously, to guide and support learning across all Domains.

COMPETENCIES & ALIGNMENTS

Each Shared Foundation includes Competencies and Alignments that are organized by Domain.

- **Competencies** define the skills and behaviors learners and school librarians demonstrate to show mastery.
- **Alignments** describe how the school library environment supports these Competencies.

The AASL Standards are flexible, not prescriptive. You're not expected to address every Competency and Alignment each year—focus on what best fits your learners, school priorities, and resources.