

Testimony to the New Jersey State Board of Education
On Draft New Jersey Student Learning Standards
Presented by Gabrielle M. Casieri
Certified School Library Media Specialist
Lawrence Township Public Schools
Chair, NJASL Standards Subcommittee
March 4, 2020

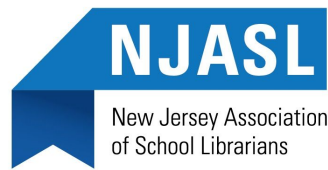
Good afternoon, members of the New Jersey State Board of Education. My name is Gabrielle Casieri and I am a School Library Media Specialist at Lawrence Intermediate School in the Lawrence Township Public School District. In addition, I am the Chair of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians Standards Subcommittee.

Thank you for allowing the time for me to share my response to the Draft 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards, specifically Standard 9.4: Life Literacies and Key Skills within the Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills Standard 9. NJASL, as an organization, and I as a citizen, want to thank you for recognizing Information Literacy and Digital Citizenship as a key component of the Life Literacies and Key Skills Standard. In our current climate, NJASL believes that the ability to be a discerning consumer of information and media is vital. The standard itself reflects this, using the phrasing, “[W]hether in their personal lives or at work, individuals will need to be able to discern accurate and valid information – given the unprecedented amount of information that is posted on the Internet daily.”

- In November 2019, Stanford University released what they called “troubling” results of a study that found incoming freshmen could not evaluate websites, recognize bias, or verify images. We are approaching a national crisis of information illiteracy. Just this morning, my sister, who is a medical professional with a master’s degree, sent this link to my family: <https://ncov2019.live/>

In the information about the website: “Who made this website? / This site was created by Avi Schiffmann. I am a high schooler in Washington State, USA.”

NJASL is certain these new standards will provide a foundation for New Jersey students to become better informed and critical users of information. This language will hold schools accountable for a uniform approach and equitable access to learning. However, we do feel that an important piece of the picture is missing from the standards, and we would like to address that here.

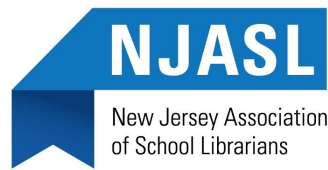


When it comes to matters of Information Literacy and Digital Citizenship, certified School Library Media Specialists are just that, the specialists in the field. Certified School Library Media Specialists are trained, through Masters level programs, to review, evaluate, and curate instructional resources. Accurate and well managed resources require the knowledge of databases and information literacy processes to ensure quality information instruction. Certified School Library Media Specialists can aid students and staff with information need assessment by teaching and facilitating lessons based on [AASL Standards for the 21st Century](#). Standards include the recognition of finding, evaluating, managing, synthesizing, using and communicating information efficiently, ethically and effectively. In the same way you would not ask an ELA teacher to teach Chemistry or a Chemistry teacher to instruct Physical Education, the important work of educating students to be critical and ethical users of information should not fall to anyone but those trained and certified in the field.

Unfortunately, districts are circumventing this need for certified School Library Media Specialists by labeling a four-year degree teacher with titles such as, Tech Coach or Teacher, STEM Coach or Teacher, even Media Specialist, just without the School Library part. While these positions may fill a district interest, none of these titles have credentialing codes with the state. Excepting the specific Technology Education which applies to technical instruction, none requires specific coursework. School Library Media Specialists and Associate Library Media Specialists, have specific certification codes from the New Jersey Department of Education. To earn a certification as a School Library Media Specialist, candidates are required, according to state code, to complete coursework that includes:

- Access, evaluation, selection and utilization of library media resources;
- Design and development of multi-media materials;
- Design, development and integration of information literacy skills and the library media program throughout the school curriculum;
- Integration of educational resources and technology throughout the school curriculum;
- Development and implementation of policies and procedures for effective and efficient acquisition, cataloging, processing, circulation, and maintaining equipment and resources to ensure equitable access;
- Development, implementation and evaluation of library media programs to meet educational goals including management of library personnel, resources and facilities;
- Utilization of current and emergent technologies in all phases of school library media programs;

To be clear, School Library Media Specialists are the only New Jersey certified educators who must study information literacy instruction in order to earn certification. In addition, it is our charge to ensure equitable access of resources.



Last week, a group of NJASL Board members met with the NJ Department of Education English Language Arts Coordinator, Erika Leak, to review the standards as they appear now, in their draft form. We were honored to be invited as a voice in this conversation, and we were pleased with Ms. Leak's positive response to our edits. We think it is important that you, too, have a similar, positive response.

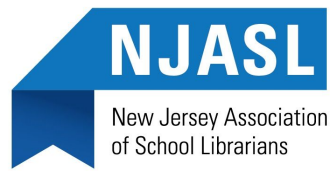
So, as a representative of these certified specialists, we would like to address specific language in the Draft Standards. Across all standards, including Social Studies and other "literacies" such as technology, STEM, Computer, Global, Financial, Health, and Civic Literacy, we see the terms sources, resources, and evidence. The Internet is a vast and, at times, unscrupulous entity. It takes practice and guidance from trained specialists to impart the skills and methods needed to navigate the many places where information can be found. Learners need to be guided to accurate and reliable information. Therefore, anywhere the terms sources, resources, or evidence appear in the standards, there should be clarification that states "including library resources, databases, and other curated instructional materials that have been selected and implemented by certified School Library Media Specialists."

In addition, while we are in complete agreement with the initiative to fight climate change, where it appears in the Standards, we recommend having the language broadened to reflect "global and societal issues, such as climate change."

From the earliest ages, K-2, we expect students to gather information from multiple sources. At this level, the Information and Media Literacy third core idea includes, "use a variety of sources including multimedia sources to find information about topics such as climate change, with guidance and support from adults." We believe the "adults" should be certified school library media specialists.

Again, on behalf of New Jersey's students, NJASL thanks you for the inclusion of these important skills and standards, and we look forward to continuing to work together to nurture informed and ethical citizens.

Respectfully submitted,
Gabrielle M. Casieri
School Library Media Specialist
Chair, NJASL Standards Subcommittee
standards@njasl.org
609-672-1529



Breakstone, J., Smith, M., Wineburg, S., Rapaport, A., Carle, J., Garland, M., & Saavedra, A. (2019). Students' civic online reasoning: A national portrait. Stanford History Education Group & Gibson Consulting. <https://purl.stanford.edu/gf151tb4868>