



INSPIRING EXCELLENCE  
IN LIBRARIANSHIP  
IN LEARNING

**Testimony to the New Jersey State Board of Education  
Presented by Jill Mills, NJASL Past President  
Certified School Library Media Specialist  
April 24, 2023**

Hello members of the New Jersey State Board of Education. My name is Jill Mills and I am the school library media specialist at Franklin Elementary School in Summit where I am completing my nineteenth year as a school library media specialist. I am also a Past President of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the proposed revisions to the English Language Arts New Jersey Student Learning Standard. I sincerely appreciate the partnership of the DOE in developing and revising standards that set the stage to encourage and foster a lifelong desire to read and inquire. Since they are outlined in detail below, I will not read them to you, but rather leave them for you to review. I'd like to use this time to sp

This work is important to me because as an elementary school librarian, I help to lay a foundation of wonder, questioning, exploration, and discovery with my students. I also strive to sustain that desire in the teachers with whom I work. The "asks" I have in the revision of the standards are on their behalf, too.

In addition to the work I do with students, I am a resource for teachers. They come to me for recommended texts, databases - print, digital, and multimedia resources - that they know I have reviewed and vetted. I am able to provide them with the most current and relevant information while alleviating them of that task.

The New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) is looking forward to the opportunity to work with DOE to infuse information literacy as appropriate within ELA standards.

First, thank you for condensing ELA to four domains: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and Language (page 10 of [technical document](#)). These changes should make it easier to integrate and approach information literacy within English Language Arts. These changes will also allow students a better understanding of what is required for them to learn as well as provide clarity for educators to implement the standards and for an easy pathway to infuse information literacy standards.

Thank you also for the vision statement for the ELA Standards (page 11):

"An New Jersey education in English Language Arts builds readers, writers, and communicators prepared to meet the demands of college and career and to engage as productive global citizens."

According to UNICEF, a global citizen is a person who understands interconnectedness, values and respects diversity, takes action in meaningful ways, and has the ability to challenge injustice.

These qualities and themes are all embedded in the ELA NJ Student Learning Standards and match the Department of Education's mission statement to ensure all of New Jersey's 1.4 million students have equitable access to high quality education and achieve academic excellence. The term "global citizen" is meant to unite students, not divide them, leading students to a broader understanding of the world.

The recommendations from NJASL are listed below with supporting documentation.

### **ASKS**

1. Include a Definition of informational text

**Rationale:** Providing a definition of informational text would ensure a standardized interpretation of informational text for all school districts.

Informational texts rely primarily on exposition rather than narration. Informational texts describe, explain, and inform the reader. Informational texts, particularly documents, encyclopedia entries, reference books, technical guides, scientific journal articles, reports, and question-and-answer text, use exposition. Unlike narrative forms, which are primarily linear (i.e., there is a beginning, a middle, and an end to the story), informational texts are nonlinear. Instead, their major point of organization centers on a process or phenomenon. Informational texts that use an expository form are characterized by elements that can challenge a reader's comprehension.

International Literacy Association:

<https://www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/bonus-materials/9415-chapter-4.pdf>

Informational text employs a variety of structures to assist the reader in finding information quickly and efficiently. These might include a table of contents, an index, bold or italicized text, glossaries for specialized vocabulary, embedded definitions for specialized vocabulary, realistic illustrations of photos, captions and other labels, and graphs and charts.

University of Maine:

<https://umaine.edu/edhd/research-outreach/lifespan-literacy-community/programs/correll-book-award/what-is-informational-text/>

2. Under Vision add the terms "with opportunities" Page 11
  - **Learn to persist in reading complex texts, establishing lifelong habits with opportunities to read voluntarily for pleasure, for further education, for information on public policy, and for advancement in the workplace.**

**Rationale:** In Becoming a Reader, an international study of avid readers indicated both fostering access, students' access to book recommendations, and support for book choice were important for students to develop lifelong reading habits.

“Librarians and teachers featured strongly in this context as key social influences that extended their role to connect respondents with books and genres that these readers subsequently enjoyed”.

It is important to provide opportunities as well as resources for students to voluntarily read for pleasure, for further education, for information on public policy and for advancement in the workplace.

3. Under Practices add the terms as listed below (page 12)
  - **Valuing Evidence in Argumentation: Constructing viable claims and evaluating, defending, challenging, qualifying the arguments of others and citing sources for claims.**

**Rationale:** As stated by [Ohio State Press Books](#), citing sources in an argument lends credibility and authority to an argument and places information within an academic context.

4. Addition of Sourcing as listed in Standard 9.4

As “sources,” “evidence,” and “resources” are regularly cited in English Language Arts anchor standards and progress indicators there should be similar clarification as listed in Standard 9.4 (listed below).

**Rationale:** This would provide consistency between the standards.

#### **Standard 9.4 (page 18) Sourcing**

Throughout 2020 NJSLS-CLKS 9.4 Life Literacies and Key Skills, the core ideas and performance expectations contain terms “sources,” “evidence,” and “resources.” Indeed, as students develop necessary skills and strategies to evaluate sources and recognize bias, these references should invoke the engagement of a certified school library media specialist to not only select and curate appropriate sources but also to provide professional development to fellow educators in this area.

On behalf of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians, I appreciate the opportunity to present this testimony. If you would like to discuss our recommendations, please contact me. Respectfully submitted,

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