American Association of School Librarians
TRANSFORMING LEARNING

NATIONAL SCHOOL LIBRARY STANDARDS

Making Standards Meaningful for Learners

Translating Competencies into Learning Goals and "I Can" Statements

Understanding Competency-Based Learning

The ***National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*** are grounded in competency-based education—an approach that prioritizes mastery of skills over time spent in instruction.

Unlike traditional models, competency-based learning allows students to:

- Move at their own pace.
- Receive timely, personalized support.
- Learn in ways that honor their strengths.

From Competency to Objective

Clarifying Key Terms

- **Competency:** Broad skill or disposition
- **Outcome:** Measurable learning based on the Competency
- **Objective:** Specific, lesson-level goal

Each Competency leads to multiple potential outcomes. These outcomes then shape lesson objectives, which guide daily instruction and assessment.

Learning objectives are often expressed in student-friendly language as "I can" statements to support learner agency. **Example B** demonstrates how the Competency used in **Example A** can be expressed as an "I can" statement across multiple grade levels.

EXAMPLE A: COMPETENCY EXPRESSED AS OUTCOME AND OBJECTIVES

Scenario: A middle school librarian partners with a science educator on a digital project that raises awareness about plastic pollution.

Competency	Outcome	Objectives
VI.C.1. Learners responsibly, ethically, and legally share new information with a global community by sharing information resources in accordance with modification, reuse, and remix policies.	The learner will ethically publish an original video on plastic pollution using Creative Commons (CC)–licensed content with accurate attribution and appropriate licensing for global sharing.	**a)** (Create) The learner will produce a video that communicates key facts and solutions about plastic pollution, incorporating at least two CC–licensed elements (images, music, or video clips). **b)** (Apply) The learner will correctly apply CC guidelines by attributing all reused content and selecting an appropriate license for their own work. **c)** (Understand) The learner will evaluate and comment on at least two peer-created videos, demonstrating understanding of ethical content sharing and digital citizenship.

EXAMPLE B: "I CAN" STATEMENTS ACROSS GRADE BANDS

K–Grade 2	Grades 3–5	Grades 6–8	Grades 9–12
I can give credit when I use someone else's idea.	I can find images and sounds that I'm allowed to use in my project.	I can publish my work online and respect, reuse or remix rules.	I can publish and promote original digital content responsibly, protect my own rights and respect others.

Understanding Domains as the Instructional Lens

Every Competency in the AASL Standards lives within one of four Domains: *Think, Create, Share,* or *Grow*. The Domain shapes how a Competency is interpreted and applied, influencing:

- How learning experiences are designed.
- The language of outcomes and objectives.
- The evidence used to assess growth.

Even similar-sounding Competencies can require dramatically different approaches, depending on their Domain context.

Using Competencies for Reflection and Growth

Competencies, outcomes, and objectives aren't just planning tools—they're feedback mechanisms for reflection. Use them to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.
- Identify and respond to learners' needs.
- Guide learners' continuous growth rather than one-time performance.

Competency development is a process, not a destination. Mastery is not all-or-nothing—skill sets expand over time. Growth happens through support, feedback, and personalized opportunities for practice.

EXAMPLE C: "I CAN" STATEMENTS ACROSS DOMAINS IN COLLABORATE

Domain	Learner Competency	Lesson Objective or "I Can" Statement
THINK	**III.A.3.** Learners identify collaborative opportunities by deciding to solve problems informed by group interaction.	I can listen to my group's ideas and decide how we will solve a problem together.
CREATE	**III.B.1.** Learners participate in personal, social, and intellectual networks by using a variety of communication tools and resources.	I can use tools like shared docs, chats, or discussion boards to communicate and work with others.
SHARE	**III.C.1.** Learners work productively with others to solve problems by soliciting and responding to feedback from others.	I can ask for feedback from my group and make changes to improve our shared work.
GROW	**III.D.1.** Learners actively participate with others in learning situations by actively contributing to group discussions.	I can share my thoughts during group work and help my group reach our goal.