

Testimony to the New Jersey State Board of Education
On Draft New Jersey Student Learning Standards
Presented by Jill Mills, NJASL President
Certified School Library Media Specialist
School District of the Chathams
February 24, 2020

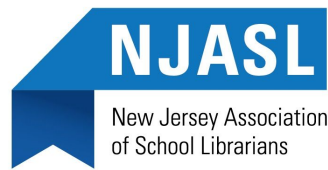
Good evening members of the New Jersey State Board of Education. My name is Jill Mills and I am a School Library Media Specialist at Milton Avenue School in the School District of the Chathams. In addition, I am the President of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) and I am here to comment on behalf of our organization.

Thank you for allowing the time for me to share NJASL's 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.

In November 2019, Stanford University released what they called "troubling" results of a study that found incoming freshman could not evaluate websites, recognize bias, or verify images. We are approaching a national crisis of information illiteracy. NJASL is certain these new standards will provide a foundation for New Jersey students to become better informed and critical users of information. However, we do feel that an important piece of the picture is missing from the standards, and we would like to address that here.

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.

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.

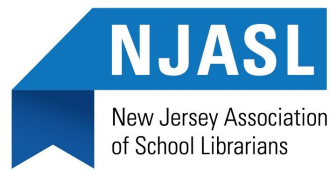
As certified specialists, we would like to address specific language in the Draft Standards. Across all standards, including Social Studies and other “literacies” such as technology, STEM, Computer, Global, Financial, Health, and Civic Literacy, we see the terms sources, resources, and evidence. The 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 agreement completely 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 thank 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,
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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>