**AASL 2014 Election**

President Elect/President Candidate Statements

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**LESLIE PREDDY**

I firmly believe that school librarians share a superpower. Using our collective strength for good, we defend the information and reading needs and rights of our patrons. I know our strength comes from the power of our association members working together toward our common, noble goals. I believe we need to focus on our ongoing mission to work toward meeting AASL’s Strategic Plan and goals. The future of school libraries depends on our involvement, the development of leaders, and advocating for excellence. Our greatest challenge is keeping up with the evolution of learning and school libraries. This requires working toward the future as we strengthen membership, mentor school library revolutionaries, bolster affordable alternative professional development, and seek new revenue partnerships to fund our goals and Strategic Plan. Our librarian superpowers change lives and influence generations, so put on your cape and join me as we continue to evolve and strengthen our school libraries and school librarians.

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**KEN W. STEWART**

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” — Helen Keller

Collaboration is the center of almost everything we do. We collaborate with administrators in order to manage an efficient facility; with teachers to ensure that information literacy skills are incorporated into curriculum; and, with students to help them achieve success. We are constantly in this mode. It’s in our DNA. With the introduction of Common Core and other challenges into education, together we need to look beyond our current relationships and collaborate with those beyond arms’ length, reaching out vertically. What skills do elementary school librarians instill in their students to prepare them for middle school? What information skills are taught in middle school to promote achievement in high school? And, what is taught at the high school level to ensure success in college and/or career? Stronger professional relationships and interactions between AASL and such divisions as the ACRL, ISS, and PLA should be established and promoted; knowledge needs to be shared.

<http://kenstewart.us>
Idaho Adopted Higher Standards to Better Prepare All Students for College and Careers  
_Luci Willits_

Virginia Standards Predated the Common Core Initiative  

Beyond the Classroom  
How Lexile Measures Are Being Used in the Library to Achieve College and Career Readiness  
_Malbert Smith III, Anne Schiano, and Elizabeth Lattanzio_

The Beneficiation of Education  
_April J. Senger_

The Common Core  
A Disaster for Libraries, a Disaster for Language Arts, a Disaster for American Education  
_Stephen Krashen_

Common Vision—Shared Goals  
_Chris M. Olszewski_

Implementing the Common Core State Standards  
What Is the School Librarian’s Role?  
_Ruth Uecker, Shelly Kelly, and Marni Napierala_

Hear Ye, Hear Ye: A Dozen Messages from the New York Common Core Crier  
_Paige Jaeger_

WebCHECK: The Website Evaluation Instrument  
_Ruth V. Small and Marilyn P. Arnone_

The Value of School Librarian Support in the Digital World  
_Linda M. Ballew_

This Is Not Your Grandma’s Library  
How Today’s School Libraries Can Help Students Meet the Common Core State Standards  
_Jan Mader_
“The Common Core State Standards encourage educators to enrich students’ learning with a vast array of resources beyond our textbooks. Core content teachers will need to collaborate with the library staff to maximize potential outcomes through effective use of literature and research.”

The Beneficiation of Education — pg 34
Once again, the profession is looking for trailblazers who have found a way to incorporate e-resources, mobile learning, new technologies, and embedded processes of teaching and learning into their school libraries.

Common Thoughts on Common Topics
Gail K. Dickinson, 2013–14 AASL President | gdickins@odu.edu

I spent last weekend on the beaches of North Carolina. As I spent the day looking out at the sand and the surf, my thoughts turned to a long-ago day when an intrepid group of school librarians met on those same beaches and built a collaborative vision of what school libraries of the future would look like, what resources they would hold, and what training school librarians would need to manage them. That dream was playfully dubbed the Ford Fantasy project, because these visionaries thought that making these dreams a reality would take a major foundation like the Ford Foundation and at least a million dollars. These planners were wrong. It took three million, and the foundation was not Ford but rather the Knapp Foundation in North Carolina. That dream became the Knapp School Library Project (Sullivan 2003).

The project kick-started the profession into what is sometimes called the Golden Age of School Libraries; the three phases of the Knapp Project set the stage for success. Participants in the Knapp Project identified the skills and structures needed for schools to build and staff the libraries their students needed. Demonstration school libraries modeled those structures, and Knapp school library preparation programs taught the skills. The program started the transformation of school librarians from managers of book warehouses to essential leaders of multiformat, multimedia project–based centers of learning. It was a happy coincidence that Elementary and Secondary Education Act federal funds began pouring into school libraries at the same time, increasing the likelihood that this vision would become a reality.

Although the money certainly helped, I am convinced that the most important aspect of the Knapp project was not the money but rather the dream. Looking back, it’s easy to see the strengths of the project, but surely it had its dissenters and detractors at the time. They may have bemoaned the use of filmstrips in schools as a temporary and time-wasting fad; they may have insisted that no teacher would be permitted to waste time in the school library, and they may have decried project–based learning as just another distracting element of a too-liberal education. They may even have insisted that audiovisual materials should not be cataloged and that the accession book was the most important tool for successful librarians. But the vision endured, and because of that vision we transformed school libraries into multimedia information centers, started down the path toward collaborative teaching and learning in the library, and began performance-based training of school librarians.

We are, once again, standing on the threshold of a new era with new types of resources and the need for school librarians who exhibit new skills.
So where is our vision now? Once again, the profession is looking for trailblazers who have found a way to incorporate e-resources, mobile learning, new technologies, and embedded processes of teaching and learning into their school libraries. Some in the profession have said that we need a new Knapp project to again build demonstration school libraries, to revamp library education into the type of training needed for new school librarians to manage these new libraries, and to work with classroom teachers to find technology-rich digital learning strategies. We are, once again, standing on the threshold of a new era with new types of resources and the need for school librarians who exhibit new skills. We need dreamers, and, yes, a few million dollars would help as well.

What about the Common Core?

The rush to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has been well documented (Tienken 2011). Even before the CCSS were fully developed, states were falling over themselves to adopt them as their state curriculum. Once the CCSS became a state curriculum, school district administrators, determined to implement the Common Core, flung their teachers into orientation sessions and forced educators to stumble clumsily through week-long workshops. Even after the workshops, classroom teachers and principals were sometimes no clearer on exactly how this implementation was going to happen than they had been before attending the workshops. Now some of those same states are reconsidering their adoptions of the CCSS, rethinking their haste to adopt standards and assessments that may or may not provide the magic bullet for schools and students.

School librarians foresaw the opportunities for securing a strong place in this implementation process and quickly stepped up. Articles on CCSS alignment with AASL learning standards were published; committees and task forces worked on alignment; and conference presentations detailed strategies for librarians to assist with school-wide implementation. Undoubtedly, school librarians have an important role in CCSS implementation. The CCSS stress reading—especially reading of informational texts—along with inquiry and information-literacy skills. The standards focus on the need for college and career readiness, an emphasis that dovetails nicely with the lifelong learning mission of school librarianship. School librarians are providing classroom teachers with resource materials and lists of information texts and demonstrating ways that inquiry projects can strengthen student learning of classroom content. School librarians are modeling use of social media, apps, and ways to incorporate mobile learning.

As they have done since the 1960s, school librarians are teaching students and teachers, using classroom projects as a way of upgrading teachers’ skills as the teachers watch and learn while librarians work with students.

The reasoned debate that should have preceded the adoption of CCSS has not yet occurred. Misguided or misinformed state legislators are considering dropping CCSS for different—yet equally unsupported—reasons than those used to justify the rush to adopt the standards. School librarians are being hailed as linchpins for CCSS implementation not because CCSS fits so well with the mission, values, and curricula of school librarianship, but because school libraries are at the heart of learning in any curriculum. Yes, school librarians play an essential role in adoption of CCSS. I am convinced, though, that this centrality is not about the Common Core. The CCSS represent a curriculum. School librarians have an important role in any curriculum implementation because it’s not about libraries—it’s about learning.

Role of AASL

AASL provides the tools for building-level school librarians to provide crucial leadership in schools. School librarians see the entire school and entire curriculum. The only other position in the school that has an equally wide focus is the position of building principal. School librarians, though, have a much better chance at effecting real change because they work as partners and peers to support teaching and learning, rather than mandate changes.

Through the AASL Lesson Plan Database, AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, and other instructional and advocacy resources in AASL’s Essential Links wiki, our professional organization is standing beside you. It doesn’t matter if the curriculum is CCSS-based or something else. It doesn’t matter if, by the time this column gets into print, something new has become the latest and greatest as the pendulum...
swings back and forth. School librarians will always be at the heart of learning. AASL’s ability to support that learning with resources, policy statements, standards, and guidelines depends on the members of the profession; all members of the profession are encouraged to be strong and active members of AASL.

Use of the CCSS will go or stay. School libraries will remain. Standing aloof from learning is not a strategy that will win friends or influence in schools struggling under the mandates and regulations imposed on them by their states.

It’s not about libraries or librarians; it’s about learning. It always has been. My dream is that it always will be.

Gail K. Dickinson is president of the American Association of School Librarians. She is associate dean for graduate studies and research in the Darden College of Education at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, and has authored numerous articles on school library programs and practice. She is also the editor-in-chief of Library Media Connection magazine.
AASL is my professional association. Throughout my career as a school librarian, instructor, and state-level coordinator, I looked to AASL for programs, standards, and learning, and relied upon resources such as Knowledge Quest to find thought-provoking articles and information about best practices. I am particularly excited to read this issue of Knowledge Quest as it is the first since I became the executive director of AASL.

I’m honored to be part of the leadership of an organization that draws on its members to ensure it meets its mission: to advocate excellence, facilitate change, and develop leaders in the school library field. As a division within the larger American Library Association, AASL is an advocate for school libraries and school librarians. I believe school librarians are leaders; they are agents of change who can make a difference. School librarians are uniquely positioned to lead a 21st-century approach to the resources, technology, and strategies needed for teaching and learning. However, a major challenge remains increasing understanding about the role of school librarians and school libraries amidst the difficult decisions some schools are making in the education of our students. We have work to do.

AASL is the leading professional association for school librarians, but in these changing times we must do more than maintain that role. It’s not enough to say we are the school librarian association; we have to show evidence that is our goal. Over the next several months, the AASL Board, leadership, and staff will develop a strategic plan for the future of AASL. I also plan to conduct an organization audit about AASL’s values, priorities, and expectations. The overarching question for me as an executive director is: How do we grow AASL to benefit school libraries and our members who empower learners?

This is a membership organization, and each member is important to the success of AASL’s efforts. It is members who volunteer to serve on committees, develop publications, and create the synergy to move the association forward. I need to hear from AASL members and other school librarians who use AASL resources or attend conferences. What do you think? How are we doing? What should we be doing? Drop me an e-mail at snorton@ala.org. Thank you in advance for your perspective on how we can all make AASL a stronger association—because building a stronger AASL ultimately benefits our students.

Sylvia Knight Norton is AASL Executive Director. She was the internship coordinator for the School of Library and Information Studies at Florida State University. Previously she was the state-level coordinator for school libraries and technology planning in Maine and a state E-rate coordinator in Maine and Florida.
The Common Core State Standards do not include a silver bullet or a treasure map with a neatly drawn path to the X that marks college- and career-ready students. It sets goals and lets each state, district, and building determine the best path. As school librarians, we can choose to be reactive or proactive, but we should never choose “not active.” We all have questions, but we should not forget that we are also answers. We may not be able to cure all ills or redress all wrongs, but there is no question that we are a key to promoting and achieving the CCSS principles. We slay the dragons of ignorance and lack of imagination; we teach and model critical thinking skills as well as the path to citizenship. There is no area we cannot and do not touch because we nurture the future, albeit in and around the trends, fads, successes, and failures of our education system.

State superintendents formulated the Common Core, but understanding the rationale behind them is helpful. At this time, the CCSS are largely untried; we have much information to digest, to disaggregate, and about which to speculate. But without data or extensive experience to share about the implementation framework and processes in our states, districts, and buildings, we are in an information-seeking and brainstorming stage during which theory begins to move into practice. When I was asked to guest-edit this issue I immediately thought this issue represented an opportunity to gather more information from the outside looking in on our perceived value.

At first glance the articles may look somewhat eclectic, but they represent a montage of current thinking and viewpoints from multiple stakeholders such as staff of public instruction offices, curriculum developers, school administrators, program administrators, critics, and teachers—new grist from many mills for our consideration. What do these stakeholders expect from us? What do they have to offer? This issue spans viewpoints, experiences, tools, applications, and suggestions. In the process of working on this issue, several authors commented that they thought this would be easy writing only to discover they really had to think where and how we could best contribute and support achieving the CCSS goals of college- and career-ready graduates. I wasn’t certain whether to be delighted they took the time to think or appalled they had to think that hard.

Whether or not we work in an adopting state, I firmly believe the shift in underlying educational philosophies expressed in the CCSS will create positive ripples throughout all of education. For so many years education has been focused largely on the lowest level of Bloom’s taxonomy, and rigor has been defined by how much information a student could process and retain. A fundamental disconnection existed between knowing and using. Critical thinking and problem solving are skills that previously have been a fiat of education. The underlying premise was that students would magically be able to convert information into skills. We know differently because we see that disconnect in practice every day.

The democracy on which our country is founded presumes that all citizens not only understand the vital need for information, critical thinking, and civil discourse but also understand and act on the need to have those skills embedded in future generations.

Common Core from the Outside Looking In

BJ McCracken  |  bj_mccracken@gfps.k12.mt.us
The shift in focus is an overdue move toward developing skills we librarians have long and consistently advocated as necessary to advance our society. The democracy on which our country is founded presumes that all citizens not only understand the vital need for information, critical thinking, and civil discourse but also understand and act on the need to have those skills embedded in future generations. The creation and acceptance of the CCSS have started an incremental process toward that goal. Base knowledge is not the primary goal, but a tool students can use in demonstrating what can be done with that knowledge.

Being able to think critically, find appropriate and accurate information, solve problems, and effectively communicate outcomes are now in the spotlight. This focus on using information effectively is a profound shift. Teachers may have to retool their training and seek help from experts—us. Some may have been teaching these skills in the past, but the new goal is to give all students equal access to that level of teaching. I believe, conversely, that all teachers should have equal access to us, the experts.

And no, I have not “drunk the CCSS Kool-Aid.” The CCSS are receiving criticism, a fact dramatically underscored by the number of states in which legislation has been introduced to withdraw from the CCSS Initiative or to block implementation funding. Faced with declining educational performance and employer frustrations with insufficiently educated workforces, Congress entered the education arena with a testing battle cry named Adequate Yearly Progress that was thinly disguised as No Child Left Behind.

The testing battle cry will linger with CCSS implementation. Regardless of programs or paradigms, the need for assessment and data to judge efficacy is inescapable. We may decry the methods of data gathering, but we are in the infancy of online testing; the road ahead is bound to be fraught with bumps. We should continue the discussions and trust experience to clarify where the balance between over-testing and adequate testing resides.

Some downsides of the proposed testing are the costs—both to budgets and to student learning time—and concerns about the validity and the reliability of such tests. One might wonder what is being assessed by a computer-scored essay in a critical-thinking environment. Also unfortunate is the move in some states to evaluate teachers according to scoring outcomes. Will this move lead some to believe that, because school librarians do not have rosters of students to be tested in our areas of expertise, we—as the Los Angeles district has posited—are not really teachers and, therefore, are an extraneous expense? How are our salaries evaluated in a system of performance incentives? These issues are individual to states and districts, but need to be on our radar of concerns as a profession.

People who express frustration with the outcomes of public education perceive testing as a path to achieving accountability. But in their frustration, they may forget that education is about people, and people are not widgets. In business, if one can control the quality of the materials used in production, one can expect a better product. We in education know reality isn’t that simple. We cannot “bid out” for a better economy, stable home lives, more motivated education partners, better student health and then replace those deficits that interfere with a successful learning process. We understand that without consistent effort across all deficit areas the “widget” will suffer, as will test results, which are affected by far more than academic ability, teaching methods, and curriculum.

In an ideal world, test results should be used as formative assessments by which congressional and business decision makers—in partnership with educators—identify and prioritize changes necessary for achieving the desired successes. For our students to develop all the skills required to be ready for college and careers, happy and productive citizens, our decision makers must become members of that “whole village” touted as necessary to raise successful students.

One of the outcomes I desired from this issue of KQ is not just new grist but a view into what might be strong advocacy opportunities or damage-control triage realities. Forewarned is forearmed. I know that the editing process provided me with both wake-up calls and pleasant surprises. I hope you, too, find these articles helpful in our discovery and planning processes. The goal is to explore, provoke discussions, and help us move into a new era of possibilities that feature our skills as integral to developing students who are successful college- and career-ready young adults well on their way to becoming thoughtful and active citizens.

BJ McCracken is a school librarian at Great Falls (MT) High School. She is also an adjunct instructor at College of Great Falls-MSU in the Communications Department and instructor for their Montana Institute for Educational Technology. Among her professional affiliations are AASL, YALSA, FRT, LIRT, and Montana Library Association. The Jan/Feb 2014 issue of Library Media Connection will include her article “The Statistical and Philosophical Art behind Elegant Collection Management.”
IDAHO
ADOPTED
HIGHER STANDARDS
to
PREPARE
ALL STUDENTS
for
COLLEGE
and
CAREERS

Luci Willits
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This year every student in Idaho’s public schools will be taught to a higher academic standard than last year. Idaho has been working toward this goal for several years.

Two years ago the state officially chose to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as Idaho’s new Core Standards in mathematics and English language arts. For Idaho’s students these standards are not only higher but also comparable with those in any other country in the world. We recognize these new standards will bring significant changes for Idaho students—and teachers—yet these changes are necessary if we are going to better prepare every child to be successful in life after high school.

Why Did Idaho Choose the CCSS?

Idaho was heavily involved in the state-led effort referred to as the Common Core State Standards Initiative. In 2007 Tom Luna, Idaho’s newly elected superintendent of the state’s Department of Education, attended a meeting of all state education chiefs. At that meeting a handful of chiefs discussed the challenges they were facing.

Our challenge in Idaho? Students perform well academically in grades K–12, but too many students graduate from high school unprepared for the rigors of postsecondary education or the workforce. Today more than 80 percent of Idaho’s K–12 students are performing at grade level in mathematics and reading. Idaho also has one of the highest graduation rates in the country at around 90 percent.

Yet once students leave high school, they struggle. According to the Idaho State Department of Education and the state’s Board of Education, 90 percent of Idaho students graduate from high school, but only 47 percent go on to some form of postsecondary education, whether it’s a four-year college, community college, or professional/technical school. Of those who do go on, nearly half qualify for remedial courses at their postsecondary institutions. As a
result, 40 percent of students will not return for a second year of postsecondary education. These are startling statistics when we consider that Georgetown University’s Center for Education and the Workforce has estimated that soon over 60 percent of the jobs in our state will require some form of postsecondary education.

The fact is, though, that Idaho is not alone. While other states may be facing different statistics when it comes to the graduation rate or “go on” rate, we are all truly facing the same challenge. In the end, states are graduating far too many students who are not ready for college or a career. That is why something that started as an informal conversation among several state education chiefs back in 2007 turned into a state-led initiative to develop common standards for a majority of states. These state leaders agreed that one way to address the serious challenges students face today would be to develop common standards that are higher, more rigorous, and equal to those in any other country in the world. These state leaders in education decided they had to work together to accomplish this common goal.

In April 2009 the professional organizations representing state education chiefs and governors held a meeting in Chicago to formalize the process and see if other states would be interested in joining. Other state chiefs or governors were invited to attend or to send representatives. Idaho Superintendent Luna and others involved were hoping for a solid showing of at least one representative from a dozen states. People from more than forty states showed up. It became clear that the need for more rigorous standards of education was recognized in almost every state, not just some, and that states were ready and willing to take the lead.

At this meeting states signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), agreeing to a state-led process limited to only the mathematics and English language arts content areas, specifying that the federal government could not be involved in the development process, and clarifying that no state would be required to adopt the standards at the end of the process. Based on these conditions, Idaho readily joined the effort.

How Did Idaho Adopt the CCSS?

Since Idaho joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative in 2009, Idaho teachers and staff from the state department of education have remained involved in the process. Throughout 2009 and 2010 teachers across Idaho looked at drafts of the standards and provided input to the appointed review committees. In March 2010 alone, nearly one hundred Idahoans—educators and parents—provided comments on the final draft of standards.

After this input from Idaho and other states, the final standards were published in June 2010. At that time, in accordance with the original MOA, each state had the option of adopting these standards or pursuing its own path in establishing college- and career-ready standards. The state of Idaho worked with its educators, parents,
and other stakeholders to determine whether or not these standards were the best choice for Idaho students.

To help explain the new standards and gather input from stakeholders, the Idaho State Department of Education held a series of public meetings throughout the summer months and into the fall. In July 2010 teachers from across the state conducted a gap analysis, comparing how Idaho’s previous standards matched up against the new Common Core State Standards. The results showed that, while these standards demonstrated alignment to Idaho’s previous standards in many areas, the new standards were actually much more detailed and more rigorous. Idaho’s colleges and universities as well as the business community agreed, telling Idaho’s State Board of Education that if students could achieve at the level prescribed by these standards, they would be ready for college or a career after high school.

Based on these results and the feedback received throughout the public meetings, Idaho moved forward in 2010 to adopt the Common Core State Standards as Idaho’s new Core Standards. In Idaho, state standards are adopted by the Idaho State Board of Education and given final approval by the House and Senate Education Committees of the Idaho Legislature. The Idaho State Board of Education reviewed the CCSS twice and held a twenty-one-day public comment period before granting final approval. In January 2011 the state House and Senate Education Committees granted final approval to the standards. This process gave Idaho’s local schools and districts two years to work on implementation before the state began requiring implementation across all grades in fall 2013.

What Are the Benefits of These New Standards?

In Idaho the State Board of Education adopted a goal for 60 percent of Idaho citizens ages 25 through 34 to attain at least a one-year postsecondary credential by 2020. Right now, just 39 percent of Idaho citizens are meeting this goal. We know we have a long way to go. However, the adoption of the CCSS as Idaho’s new Core Standards in mathematics and English language arts is a huge step forward. With these standards providing a framework for instruction, we are confident Idaho students will now graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the twenty-first century. Whether a student chooses to go on to college, professional/technical school, the workforce, or the military after high school, we know he or she will be prepared.

These standards, just like standards in every other content area, are the goals the state has set for what every child should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level. Our local school districts will still determine the curriculum and methods that will best help students meet these standards.

We foresee three main benefits from the English language arts standards in reading and writing, which are detailed in the following paragraphs.

First, students will read challenging texts in every class. They will
continue to read classic literature, stories, and poems in English class, but they also will be challenged with studying and analyzing nonfiction texts in all other subject areas. As a result, when students graduate from high school, they will be prepared to read, analyze, and write at a higher level about all types of texts—fiction and nonfiction.

Second, students will be asked to use evidence from the texts when writing papers or making oral presentations. In all classes the standards will require students to not only read the text but dig into it to support their arguments or research topics. As a result, students will be better prepared to support their arguments and decisions with evidence, not just opinion, whether they are in college or the workforce.

Third, students will see an increased focus on vocabulary across all grade levels. As a result, as they progress through school, students will continue to learn new vocabulary words and the correct contexts in which to use the words. This emphasis on developing rich vocabularies is more important than ever in the twenty-first century as students live and work in the digital age and frequently encounter, and will continue to encounter, new words and terms.

Mathematics benefits will also result from adoption of the CCSS.

First, students will work more deeply on fewer topics. In each grade level teachers will cover fewer concepts than in the past but go into much more depth on each concept. This process should ensure that every student gains a full understanding before moving on to the next concept. As a result, children will gain a full, foundational understanding of mathematics before moving on to the next grade level.

Second, students will understand why math works and be asked to talk about and prove their understanding. Students will no longer just memorize formulas but will learn why a particular formula exists and works. As a result, students will learn critical foundational concepts and problem-solving skills in the early grades so they are prepared for higher levels of math, such as algebra, once they reach the middle grades.

Third, students will be asked to use math in real-world situations. Students will learn to apply strategies for solving problems they could encounter in their personal lives and in the workplace. As a result, students will gain critical-thinking and problem-solving skills while in school, skills that they can apply in postsecondary education and the workforce.

Our local school districts will still determine the curriculum and methods that will best help students meet these standards.
These are just some of the changes and long-term benefits to students we expect as a result of implementing the new standards.

**How Do We Test against the New Standards?**

Idaho students will first be tested against these higher standards in spring 2015. Because the standards are higher, we know it will take students a few years to reach mastery and grade-level proficiency, and we expect to see, at first, a drop in the number of students reaching grade level. In years past we have seen 80 percent or more of Idaho students performing at grade level in reading and mathematics.

We do not expect to see these results for several years. But that is not necessarily a bad thing. The immediate lower test results will not be because our students woke up one day and were not as smart as the day before; the results will be because we are holding students to a higher standard, which is a good thing for the future of every child in Idaho.

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Luci Willits has served as the chief of staff at the Idaho State Department of Education since 2007. She was recently elected to the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Executive Committee. Prior to joining the department, she served as the communications director for the Idaho State Board of Education.

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**WITH THESE STANDARDS PROVIDING A FRAMEWORK FOR INSTRUCTION, we are confident Idaho students will now graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the twenty-first century.**
VIRGINIA STANDARDS PREDATED THE COMMON CORE INITIATIVE
The Board of Education is committed to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) program and opposed to adoption of the newly developed Common Core State Standards as a prerequisite for participation in federal competitive grant and entitlement programs.

The Standards of Learning are clear and rigorous and have won the acceptance and trust of Virginia educators. Whatever adjustments might be warranted to ensure alignment of the SOL with the Common Core State Standards can be made within the process through which the Board of Education exercises its constitutional authority to establish standards for the commonwealth’s public schools.

The board believes this approach makes the most sense for Virginia for the following reasons:

- Virginia’s system of accountability and support is founded on the Standards of Learning.
- The commonwealth is in the process of implementing recently revised Standards of Learning in English and mathematics that meet national benchmarks for college- and career-ready content.
- The revised English and mathematics SOL and the Common Core are comparable in content and rigor. The board’s established process for revising and adopting standards is ideally suited to incorporating Common Core content into the SOL where warranted.
- The subtle differences between the SOL and the Common Core do not justify the disruption to instruction, accountability, professional development and teacher preparation that would follow word-for-word adoption.
- Adoption of the Common Core would leave teachers without curriculum frameworks, scope and sequence guides and other materials specifically aligned with the standards students are expected to meet. Experience shows that these supports are critical to successful standards-based reform.
- Virginia’s accountability program is built on a validated assessment system aligned with the SOL; validated assessments aligned with the Common Core do not exist.
- Virginia’s investment in the Standards of Learning since 1995 far exceeds the $250 million Virginia potentially could have received by abandoning the SOL and competing in phase two of Race to the Top.

The Board of Education supported—and continues to support—the development of internationally benchmarked standards for states to adopt outright or to use as models to improve their own standards. The board, however, opposes the use of federal rulemaking and the peer review process as leverage to compel word-for-word adoption of the Common Core State Standards.

GUEST EDITOR’S NOTE: When the Common Core State Standards initiative first began, Virginia already had in place a program that followed many of the same precepts. Because the Virginia program was established and data collection had begun, the department of education and state board determined that continuing with the existing program would be in the best interests of Virginia students. Although Virginia is not a part of the Common Core initiative, it has participated in the structuring of the Common Core. In fact, Virginia’s online testing program was used by the Common Core State Standards Initiative as a model (Pyle 2013).

The information below is provided by the Virginia Office of Education and covers both the board adoptions and the rationale for continuing with their already established program.
SOLs ARE VIRGINIA’S KEY TO UNINTERRUPTED PROGRESS

National standards advocates suggest that while other states are “racing to the top” by adopting the new Common Core standards in reading and mathematics, Virginia is resting on laurels earned during the early years of the Standards of Learning (SOL) reform.

The reality is that the rigor of the commonwealth’s accountability program has increased since students first began taking SOL tests 12 years ago. By sticking with SOLs and not adopting the Common Core word-for-word, Virginia is keeping its students on track to higher achievement.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation recently found that the grade-by-grade reading objectives of the Common Core and SOLs are so similar that it was “too close to call” which set of standards is superior. The comparison was a dead heat, even though Fordham’s review did not include the more detailed SOL curriculum framework documents. A review of the required content in the mathematics curriculum framework would have resolved the foundation’s questions about elementary mathematics instruction.

While the Common Core initiative has produced grade-by-grade standards comparable to the Virginia SOLs, assessments aligned to the national standards won’t be available until 2014 or 2015.

The cost of administering the new tests is just one of many unknowns. Once tests are developed, how long will it take for states and stakeholder groups to reach a consensus on what constitutes proficiency? When will classroom teachers have Common Core-aligned resources and instructional materials? Will teachers in states that have adopted the national standards continue to teach to their now-outdated state standards until the new tests are ready?

Abandoning the SOLs amid this uncertainty—as required to participate in the Race to the Top grant competition—would send a confusing signal to the thousands of educators who have made standards-based reform a success for the commonwealth’s students.

Adopting the Common Core would also interrupt the systematic revision of the commonwealth’s standards and tests in reading and mathematics that began well before the national standards initiative was launched early last year.

Proceed with Rigor

The reading and mathematics SOLs were already strong. But rather than leaving well enough alone, the Board of Education collaborated in 2008 with the College Board and the American Diploma Project to increase rigor. As a result, the revised standards that will be phased in over the next two years include the content and skills recognized by these national groups as essential to college and career readiness. Whatever gaps that may still exist between the SOLs and the Common Core can be addressed without the disruption that word-for-word adoption would cause.

Students will begin taking SOL tests based on the revised mathematics and reading content in 2012 and 2013 respectively. These new assessments will include innovative items made possible by Virginia’s nationally recognized online testing.
program. The rollout of the new tests also provides an opportunity for the Board of Education to raise the bar.

A passing score on the SOL should denote grade-level proficiency rather than the lowest level of acceptable competency. There also should be a closer relationship between Virginia’s definition of proficiency and performance levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—while still recognizing that NAEP and high-stakes state assessments serve different purposes.

The current minimums were set during the early years of the SOL reform. The assumption was that passing scores would be revised upward once schools became accustomed to the standards. Now that 98 percent of Virginia schools are fully accredited, it is time to challenge our students to reach higher.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright has made no secret of her intention to ask the board to raise expectations by increasing the number of items students must answer correctly to pass. I support the state superintendent and will encourage my colleagues on the board to approve higher cut scores.

Strong Accountability

Other recent actions by the Board of Education to strengthen the SOL accountability program include the following:

- Raising accreditation benchmarks in English, history, and science;
- Requiring low-performing schools to meet annual goals for raising achievement;
- Requiring schools to develop academic and career plans for middle and high school students;
- Creating an incentive program encouraging students, schools, and division to achieve excellence goals established by the board and governor;
- Requiring students to pass a course in personal finance and economics to graduate;
- Creating annual accreditation benchmarks for graduation and requiring high schools to graduate, on average, 80 percent of students to earn a positive federal accountability rating.

And reform is not “stalled” in the critical area of teacher and administrator evaluation. Last month, the board directed the state education department to develop a model policy that includes growth in student achievement as a significant factor in evaluating the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other administrators. The policy will provide school divisions with an objective basis for implementing performance-based compensation.

All these enhancements build on the foundation of Virginia’s Standards of Learning. Abandoning the SOLs would negate this important policy work and interrupt progress. How would this serve the interests of Virginia students?

It is time to move beyond the “SOLs versus Common Core” debate and focus on helping students meet the evolving expectations of Virginia’s dynamic and successful accountability program.

Virginia’s educators share the concerns of educators in other states; all stakeholders in every state want students to get the best education possible. In Virginia the Board of Education has determined that the best way to continue to focus on that goal is to use the commonwealth’s Standards of Learning. Board members in Virginia believe that applying these proven standards—and using the process already established for modifying the standards as circumstances evolve—allows Virginia’s educators to continue to focus their efforts on preparing the commonwealth’s young people for college and careers in the twenty-first century.

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New Movement Shaping Education Today

In 1957 the launch of Sputnik sparked a transformative movement in public education in the United States, a movement that dramatically changed educational policy and practice. Now, over fifty-six years later, we are at another transformative moment in education with the almost universal adoption (forty-five states, the District of Columbia, and four territories) of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). As we move from adoption to implementation of these standards across the country, the climate for educational reform has led to expectations of change that are unprecedented in scope. The challenge before educators today has never been greater. The end goal of the CCSS is best expressed by Education Secretary Arne Duncan’s description of the Holy Grail of K–12 education: to graduate all of our students and make sure that they are “college-ready.”

Librarians as a Driving Force

A substantial body of research clearly shows strong school library programs staffed with certified librarians have a significant impact on student achievement without regard to socioeconomics, teachers’ experience levels, or other common correlations to student performance. Research has documented that schools where library resources have been used in support of instruction in literacy, information literacy, and technology skills have witnessed increased levels of motivation in students, as well as higher scores on student achievement measures and higher graduation rates. A study in Illinois involving schools with flexible scheduling and where students have increased access to the school library found that on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test fifth-grade students performed 10 percent better in reading and 11 percent better in writing compared to those with less access (Lance, Rodney, and Hamilton–Pennell 2005). The “School Library Impact Studies” conducted by Library Research Service concluded that libraries have a significant impact on student test scores, even for elementary-level students, and that school libraries play an important role in helping to close the achievement gap.

Equally important is the established role of public libraries in supporting all learners, especially underrepresented populations, including English language learners, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities. In addition to being a valued community-based resource for recreational reading, these institutions provide students access to resources and technology that may not be available at home, as well as opportunities for after-school and summer learning programs. Experts agree that 21st-century information- and digital-literacy skills are essential for all learners. Public librarians have embraced this need by providing instruction and programs to help young people acquire these skills.

With the implementation of the CCSS, libraries should be one of the most valued and trusted resources for teachers, parents, and students. Why are school and public libraries so well positioned to take on this role? A look at the six critical shifts from previous standards to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy (EngageNY n.d.) brings this connection to light. Other than classroom teachers, no other professionals are so well suited to address these core issues as librarians are.
The CCSS recommends a three-part model for evaluating the complexity of a text (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010). The heart and soul of text complexity is best conceptualized in the graphic in figure 1. It takes into account the qualitative dimensions (levels of meaning or purpose, structure, language conventionality, and clarity, knowledge demands), quantitative measures (word length or frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion), and reader and task consideration (motivation, interest, prior knowledge, and experiences). Text complexity is defined in the Common Core State Standards as “the inherent difficulty of reading and comprehending a text combined with consideration of reader and task variables; in the standards, a three-part assessment of text difficulty that pairs qualitative and quantitative measures with reader-task consideration” (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010, 43).

In applying these considerations for instruction, educators need to keep in mind two very important sentences from Common Core documentation: “The use of qualitative and quantitative measures to assess text complexity is balanced in the Standards’ model by the expectation that educators will employ professional judgment to match texts to particular students and tasks. Numerous considerations go into such matching” (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010, 7).

The CCSS Initiative stresses the importance of text complexity if we are to successfully prepare students for reading demands after high school. As stated, “One
of the key requirements of the Common Core State Standards for Reading is that all students must be able to comprehend texts of steadily increasing complexity as they progress through school” (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010, 2). There are, however, two alarming trends in terms of text complexity that must be noted across the P–20 continuum (preschool through postgrad studies). First, over the last fifty years the text complexity of K–12 texts has trended downward (Chall, Conrad, and Harris 1977; Hayes, Wolfer, and Wolf 1996; Williamson 2008). Second, the text complexity of reading required by college courses, careers, and citizenship has held steady or increased over this same time period (Hayes, Wolfer, and Wolfe 1996). This disparity, along with the finding that reading comprehension breaks down as students read more complex text on college admissions tests such as the ACT and SAT, led to the development of the “staircase of text complexity” by grade level. The Common Core cites Lexile measures as key indicators of text complexity and provides recommended Lexile grade bands for reading development to ensure students are on track for college and career text demands.

In short, the Lexile Framework for Reading is based on this model and is significant because it, unlike any other technology, allows for matching individual readers with specific texts on the same developmental scale. MetaMetrics, developer of the Lexile Framework, has performed research on the importance of the reader–with-text match and the typical reading demands of college and careers. This research contributed to the Common Core as a whole and, more specifically, to the Lexile-based bands in table 1 above (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010).

By specifying the Lexile reading demands across the K–12 continuum, a few points become obvious. First and foremost, we need to take a more longitudinal perspective as we prepare all students for the reading demands post high school. Secondly, every grade, every subject, and every education professional is important in growing the literacy skills of our students. Too often we have viewed only a subset of our educators (K–3) as responsible for the reading growth of students. A third point is that we now have a quantitative measure to evaluate whether a student is reading on grade level, a measure that is consistent across districts, states, and our nation.
Since the Lexile Framework is used extensively throughout the nation by teachers and librarians who are currently implementing the CCSS, we thought it would be helpful to provide background on the development, purpose, and utility of Lexile measures.

Background on the Development of the Lexile Framework

Founded in 1984, MetaMetrics cofounders Jackson Stenner, PhD, and Malbert Smith III, PhD, set out to build an empirical scale that would help match readers to text (placing reader ability and text complexity on the same scale) so that educators could respond what school and public librarians do daily: find the right book for each student. A second and related goal was to make test scores more meaningful and actionable. The typical scores that were reported from the major reading assessments in use at the time were norm-referenced scores that simply ranked student performance. There is not much a teacher, parent, or librarian can do with a percentile rank, stanine, or normal curve equivalent.

A final consideration in the development of the Lexile Framework was motivated by the need for what the philosophers of science call “unification of measurement.” Simply stated, all of the different reading assessments with their various scales had created a psychometric Tower of Babel. Like other constructs, such as temperature, if we could unify the measurement of reading, we could reduce the need for so many different assessments and do more with the assessments that were administered.

The initial research on reading and psychometric theory that culminated in the development of the Lexile Framework was funded over a decade through a series of grants from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, part of the National Institutes of Health. While Stenner and Smith were the principal investigators on these grants, scholars from Duke University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and University of Chicago also played a significant role.

Consistent with the conceptual triangle of text complexity described earlier, the Lexile Framework was created within the transactional nature of students’ relationship with text. Unlike some quantitative text-complexity tools that are just “text-centric,” the Lexile Framework was created through a conjoint measurement model of both reader and text. In the creation of the Lexile Framework, the importance of the qualitative portion of the triangle was also recognized. These qualitative features are important and include such characteristics as developmental appropriateness, intended audience, purpose, and even factors such as the book’s jacket art. When matching readers to books, it is important to pay attention to all of these features.

In trying to address some of these qualitative features, MetaMetrics also provides a series of codes. These codes, while not exhaustive, are intended to capture some of this information that is outside the quantitative measurement of Lexile measures. Below is a list of these codes along with a brief explanation.

**AD (Adult Directed):** Text that is usually read to a child, rather than a child reading independently.
Lexile Measures for Both Texts and Readers

The Lexile Framework for Reading is an approach to reading and text measurement. Therefore, two Lexile measures exist: the Lexile text measure and the Lexile reader measure. A book, article, or piece of text receives a Lexile measure by running it through the MetaMetrics Lexile Analyzer, which uses a linguistic algorithm that examines the semantic and syntactic features of the text. The lower the Lexile text measure, the easier the text is to read. For example, *Frog and Toad Together* (Arnold Lobel) is a 330L text; *Charlotte’s Web* (E. B. White) is a 680L text; *The Pearl* (John Steinbeck) is a 1010L text, and *The House of the Spirits* (Isabel Allende) is a 1280L text. Lexile text measures are rounded to the nearest 10L.

What makes the Lexile Framework for Reading such a powerful technology is the fact that students receive a Lexile reader measure, which is placed on the same developmental scale as the text complexity of reading materials, allowing teachers, parents, and librarians to match a reader with resources at the student’s ability level. A Lexile reader measure can range from below 0L for beginning readers to above 1600L for advanced readers. A student gets his or her Lexile reader measure from a reading test or program. For example, if a student receives an 880L on her end-of-grade reading test, her reader measure is 880L. Higher Lexile measures represent a higher level of reading ability.

Use of Lexile Measures

In addition to the utility of any tool, another important component is the ubiquity of that tool. Lexile measures are used at the school level in all fifty states. More than thirty-five million Lexile measures are reported worldwide each year. In over twenty states, students receive Lexile measures from the state’s end-of-grade reading tests. More than sixty popular reading assessments and programs from major test publishers—including CTB/McGraw-Hill, ETS (formerly known as Educational Testing Service), NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association), Measured Progress, Pearson, Scholastic, Scantron, and Cambium-Voyager—report Lexile reader measures. In addition to test publishers, all the major text and trade book publishers have elected to use Lexile measures as a way to describe text complexity.

More than one hundred million books, articles, and websites have been measured and received Lexile measures. The nation’s largest periodical database services have provided Lexile measures for their newspaper and magazine articles, as well as encyclopedia and reference content.

NC (Non-Conforming): Text that has a Lexile measure markedly higher than is typical for the publisher’s intended audience or designated developmental level of the book.

HL (High-Low): Text with a Lexile measure much lower than the average reading ability of the intended age range of its readers.

IG (Illustrated Guide): Text consisting of independent pieces or sections of text such as in an encyclopedia or glossary.

GN (Graphic Novel): Text in the form of sequential art (graphic novel or comic book).

BR (Beginning Reading): Text that receives a Lexile measure below 0L.

NP (Non-Prose): Text comprised of more than 50 percent non-standard or non-conforming prose.

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The Lexile measure is an important tool in the book-selection process. However,

**NO TOOL CAN REPLACE THE PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT OF A TEACHER, PARENT, OR LIBRARIAN**
in helping students select books for educational and recreational reading.

ProQuest, and Grolier—are easily accessed in libraries through online state databases, and all provide a Lexile search for their content. The country’s leading library automation services providers like Follett and Alexandria integrate Lexile measures into school library catalogs.

With the onset of the development and adoption of the CCSS, these numbers are growing dramatically. Lexile measures have become so widely used that there has been a transformation of the term “Lexile” from an adjective to a verb. When inquiring about texts, potential users often want to know if the text has been “Lexiled.” The fact that such a large collection of resources has been Lexiled and the measures made available free of charge to teachers and parents enhances the ability of school and public librarians to support differentiated instruction in all content areas at all levels. The abundance of Lexile measures enables librarians to assume more of a leadership role in strengthening their partnership with classroom teachers to enhance instruction.

Kathy Mansfield, library media and textbook consultant from the Kentucky Department of Education, stresses the importance of using the Lexile search features like those in the KY Virtual Library “to help teachers differentiate instruction for their students and to help students find just the right materials that they can best comprehend” (2013). As a school librarian, Mansfield promotes the use of Lexile measures in helping teachers identify valuable resources and materials; the method she recommends for this advocacy is through collaboration that has meaningful goals, such as curriculum development and lesson design.

Kim Shearer, 2012 Kentucky Teacher of the Year and ELA teacher and school librarian at Boone County High School in Kentucky, emphasizes the importance of teachers using “stretch text” in classrooms “to expose students to texts which are more challenging than what they’re used to” (2013). Shearer values and actively promotes collaboration between classroom teachers and school librarians in bringing Lexile-measured resources—books, articles, encyclopedia entries—into classrooms to support student achievement in all content areas.

**Common Misconceptions of the Lexile Framework**

Many factors affect the relationship between a reader and a book, including its content, the age and interests of the reader, and the design of the actual book. The Lexile measure is an important tool in the book-selection process. However, no tool can replace the professional judgment of a teacher, parent, or librarian in helping students select books for educational and recreational reading. Lexile measures are an indicator of whether the book will be accessible to a reader, not whether it is developmentally appropriate for a reader. Lexile.com provides recommended age-appropriateness ranges for books when this information is available. Lexile.com also offers an age-appropriateness filter for the popular “Find a Book” book search tool. Age information is provided by publishers and Bowker, the world’s leading provider of bibliographic information management solutions. In addition to these features, Lexile codes, as described earlier, provide additional information about a book; this information relates to its developmental appropriateness, reading difficulty, and common or intended usage.
The Lexile Framework is not a panacea but a tool that helps match readers to text by measuring reading ability and text complexity on a common scale, the Lexile scale. As all educators, including school librarians, know, there is a tremendous heterogeneity in the reading ability of students within a given class, grade, or age level. The Lexile Framework helps in finding the “sweet spot” in terms of finding text at the appropriate challenge level. What Lev Vygotsky called the “zone of proximal development” (McLeod 2012) is engineered into the matching of reading ability and text complexity through the Lexile Framework.1

When a reader’s Lexile measure and the Lexile measure of a book match, a targeted reading experience occurs. For example, if a reader has a Lexile measure of 1000L, he or she will be forecasted to comprehend approximately 75 percent of a book with the same Lexile measure (1000L). With the targeted reading experience, a reader will comprehend enough to understand the text but will be exposed to new vocabulary and face some reading challenge. This 75 percent comprehension rate is based on independent reading; if the reader receives assistance, the comprehension rate will increase. Important scaffolds like audio support, visual aids, and preteaching vocabulary can all contribute to a higher comprehension rate or help students read above their Lexile range. Of course, the Lexile Framework should never be used to restrict or pigeonhole a reader.

Librarians’ Essential Role in Reading Progress

The ambitious goal of graduating every student ready for college or a career will be reached only if we marshal all of our collective resources in a concerted effort to promote literacy. Huge arrows in the quiver of educational resources are the school and public libraries and their importance in extending learning time. Unfortunately, our school calendar of 180 days a year with 3 months of summer off was built upon an agrarian society that no longer exists.

A large body of research documents the pernicious effects that this three-month break has in terms of reading growth for our students, in particular our low-income students. “Summer loss,” “summer slide,” and “summer fade” all refer to the reality that students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch lose ground during the summer at a higher rate than other students. In fact, researchers now argue that up to two-thirds of the achievement gap can be explained by twelve summers of turning off the educational spigot (Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson 2007a, 2007b).

To the credit of leadership within the library community, your profession has long recognized this problem and attempted to address it through participation in the Collaborative Summer Library Program. At MetaMetrics, we have attempted to promote library use over the summer as well. We have teamed with the Council of Chief State School Officers to encourage state departments of education to engage in programs to increase targeted reading over the summer.

As mentioned earlier, over twenty states report Lexile measures from their state-wide reading assessments. These states are now able to take advantage of the link between reading ability and the millions of resources that have a Lexile text measure. When these states send score reports to parents, they are able to directly link test scores through Lexile measures to actionable resources. This capability has enabled over twenty state departments of education to use the state test reports to promote the use of libraries through summer reading programs.

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1 Since other text-complexity tools exist in addition to the Lexile Framework for Reading, comparative studies have been conducted to align and crosswalk other metrics to the Lexile grade bands. For a more thorough analysis and review of text-complexity tools see “Not So Common: Comparing Lexile Measures with the Standards’ Other Text Complexity Tools” (Smith 2012) and Measure of Text Difficulty: Testing Their Predictive Value for Grade Levels and Student Performance (Nelson et al. 2012).
Through our partnerships with state departments of education, MetaMetrics has worked directly with four state libraries. In Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, and South Dakota the state librarians urged school and public librarians, educators, and families to use the Lexile-based “Find a Book” search tool. “Find a Book” enables individuals to build custom reading lists based on a Lexile range and personal interests and then to check the availability of books at the local library. The development of “Find a Book” was motivated by research performed by Harvard’s Dr. James Kim and others, research that has demonstrated the importance of paying attention to both interest and Lexile match when encouraging summer reading (Kim 2005).

The idea behind the Lexile Framework for Reading is simple; if we know how well a student can read and how hard a specific book is to comprehend, we can predict how well that student is likely to understand the book. The Lexile Framework for Reading provides a common developmental scale and measure to match readers with resources and activities that are targeted to readers’ ability levels. Lexile measures help educators, school librarians, and families select books, articles, and other materials that provide the right level of challenge for a reader’s skills and goals, and to monitor growth in reading ability.

For more information on Lexile measures, visit <www.Lexile.com>.

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Malbert Smith is a senior investigator on a U.S. National Center for Education Statistics research study to examine National Assessment of Educational Progress benchmark scores in relation to university and career readiness. He also serves on the boards of the UNC School of Education Foundation, Public School Forum of North Carolina, National Summer Learning Association, North Carolina Virtual Public Schools, and LEARN NC. He is also a research professor at UNC-Chapel Hill; he speaks frequently around the globe on issues related to educational research, measurement, and technology.

Anne Schiano joined MetaMetrics in 2011 after serving many years as a senior manager responsible for policy development at the New York State Education Department. Most recently, she led the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Instructional Technology. She has been the recipient of several honors and awards, including NYS Technology Education Association’s Appreciation Award, the NYS School Library Association’s Advocate Recognition, the NYS Reading Association’s Advocate of the Year, and Georgetown Washington University’s Elliot Fellow Award: Governing in the Global Age.

Elizabeth Lattanzio joined MetaMetrics in 2007 and has served many roles in the organization, including product analyst in the Learning Sciences Division and communications director. She shapes messaging for press releases and announcements and provides assistance for state, testing, and book publishing partners’ messaging needs. She also works closely with state departments of education to develop and implement their summer reading initiatives. Elizabeth also oversees the development of MetaMetrics’ white papers, policy briefs, research briefs, and position papers.


As an educator, I dedicate myself to teaching my students through science. I have an extensive background in my content area. However, when the challenge of adapting our curriculum to meet the requirements of the Common Core State Standards was presented to us, I immediately sought out the assistance of experts in another field: our school library staff. In my curriculum we study mineral beneficiation and how the treatment of mined materials can make minerals more concentrated or rich. It was apparent to me that we needed to practice the beneficiation of our current curriculum to meet the CCSS requirements.

In our district a collaborative project that involves all the core subjects is conducted from November to March. For this project, WarFair, students select a conflict-related topic, and rubrics are designed in each core class to assist students in completing the requirements for that portion of the presentation. During the process of assisting students in their research, a pattern has emerged. Students can easily navigate the Web to find information and are, in effect, experts at surface mining. However, the information they reveal is not always reliable or at their ability level. This pattern was not far from my mind when the school library staff and I developed a collaborative project to enhance an end-of-the-term review unit.

Students can easily navigate the Web to find information and are, in effect, experts at surface mining. However, the information they reveal is not always reliable or at their ability level.
Prospecting and Mining

Last spring we embarked on a project to guide students through not only researching a topic but also, through close reading, validating the quality of the content they discovered. The collaborative project between the school library and our science class was developed around the mineral extraction theme with which students were familiar. To set the tone for the project, students were asked to make correlations between the process of discovering content and the process of evaluating it for value.

Students were tasked with leveling content material on an assigned topic; the material was retrieved from subscription databases. To assist in reviewing for our semester exam, the materials presented key concepts. As part of the review for the exam, students later shared their research results in groups. For this portion of the studies, students submitted a research packet that included a minimum of five supportive informational pieces, and each piece had an assigned point value. Students were expected to uncover credible sources at elementary, middle school, high school, and college levels and then cite each source using MLA format. Students were also allowed to include in their packets related comics, images, or even a URL for an interesting website. Those who desired to work above minimal expectations of five sources were encouraged to submit pieces for all categories for extra points. Some students were so passionate about their searches that they included several articles for no additional points. The Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level option in Microsoft Word was used for leveling the material. We selected this option because it was available to all students and did not require registering or supplying an e-mail address as did some of the other programs.

The project spanned four fast and furious days. The school librarian introduced students to resources available through our library’s website and had students familiarize themselves with the databases most useful for this project. This orientation day was facilitated by the iPads in our school’s 21st Century Learning Room. The iPads gave students the ability to explore without the temptation of printing the first article they exposed. In addition to helping students learn to recognize authoritative resources at appropriate levels, this collaborative project also demonstrated that many of the electronic devices that we have at home for amusement are also valuable for academic purposes. The next three days were dedicated to unearthing quality and relevant resources.

Refining

I have found that our students have a surplus of information available but are unable to process it. When introducing the project, the majority of students felt proficient in using our school resources and thought that they would complete the project in one day. Because this was a review activity students were quite comfortable with the material. On day three, many were still struggling to extract meaningful content from the ore that our databases presented to them. Students expressed disbelief and, in some cases, disgust that a search in a children’s database would present college-level material.

The project dredged up a number of learning opportunities for the students and our staff. Before the students could cite a resource for their packets, they had to get permission from one of the science teachers or the school librarian. To ensure that the resource was, indeed, about the student’s topic, the adult would ask the student to explain what the article was about. In the beginning, students thought we could be snowballed by merely pointing to keywords or trying to paraphrase as they read what was on the screen. They quickly learned our expectations and, with a little drilling, uncovered meaning from the text. Students who had celebrated having been assigned narrow topics now begged for broader topics that gave them more freedom to investigate.
Much time was spent clarifying an important point: just because a keyword shows up multiple times in an article, a researcher can’t assume that it is relevant to his or her topic. Use of the key term in a specific article might have nothing to do with the science concept being investigated. We also reviewed what makes a comic funny and appropriate for their research. The realization that this project required more than simply Googling words set in rapidly. Students advocated for themselves to obtain assistance from all the adults for content questions and from the school librarian for citation or more specific search inquiries. By the time my students had concluded the project they had learned that the Web is a massive reserve of information, but careful analysis is needed to convert this information into viable knowledge.

Assaying

My lessons, like a good book, have a beginning, a middle, and an end. To close this lesson, we reflected orally with a strategy I call "three questions or comments." Students can share any thought, concern, or question and will not be released from class until we have discussed a minimum of three reflections or questions. Most classes had at least a half dozen comments and questions before the bell rang at the end of the class. The students had a lot on their minds. They learned that they did know how to search for words but were not as proficient as they thought in sorting through the results.

Students found it interesting that for their science topics the majority of the cited material was written at either the college or upper middle school level. The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level option is a resource students vowed to use again, not only in science but also in other courses. A short time after the project, a student told an English teacher about spending twenty minutes using the Flesch-Kincaid option (to which the student had been introduced during the collaborative science project) to increase the student’s own writing level. The English teacher was impressed that the student was not only writing to complete her assignment, but challenging herself to write at her grade level. With the proper tools and permission to use them, our students can extract meaning from our lessons and apply them to everyday life. The small payday from our project was the content learned and reviewed. The mother lode was students’ applying their skills independently in other settings.

This project verified for me that education sometimes focuses too much on the end product and not enough time on the process of creating it. Once the students moved past a surface understanding of the material, a deeper understanding of the content emerged. In our semester review activity in which the students used their packets, the students appeared more confident, and the quality of their discussions was enhanced. The collaboration with our library staff was invaluable. Exploring the services and resources available in our schools is essential. We are not alone in our quests, and often our library staff knows a more efficient route to reach our goals. My experience with science and our school

Students expressed disbelief and, in some cases, disgust that a search in a childrens’ database would present college-level material.
As educators become comfortable with instruction beyond textbooks, digital resources provided through our school library can be harnessed.

Librarians’ knowledge of resources will provide our students with an enriched education.

Conducting Wider Explorations

The Common Core State Standards encourage educators to enrich students’ learning with a vast array of resources beyond our textbooks. Core content teachers will need to collaborate with the library staff to maximize potential outcomes through effective use of literature and research. School librarians’ understanding of resources available to support content will supply a foundation for supporting the diverse learning needs of our students. The expanded number of resources available for classroom instruction will expose students to a greater variety of materials that address the same key content concepts but in a multitude of ways.

Our library staff has been excellent in assisting us in refining content-themed units that encompass many different interests. These diversified lessons allow students to learn at their reading level and through lessons that are interest-based. As educators become comfortable with instruction beyond textbooks, digital resources provided through our school library can be harnessed. In our own education, we are taught that the most authentic learning results when we are a little uncomfortable. With the assistance of library staff, we can take a step out of our comfort zones and push ourselves. This educational vein can be explored through digital books in the classroom or other tools that can be accessed using computers or even electronic devices usually used for entertainment.

Educators are challenged with ensuring that our students are both college- and career-ready. The science requirements of the core are heavily research- and evidence-based. A strong partnership between the departments and our library will ensure that our students are being exposed to the most current information available. The CCSS not only sets standards for English literacy but science literacy as well. The collaborative project we piloted this spring allowed our students the opportunity to demonstrate critical-thinking and problem-solving skills that can be used outside the classroom or in the workplace. With the assistance of our school library staff, students were asked to critically read text both in digital and hard-copy format. This close-context reading project assisted students in decoding complex text and enjoying their reading. The stimulation of learning with quality literature and informational text will enhance knowledge, provide experiences that students might not otherwise have, and foster a worldly view of their education.

The Common Core State Standards should be viewed as a means of engaging our students in relevant and meaningful learning that will prepare them for the twenty-first century. Through educational collaboration, students will navigate life by discovering raw aggregate and knowing how to process it. The beneficitation of education will foster the greatest payoffs for the highest stakeholders: our students.

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There never has been a need for the Common Core State Standards, and there is no evidence that it will do students any good. The Common Core ignores the real problem in American education: poverty. The Common Core will continue the process of turning schools into test-prep centers and bleed billions from places the money is badly needed, where it can help protect children from the effects of poverty. The only real outcome of the CCSS is to do the opposite, to profit a small group of the elite, the .01 percent, at taxpayer expense—a classic case of “take from the needy, give to the greedy.”

There Has Never Been a Need for the Common Core, and There Is No Evidence It Will Do Students Any Good.

The major argument for adoption of the CCSS is the assertion that our schools are terrible and that something needs to be done about the situation. The only evidence cited in support of this argument is the claim that our international test scores are very low. We must, therefore, force students and teachers into doing better. This “improvement” will be done by establishing tough standards that control what is taught and by testing students on the standards, thereby making sure that the standards are taught.

But analyses of our international test scores have revealed that American international test scores are nowhere nearly as bad as critics claim and that they have not declined (Loveless 2011). In fact, when we control for the effects of poverty, American students rank near the top of the world (Carnoy and Rothstein 2013). Our overall scores are unspectacular because of our high rate of child poverty (more than 23 percent), the second-highest among all industrialized countries (UNICEF 2012). In comparison, Finland, a country that consistently has high scores, has about 5 percent child poverty.

The products of our educational system do very well; the U.S. economy is ranked as the fifth most innovative in the world out of 142, according to the 2013 Global Innovation Index, which is based in part on the availability of education, new patents, and the publication of scientific and technical journal articles (Cornell University, INSEAD, and WIPO 2013).

Every indication points to a continuation of this record of success. Our educational system is doing much better than it needs to in the area of science and technology; in the U.S. two to three qualified graduates are available for each science/
tech opening (Salzman 2012; Salzman and Lowell 2007, 2008; Teitelbaum 2007). According to the Atlantic (Weissmann 2013), the U.S. is producing more PhDs in science than the market can absorb.

Finally, there is no evidence that having national standards and increasing testing have improved student learning in the past (Nichols, Glass, and Berliner 2006; Tienken 2011).

The Real Problem: Poverty
As noted above, when we control for poverty, American students rank near the top of the world on international tests. This finding confirms that poverty is the major factor in determining school achievement, a finding that is consistent with the results of many studies showing the powerful negative impact of poverty on many aspects of learning, including, of course, reading comprehension and other aspects of literacy development (e.g., Biddle 2001; Duncan and Brooks-Gunn 2001).

Studies have documented how poverty impacts school performance. Food insecurity, lack of health care, and lack of access to books, among other aspects of poverty, all have devastating effects on students’ ability to learn.

Food Insecurity
Children of poverty are likely to suffer from food insecurity (hunger and concern about future availability of food). Studies (Coles 2008/2009) show that food-insecure children are more likely to have slow language development and problems in social behavior and emotional control. They are more likely to miss school days, repeat a grade, and have academic problems.

The effects of food insecurity are reversible; when previously food-secure children experience food insecurity, their reading development slows down relative to food-secure children. But “a change from food insecurity to food security can bring concomitant improvements: the study also found that poor reading performance for food insecure children in the beginning grades was reversed if the household became food secure by 3rd grade” (Coles 2008/2009).

Lack of Health Care
High-poverty families are more likely to lack medical insurance or have high copayments, circumstances that result in less medical care, and more childhood illness and absenteeism, which, of course, negatively impact school achievement. David Berliner cites studies showing that “children in poor families in most states are six times more likely to be in less than optimal health, experiencing a wide variety of illnesses and injuries, as compared with children in higher income families” (2009, 16). School is not helping; poor schools are more likely to have no school nurse or have a high ratio of students to nurses (Berliner 2009).

Lack of Access to Books
Very clear evidence demonstrates that children from high-poverty families have very little access to books at home, at school, and in their communities (Newman and Celano 2001; Duke 2000; additional studies reviewed in Krashen 2004). Studies also show when children have access to interesting and comprehensible reading material, they read (Krashen 2001; 2004). And finally, when children read, they improve in all aspects of literacy, including vocabulary, grammar, spelling, reading, and writing ability (McQuillan 1998; Krashen 2004). In fact, the evidence is strong that reading for pleasure—self-selected reading—is the major cause of advanced literacy development.

Making sure that all children have access to books makes literacy development possible. Without access to books, literacy development is impossible.

Libraries
Libraries are often the only source of books and other reading material for children of poverty, and they are a potent source. A number of studies confirm that providing access to books via libraries has a positive impact on reading development; the better the school library (more books, presence of a credentialed librarian, better staffing), the higher the reading scores (e.g., Lance 2004; Lance and Helgren 2010; Krashen 2011). Multivariate studies show that the positive impact of school libraries can be as strong as the negative impact of poverty on reading achievement (Achterman 2008; Krashen, Lee, and McQuillan 2012); in other words, a good library can offset the effect of poverty on literacy development.

Protect Children from the Effects of Poverty
The implications are straightforward; until poverty is eliminated, until we have full employment at a living wage, we need to protect children from the effects of poverty. This reality means they need adequate food programs, improved health care, including more school nurses in high-poverty schools, and, of course, more investment in libraries and librarians.

As readers of this journal know, however, funding for school and public libraries is not being increased. It is being cut (Kelley 2011).
Funding

An obvious way to free up money that could be used to support food programs, increased health care, and libraries and librarians is to reduce testing. An unprecedented amount of testing has been planned to monitor compliance and achievement under the CCSS—far more than the amount done under No Child Left Behind and far more testing than has ever been seen on this planet (Krashen 2012). The new tests will include the usual end-of-year tests, but in more subjects, and in more grade levels, as well as interim tests during the year and, possibly, pretests in the fall to measure improvement over the academic year.

All tests are to be delivered online. Therefore, all students must have access to the Internet with up-to-date equipment. Providing this access will involve a staggering expense, and one that promises to increase as systems require updating, replacement, and even complete overhauls as progress is made in technology (Krashen and Ohanian 2011). All this effort and expense are planned, despite the fact that there is no evidence that standards will help, that new tests will help, or that online technology will help.

What is clear is that the testing and computer industries will profit, and taxpayers will pay the cost of setting up the infrastructure and supporting the numerous adjustments and changes, as software and hardware regularly become obsolete.

I need to point out that I am not presenting an argument against all standardized testing. My position is that we should have only standardized tests that actually do some good—that help with teaching and learning (Krashen 2008). My position is No Unnecessary Testing (NUT).

The Nature of the Standards

Despite the claim that the standards do not tell teachers how to teach, the nature of the language arts standards (especially Reading: Foundational Skills, Writing, and Language) make it hard for teachers to do anything but direct instruction.

First, the standards have accepted in full the conclusions of the National Reading Panel: “Materials that are aligned to the standards should provide explicit and systematic instruction and diagnostic support in concepts of print, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, and fluency” (Coleman and Pimentel 2012a, 2012b), as well as text structure (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010a, 11, 42.) and grammar (CCSS Initiative 2010b, 31, 33). The creators of the language arts standards appear to be unaware of the extensive and deep criticism of the National Reading Panel’s conclusions and the unimpressive results of Reading First, which was based on the these conclusions (Garan 2002; Krashen 2001, 2005, 2009; Allington 2002; Coles 2003).

Second, the CCSS are so demanding that in English language arts classes, educators and students will have little time for anything not directly linked to the standards. Nor should there be, according to the Common Core State Standards Initiative’s Publisher’s Criteria: “By underscoring what matters most in the standards, the criteria illustrate what shifts must take place in the next generation of curricula, including paring away elements that distract or are at odds with the Common Core State Standards” (Coleman and Pimentel 2012b, 1).

As Ashley Hastings has pointed out (personal communication), the Common Core is clearly more than a “core”; it is the entire apple.

Third, constant high-stakes testing ensures direct teaching. As noted above, the standards will be enforced by a massive amount of testing, including “interim” testing through the academic year, to make sure students stay on their “educational trajectory” (Duncan 2009). Performance on these tests will have serious consequences for students, for teachers, and, we are told, even for schools of education: “We need comprehensive data systems that do three things, track students throughout their educational trajectory,…track students back to teachers….track teachers back to their schools of education” (Duncan 2009). The pressure to stick with what is in the standards will be extreme, and the force of constant testing...
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will ensure that direct teaching methods will be used; educators will be concerned that there is no time for the target structures to emerge naturally; it may not happen in time for the next test.

In short, it is likely that language arts will consist entirely of direct instruction, with no time for self-selected reading. However, focusing primarily on direct instruction in reading conflicts with the massive research that shows direct teaching of aspects of literacy produces very limited results and that most of our literacy and academic language competence is the result of reading, especially self-selected reading.

**The Common Core and Self-Selected Free Reading**

The CCSS disparage self-selected free reading. This quote from Appendix A of the ELA standards presents the creators’ position on free reading:

"Students need opportunities to stretch their reading abilities but also to experience the satisfaction and pleasure of easy, fluent reading within them, both of which the Standards allow for" (CCSS Initiative 2010b, 9).

This quote sends the message that hard reading requiring grim determination is the real stuff, the true way to "stretch reading abilities." Easier, more comprehensible reading that we actually enjoy is fine for a break but only to experience some "satisfaction and pleasure."

The ELA standards’ Appendix A does not cite any of the plentiful research that strongly indicates that reading that does not require struggle is the source of nearly all of our literacy competence, that it is the bridge between "conversational" language and "academic" language.

Appendix A, along with the rest of the ELA standards, has very little respect for the power of reading. It assumes that grammar must be taught directly, even though many studies show that our grammatical competence is largely the result of reading. ELA Appendix A barely acknowledges that vocabulary is the result of reading, maintaining that "direct study is ... essential" (CCSS Initiative 2010b, 32). Appendix A states that "at most between 5 and 15 percent of new words encountered upon first reading are retained" (CCSS Initiative 2010b, 32), which is not what studies show. Studies actually show that when readers see a new word in print, they typically pick up a small part of its meaning, about 5 to 15 percent; as people read more, they encounter the word more and gradually acquire the meaning.

The Common Core State Standards do not allow "easy reading": The publisher’s criteria explain that materials for independent reading "will need to include texts at students' own reading level as well as texts with complexity levels that will challenge and motivate students" (Coleman and Pimental 2012a, 4). In other words, nothing below the readers’ current official level is allowed.

The creators of the CCSS seem not to be aware that reading below one’s current official level can be beneficial; reading level is an average; "easy" texts often contain plenty of language above one’s level. Easy reading provides background knowledge, and easy reading can increase enthusiasm for more reading (Krashen 2005).
Consequences for Libraries

The Common Core movement will be a disaster for libraries and will have a negative impact on nearly every aspect of our educational system.

Like other major educational organizations, the library organizations have dedicated their efforts to finding a way to live with and adjust to the dictates of the CCSS. In fact, a current argument for supporting libraries is that libraries and librarians can help students meet some of the requirements of the CCSS.

Given the serious problems with the Common Core—it is unsupported by research, it creates a rigid, test-prep version of schooling, and there is the real possibility that it will drain every spare dollar from the educational system—to borrow from Alfie Kohn’s comment about efforts to privatize education, we should not be “scrambling to comply with its provisions.” Rather we should be trying to figure out the best ways to resist (2004).

We should, at a minimum, demand that experiments and descriptive studies of groups of students be carried out so that the standards and measures can be evaluated. Instead, states whose departments of education and legislatures have jumped on the Common Core bandwagon are using nearly their entire student populations as experimental subjects. When the new standards and technology fail to produce dramatic results, “experts” will blame teachers and call for tougher standards and even more testing, requiring newer (and even more expensive) technology. And the profits for the .01 percent will be even greater.

Like other groups, school librarians have argued that the CCSS is inevitable; the train has already left the station. Yes it has, but it has not yet arrived. The public has little idea of what the CCSS require, and no idea of what

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the drawbacks are. If the public were aware that the CCSS is "a radical untried curriculum overhaul and... nonstop national testing" (Ohanian 2013), the rush to adopt the CCSS would be halted immediately.

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It’s been only a few years since the state of Montana adopted revised standards for Information Literacy/Library Media. (To read the standards, go to <http://opi.mt.gov/PDF/Standards/09IL_LMContentStandards.pdf>.) In the years since their adoption, our district’s curriculum review team, made up of K–12 school librarians, defined our local curriculum directly from these standards. As these librarians worked to expand the standards into learning objectives and a local implementation plan, much debate occurred, debate that was influenced by personal philosophies and experiences. However, the process was guided by the standards, which provided the common vision and shared goals. As Montana’s school librarians reflect on their past implementation plans and begin planning for the future, they might ask themselves: “What are we to do with the Common Core?”

As the curriculum director for Montana’s second-largest school district, I, too, have been reflecting on what the vision should be for the cross-curricular collaboration between educators as they focus on specific Common Core State Standards and how these standards should impact our school librarians. What should the implication of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) be to a school librarian? While I set out to explore this question and analyze what resources are available for school librarians, I was reminded that a core belief of AASL members is that school librarians are ideally positioned to assist teachers in preparing students for a lifetime of success through literacy.

After further comparisons, I found no conflict between what AASL has published and the CCSS for English language arts and for
I see a common vision and a shared set of goals when I compare the focus of school library programs and the overall vision and structure of the CCSS.

mathematics. It is clear that AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner and the CCSS are not opposing sets of standards, nor do they have a dichotomous relationship that would make an educator feel the need to choose one over the other. As some national organizations criticized the Common Core movement because they themselves were not invited to the table to create them, I was encouraged to see that AASL actually took a different approach. Instead of criticizing and creating an opposing plan, AASL looked at how school librarians can actually collaborate with teachers as the CCSS are implemented. An examination of the AASL website revealed quite a few resources available to assist school librarians to support implementation of the CCSS.

Additionally, the goal of AASL’s Learning4Life plan for implementing the AASL learning standards is “ultimately...to create a shared vision with stakeholders and constituents” (2008, 5). The authors of the plan recognized that “a common vocabulary and message are critical to success” (2008, 5). Further, AASL’s Teaching for Learning Goals require that the school library program promotes: a) collaboration, b) reading as a foundational skill, c) providing instruction on information and technological literacy, d) promoting critical thinking and problem solving, and e) collaborative assessment of student learning (AASL 2011). These expectations are conducive to the role school librarians will take in the successful implementation of the CCSS.

The resources available to the school librarian through AASL’s website include the curricular crosswalks between the AASL learning standards and the CCSS <www.al.org/aasl/standards-guidelines/crosswalk>. These crosswalk documents can be used in two different ways, depending on the educator’s point of view. A classroom teacher can look at the crosswalk that begins with the CCSS to see the alignment to AASL’s learning standards. On the other hand, a school librarian can pull up the crosswalk that begins with the AASL standards and then explore alignments to the CCSS. These curricular crosswalks help school librarians “recognize and make the connection between the new learning standards and program guidelines and content area curriculum standards” (AASL 2008, 6).

The curricular crosswalks are only a few tools the school librarian can access to support classroom teachers in their implementation of the CCSS. Whether the task is developing critical-thinking skills or looking for informational text and information online, school librarians are well prepared, with their expertise and supporting resources, to collaborate with classroom teachers.

I see a common vision and a shared set of goals when I compare the focus of school library programs and the overall vision and structure of the CCSS. As educators look to the future of Common Core implementation in all the content areas, I am hopeful that other national organizations will take a close look at what AASL has done to create a collaborative process to provide resources that align with the new standards. Ideally, other educational organizations will follow AASL’s example.

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School librarians will play a crucial role in the support of the implementation of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (CCSS). More than ever, to ensure these standards are met, school librarians must work in tandem with classroom teachers. School librarians will be instrumental in providing opportunities for students to access resources that will support their becoming critical consumers of information.

In this article, we explore the instructional shifts as a whole that adoption of the CCSS will require (EngageNY n.d.). Each shift will adequately prepare students for success in a college or career pathway. Teachers and specialists, such as librarians, will need to explore these shifts and discern how their roles will change because of them. If all educators implement the outlined CCSS, students will have clear, consistent, and targeted benchmarks to follow, a circumstance that will allow each student to be better prepared.

Schools must coordinate and collaborate at all levels by creating opportunities for all students to gain the knowledge and skills needed for their undefined futures. We must create students who are adaptable, are able to adjust to various situations, and are problem solvers. These traits can also be defined as 21st-century soft skills. School librarians must become familiar with the CCSS and know how to support students and classroom teachers in the implementation process. Later in this article we will discuss the six shifts with an analysis of how school librarians fit within each shift.

**Drawing on School Librarians’ Strengths**

For school librarians the implementation of the CCSS will bring an increased focus on nonfiction material. The CCSS require that in elementary grades 50 percent of what students read be informational text, and this requirement increases to 70 percent in high school. However, traditional basal series have had limited focus on nonfiction text. School librarians can take an active role in motivating students through piquing their interest in nonfiction material. Book talks can be a key strategy to promote interest in nonfiction as well as fiction; booktalking is a tool well-suited to school librarians who know about a wider range of materials than classroom teachers.

Readers’ advisory skills are also a powerful tool for use with readers of all ages. Employing their knowledge of students’ individual reading levels (Lexile levels) school librarians can assist in exposing students to more rigorous text that is appropriately aligned to both interest and maturity level.
A shared understanding of the CCSS is necessary for school librarians and classroom teachers so they can collaborate on content-specific topics or projects. The librarian’s evolving role should be more active in planning and, perhaps, coteaching of lessons. These lessons could involve shared research, evaluation of materials, critiquing relevancy of a source, the construction of a final project, and locating information for close text reading. To foster independent lifelong readers, school librarians and classroom teachers must collaborate to an even greater extent.

We know that through the Common Core State Standards students will encounter more complex text and will, therefore, need to employ effective reading-comprehension strategies when faced with increasing complexity. The professional librarian will need to do a comprehensive audit of the current collection and work with classroom teachers to determine the genres and texts that students will need to use.

As we previously stated, and it bears repeating, school librarians will play a crucial role in the support of the implementation of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards. The remainder of this article will look specifically at the role of school librarians and library collections within the six shifts, as seen from the viewpoints of a K–6 superintendent and Common Core specialists.
Conclusion

These shifts support the notion that instruction in the school library and in the classroom must mirror each other. We all need to shift from teacher-driven to student-driven instruction. To foster independent lifelong readers and learners, school librarians and classroom teachers must collaborate to an even greater extent. Within these shifts, school librarians have the opportunity to take on a leadership role and support the classroom teachers as the CCSS are implemented. This endeavor necessitates that librarians coordinate their instruction with that of the classroom teacher and be a significant resource to students and teachers alike.

The shift to focusing on the CCSS validates the need for librarians in our schools. Common Core ELA standards serve to define school librarians’ role more specifically. The library can and should be the focal point of the school, and these shifts can be the pathway to making this centrality a reality.

Deep knowledge of standards is necessary so school librarians and classroom teachers can collaborate on content-specific topics. This collaborative approach will allow students the opportunity to access information, practicing and refining this 21st-century learning skill.

Work Cited:
Once upon a time in 2010, I sat in a meeting where Jean Stevens from the New York State Education Department addressed a group of NY state administrators and shared, "It is no mistake that inquiry-based learning is throughout the Common Core." That was a cornerstone cry for which only school librarians knew the significance. I was excited. After years of fighting for turf as a poor fief, it was as though the lord of the manor had knighted our troops. This was our moment, but no one knew it yet.

As teachers all over America try to figure out what this new teaching paradigm is supposed to look like, school librarians are able to focus on concrete paradigm shifts in the standards:

- Researching to build and present knowledge
- Reading more nonfiction
- Reading to build core background knowledge
- Researching and reading for information ("evidence") for discussions and writing

Since that noble announcement, many messages for educators have been promulgated, and in New York State the messages just keep coming and coming and coming. With each announcement comes a new understanding—a new view into what the Common Core picture is supposed to look like. Even though our education department has done a supreme job of funding curriculum and training, getting the message down to the serfs is a tough task and not every teacher has heard the crier's decrees. The Common Core pedagogy news is traveling at a medieval rate, despite the state department of education's valiant effort, and the presence...
of technology and the Internet at educators’ fingertips. Some classrooms are still operating in an educational Dark Age of stand and deliver.

New York is a Race to the Top (RttT) state, in addition to being one of the forty-five Common Core states, and that gives us a “change double-whammy.” It is this double-whammy that has set up New York as a “leader” state in the CCSS adoption. Be ye hereby notified: Being a “leader” does not mean that every soldier is following.

As the New York State Education Department received RttT money, they were able to:

• Create exemplar lessons, called “modules.”
• Create an army of turn-key trainers,
• Create training videos,
• Establish a central Common Core Web portal <www.EngageNY.org> and more.

Listed below are some representative Common Core Cries from the New York State Education Department. Perhaps you have heard similar messages from your state, but regardless of whether you are in a Common Core state or not, these comments represent good instructional paradigm shifts that can be embraced by school librarians and other educators everywhere.

• “Materials truly aligned with the standards are incredibly difficult to find and Common Core stickers are incredibly easy to make,” cries Kate Gerson, research fellow for the NYS Education Department. “If you are doing more talking and thinking than the students, then you are not aligned with the Common Core. The person doing the work is doing the learning. The students have to be doing the thinking,” she shared at a recent Common Core conference (2013).

• "Low test scores are not an indicator that ‘remediation’ is necessary, but that the learning has to be supported in every classroom,” shared Commissioner of Education John King (2013). As the rigor is increased in material and instruction, test scores are likely to plummet before they improve. Teachers and students alike are learning to embrace harder material and learning to speak and write with evidence from the text. This is a paradigm shift that requires time for success.

• "Everyone is in the literacy business,” David Coleman (2011) told us when the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were rolled out. It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes the whole building to triage an achievement problem. The collective efforts of everyone embracing reading and literacy will only hasten achievement. Almost every educator in the state of New York is required to have a master’s degree, so we all should be able to assist. Even special area teachers have been told to support literacy. Educators in content areas such as music, art, physical education, and the library have been encouraged to embrace building goals of reading fluency and core-content vocabulary and embrace creative connections to curriculum goals.

School librarians need to understand and embrace that they are more than classroom support; they are teachers. This is school librarians’ opportunity to teach, to stretch, to challenge. If everyone is truly in the literacy business, our school library doors should be the busiest in the building. If you are not seeing an increase in circulation, gather a committee of committed teachers who could become your literacy think tank. How could you inspire an outside reading incentive program?

• "The language deficit is the largest contributor to the achievement gap,” shared Commissioner King at the May 2013 Network Training Institute in Albany. The body of research behind the poverty and vocabulary deficit is large and widely accepted. This premise upon which the Common Core based its “vocabulary shift” is not a newly found cure, but merely a new spotlight shining on a literacy building block. By sharing that all educators are in the vocabulary and literacy business, we are all part of the solution. If students can use and embrace “vocabulary of the discipline” correctly, then they demonstrate mastery of the content. To understand vocabulary instruction and its role, school librarians should investigate and understand the three vocabulary “tiers.” It is in strengthening tier two and tier three vocabularies that we build achievement.

• "Let go of the skill of ‘telling kids’ what you know,” shared Kate Gerson at a recent Common Core conference (2013). "Gain the skill of captivating the students into learning from text. What we now know is students need to access much more complex text than what we have required of them. They have been operating two to three grade levels too low in the past. Students must be ‘supported’ to make meaning of the text.
Don’t make it easier, make it harder.”

- Students need to speak from sources, and not their opinion. This is called evidence-based discussion or writing, and it requires that students digest what they have read to use it in speech. This task is harder than pulling old knowledge from inside the brain, but by requiring students to refer to the text we create thinkers. Kate Gerson encouraged creating classroom environments where students “participate in discourse using evidence. Our arguments will become much stronger” (2013).

- The idea that millennials need to read nonfiction to build background knowledge and vocabulary has been reinforced by training provided by New York State, as well as by my watching videos about implementation of the CCSS (King and Coleman 2012; King, Coleman, and Gerson 2012) and hearing and reading David Coleman’s comments on implementing the Common Core (2011). Teachers should pair fiction with nonfiction to embrace the nonfiction requirement. Nonfiction is emphasized, not to reduce students’ reading of fiction, but as part of a crusade to provide supplemental high-quality and captivating materials that inspire students to read more. This reading will build background knowledge and enable them to conduct discourse on topics based upon nonfiction facts rather than fiction reads. This is a crusade we as school librarians can join.

- Students will need to increase their volume of reading. New York State has published a five-page document about increasing the volume of reading
Assessment has become a three-headed beast: to measure students’ achievement, to measure teacher efficacy, and to inform instruction.

in students and its importance in building achievement. The New York education department understands the connection between reading for background knowledge and increased vocabulary acquisition. The document is available at <www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/volumeofreading.pdf>.

• According to Commissioner John King, “Our third-grade assessment numbers show chronic underachievement across NY State. Outside of school creates challenges for students inside school. This cannot preclude achievement, but only inform our instruction. We have a responsibility to give students access to the world and give them the tools to be lifelong learners. Access information, participate in civic discourse, and teach them to be responsible. Think about these challenges” (2013). These tasks are easier said than done, but in NYS the belief is widespread that implementation of the CCSS will provide students with the impetus and tools for lifelong learning and address some of the ills that plague our classrooms.

• Research to build and present knowledge will indeed foster college readiness. Although our graduation rates are rising in New York, too many of our graduates are not college- and career-ready. Despite the fact that our graduation rates are rising, fewer college freshmen are finishing degrees and are, instead, dropping out of college. It is the intention of the drafters of the CCSS that students’ skills and knowledge acquired in grades K–12 will result in a huge reduction in the number of students who need remediation when they arrive at college.

• Teaching is no longer just an “art”; it is art and science. It is data-driven and carefully crafted. In New York, all classroom teachers are required to pre-assess student knowledge. Data-driven instruction is becoming vitally important in determining what and how to teach. No longer can teachers just deliver a lesson because they did it last year and it was such a success.

Teachers have to carefully plan units of instruction to meet educational needs and academic achievement goals. Assessment under No Child Left Behind was all about how much the students have learned. Assessment now is about what the students need to learn and whether it’s been taught correctly, efficaciously, and aligned with our Common Core objectives. Assessment has become a three-headed beast: to measure students’ achievement, to measure teacher efficacy, and to inform instruction.

• “Think about it. Talk about it. Write about it,” says NYS educator Andrew Hossack in a close-reading video at the EngageNY website (2012). Student-centered learning is about the student doing the learning, not the teacher doing the delivering. Educators have to carefully craft lessons that are engaging and where the students “own” the process. School librarians can help teachers build deeper lessons that encourage students to question, investigate, discover, synthesize, and then express their knowledge—this is the language of inquiry. This skill will catapult students into being lifelong learners.

School librarians can brainstorm research activities that are inquiry-based and that allow students the opportunity to dig deeper into curriculum content areas to answer questions that might arise in a close-reading activity. Rarely does reading an article or primary source document answer all the learner’s questions. A quality article should compel students to ask additional questions on a topic, thereby extending their learning, extending their reading, giving them more opportunities to see the same domain-specific vocabulary, and allowing them to complete short- or long-term research projects as the standards suggest. Learning has to be deeper and more meaningful than in the past.

The ELA Common Core mode of operation can be summed up by this 2011 statement from David Coleman, one of the authors of the
CCSS, "Read like a detective; write like an investigative reporter." If students are reading like detectives, they will be innately embracing the shifts identified in the move to implementing the CCSS.

Whatever the language, it is nice to see that teachers who have shifted to deeper instruction are testifying positively about improved results. Though not without their warts, the curriculum "exemplars" that New York State have produced do exemplify student-centered deep learning experiences. To assess whether you have dug as deeply on your own, if your school reads any of the following "ELA core novels," for example, you may want to go to <www.engageny.org/english-language-arts> and investigate how our "exemplars" have addressed these books: A Long Walk to Water (Linda Sue Park), Esperanza Rising (Pam Muñoz Ryan), The Lightning Thief (Rick Riordan), or Ender's Game (Orson Scott Card). These are merely four novels from a long list of reading suggestions.

The biggest decree from the New York State Education Department is the proposed rollout of a research paper requirement for graduation. Our state’s governing board (Regents) will be voting on whether to require a research paper for high school graduation. Regardless of whether they vote yea or nay on this proposed graduation requirement, "It is in the standards," states David Abel, Regents Fellow (2013). For the first time in recent years, we are hearing a top-down research message that, to be college- and career-ready, students must learn how to conduct an inquiry investigation, question, synthesize information, draw conclusions, and report their findings.

School librarians should not forget that writing for information standards 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 has to do with “researching to build and present knowledge.” If teachers are not visiting your library, how can they be correctly teaching these standards? This focus on research may be our trump card. We must also carefully think about the shifts and determine what we as teaching librarians can do to answer the Common Core call.

Paige Jaeger has been a school librarian at both the elementary and secondary levels. She is currently the coordinator for school libraries for thirty-one school districts in northern NY. She has held online courses for AASL and is currently serving on the AASL Common Core Implementation Task Force. In 2013 she received the Distinguished Service Award from the School Library Systems Association of New York State. She blogs at <librarydoor.blogspot.com>. Her coauthored book will be released in the spring by Libraries Unlimited.

Works Cited:

Visit Knowledge Quest online at <www.ala.org/aasl/kq> to view videos of experts talking about the biggest opportunity the Common Core State Standards offer school librarians in AASL’s 30 Second Thought Leader series.
FEATURE

WEBCHECK
THE WEBSITE EVAL

Welcome! The Center for Digital Literacy at Syracuse University is pleased to present WebCHECK: The Website Evaluation Instrument. WebCHECK, funded by an Institute of Museum and Library Services SPARC Ignition Grant, is a series of instruments that were designed for educators, Web designers and students to assess Web sites they use for assignments and projects. There are several instruments that can be used by K-12 students as well as WebCHECK Facilitator designed for K-12 educators and administrators and higher education faculty to use when assigning a single Web site to be evaluated by classes or groups of students or by educators in a professional development workshop.

WebCHECK is based on a foundation of instructional design and motivation theory, is free, fun and easy-to-use, and generates a full evaluation report to share results. This site also features a collection of lesson plans that can be used with WebCHECK to teach information skills. Click on the menu below to access the WebCHECK instruments for individual use, WebCHECK for Facilitators, or Lesson Plans created by practitioners who have used WebCHECK.

WebCHECK Instruments
WebCHECK for Facilitators
Lesson Plans
INTRODUCTION

Just as with print resources, as the number of Web-based resources continues to soar, the need to evaluate them has become a critical information skill for both children and adults. This is particularly true for schools where librarians often are called on to recommend Web resources to classroom teachers, parents, and students and to support students who must select and use appropriate Web resources for homework assignments and classroom activities.

Because of the dynamic, interactive nature of Web-based resources, new tools are required that encompass a broader concept of evaluation, beyond assessing authority and accuracy of content, soundness of functionality (Alexander and Tate 1998; Nielsen 1994), and value-added information design characteristics, such as currency and coverage (Taylor 1986). Tools used to evaluate the Web today also must be able to assess the website’s ability to engage and satisfy, or what we (2000) call its “motivational quality.”

What is motivational quality?

Motivation explains why people choose certain activities over others. One of the most widely researched and applied motivation theories, Expectancy-Value (E-V) Theory (Fishbein 1963), specifies that a person’s motivation depends on his or her perceived value of and expectation for success at a given task. Although E-V Theory was originally developed to explain motivation in the workplace, it has been applied to a wide variety of contexts.
The WebMAC instruments, based on E-V Theory, emphasized motivational quality while including functionality, information design, and content validity issues framed in terms of their effect on motivation (Arnone and Small 1999). They are unique because they (1) are theoretically based, (2) are user-centered, (3) use an inquiry approach, (4) are designed for use by children and adults, (5) provide both text-based and graphical data representation, (6) are useful to website consumers and designers, and (7) offer mechanisms for assessing and improving websites from multiple perspectives.

Why wasn’t WebMAC adequate?
While the WebMAC instruments were highly innovative, they had some shortcomings:

- WebMAC was originally developed for paper-based evaluation, making scalability for individuals and groups difficult.
- Librarians must be able to easily generate reports for constituents (e.g., principals, parents, community groups) on the quality of specific Web resources.
- Class or group evaluation summaries and reports could be accomplished only manually, making the process difficult and time consuming.
- While WebMAC Professional can be used by librarians in all library settings, school librarians may have a particular need for more targeted instruments in their unique educational setting.
- The instruments did not adequately reference today’s social technologies and participatory culture, often afforded by the best websites.
Thus, there was a need for an automated version that could process individual or group scores and provide reports of the results for a variety of purposes (e.g., justifying the use of one website over another for a student assignment or project, demonstrating the quality of a library website to a principal or parent).

Through a 2012 IMLS SPARKS! Ignition Grant for Libraries, WebMAC was renamed WebCHECK: The Website Evaluation Instrument (a.k.a. WebCHECK). All of the unique and innovative characteristics of WebMAC were retained; four of the instruments were updated with the ability to facilitate instrument use by groups or classes; and all of the shortcomings discussed above were addressed.

The four updated instruments are:

- WebCHECK Junior for lower elementary students (sixteen items)
- WebCHECK Middle for upper elementary/middle school students (twenty-four items)
- WebCHECK Senior for high school students (thirty-two items)
- WebCHECK Professional for educators (forty-eight items)

How did WebCHECK address the shortcomings?

Evaluation of Web resources is a critical skill for today’s learner and aligns with elements of AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner (2007) and the Common Core English Language Arts Anchor Standards (Common Core 2012):

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
WebCHECK is particularly well suited for reaching these standards with students. Educators may use WebCHECK to evaluate websites to be included in instruction, or students can use it to assess websites to be used as resources for assignments or projects or of personal interest. WebCHECK also serves as a guide when designing or redesigning library or school websites.

In order to address the need to update the instruments, an exhaustive literature review was conducted and several potential items that tap into today’s social and participatory media were developed and reviewed by a small group of school librarians. All instruments were updated to address Web 2.0 features and functions used in website design.

WebCHECK is fully automated. Users simply click on a response for each item on the instrument, and, once all items are scored, their scores are automatically compiled and a full, printable report is generated. These reports include text and graphically represented results, as well as an explanation of compiled scores, making reports suitable for presentation to parents, administrators, teachers, and students.

In addition, educators now have the choice of using WebCHECK with individual students, with a small group of students, or with an entire class or multiple classes, using WebCHECK for Facilitators. This allows comparisons across different websites or comparisons of scores across different groups.

How does WebCHECK’s scoring system work?

All WebCHECK instruments break down scores into two main categories: the evaluator’s perceptions of the site’s Value and whether he or she has an Expectancy for Success in using the site. These two categories are further broken down (on all but WebCHECK Junior) into four subcategories: Stimulating (how interesting or exciting the site is), Meaningful (how important or relevant the site is), Organized (how well the site’s information is arranged), and Easy-to-Use (how easily the site can be navigated).

In all but WebCHECK Junior, summary graphs are generated for visual feedback. These graphs can be generated by an individual or a group. For example, if a librarian wants a class of fifth-graders to evaluate a website they might use in a class project, she can set up the class in WebCHECK for Facilitators. Each student completes WebCHECK Middle and receives an individual report, while a summary report is generated graphically, allowing the entire class to quickly and easily see the total group’s assessment. The WebCHECK report pinpoints strengths and weaknesses in the site at the item level, at the category level, and in total.

The number of items and the wording of those items change as the level of students advances; i.e., there are more items for students in higher grades than in lower grades and wording differs in age-appropriateness; for example, the term “navigating the website” used in WebCHECK Senior is replaced by “finding my way around the website” in WebCHECK Junior. Once initial revisions were made, the instruments were pilot tested.

What kind of pilot testing was conducted?

Ten school librarians from the central New York state area were recruited to participate in the Phase I pilot test of WebCHECK Professional, the instrument targeting librarians and classroom teachers who wish to assess the websites they are considering using in their instruction. Results of this phase of pilot testing provided guidance for revision of that instrument.
Subsequently, fifty school librarians nationwide were recruited (via LM_NET) to participate in Phase II of the pilot test, focusing on the use of the WebCHECK student instruments. Participants were given two choices: (1) use WebCHECK for Facilitators to have their whole group or class evaluate the same website or (2) have individual students evaluate different websites using a student WebCHECK instrument.

Participants were asked to test the appropriate level of WebCHECK with their students by designing, teaching, and revising a curriculum-integrated, Common Core-related lesson incorporating that instrument and then evaluating WebCHECK based on its clarity, ease-of-use, comprehensiveness, and usefulness. After the pilot test was completed, revisions were made. Participants submitted their lesson plans to be shared with colleagues via the WebCHECK website.

What will I find on the WebCHECK website?

The WebCHECK website, <www.mywebcheck.net>, was launched worldwide in early October 2013. It includes three sections of freely available resources: (1) WebCHECK instruments, (2) WebCHECK for Facilitators, and (3) Lesson Plans. Questions or comments about WebCHECK should be sent to the authors at cdl@syr.edu.

Ruth V. Small is Laura J. and L. Douglas Meredith Professor of Information Studies at Syracuse University and founding director of the Center for Digital Literacy. Her research focuses on the motivational aspects of information design and use. She is co-editor of School Library Research. With more than one hundred publications, her latest book is Teaching for Inquiry: Engaging the Learner Within (Neal-Schuman 2011).

Marilyn P. Arnone is a research professor and professor of practice of information studies at Syracuse University in the School Media Program and serves as co-director for the Center for Digital Literacy. Recently, she contributed a chapter to The Creative Imperative: School Librarians and Teachers Cultivating Curiosity Together (Libraries Unlimited 2013).

Works Cited:


THE VALUE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIAN SUPPORT IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Linda M. Ballew
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The mission of school librarians in the digital age of information gathering and messaging has not undergone any real change of focus. Even though the tools and methods available for accessing information have significantly altered the way people now use library services, school libraries remain a constant place to make valuable discoveries. It is the place where we learn that science, math, literature, and art are all pursuits resulting in truth found out.

School librarians serve a crucial role as the bridge for bringing information to the diverse individuals they support, acquiring an extensive amount of possible information in a faster timeframe. They are the experts in the field, knowing what options are viable and what the best alternatives would be for a student needing help.

Teens definitely want a more multimedia approach to the information they require. The millennial generation is a more visual group who wants to incorporate not only one-dimensional books and photos into their presentations or work, but also three-dimensional video and audio. They want technology that integrates literature and research in electronic devices that are as easy to use as opening a book.

They want to not only have access to the electronic equipment that they may not be able to afford in their own homes, but they also want to know how to use it. They want to be able to check out equipment such as Kindles or e-reading tablets that allow them to integrate both print and digital information. They want the audience of their information to respond with "awe" and "wow," and so, they look for the data that can be presented with movement and layers and sound.
Libraries and librarians are essential for students and teachers because they are a front line for aptly teaching students how to use the technology available in each specific high school library.

School districts struggle to keep up with ever-changing advances, and so, maintaining not only sufficient technology in a library, but rather, state-of-the-art technology is essential.

With the district adoptions of curricula developed around the Common Core State Standards, the possibilities for the English or language arts program to include the technical types and styles of writing that will be demanded of current graduates begins to emerge. The Common Core State Standards require writing courses to incorporate more technical writing and emphasize nonfiction writing and literature, but the actual placement of this 21st-century writing need has not been readily adopted and embraced in local district curriculums.

Libraries need to focus on the current priority for students to know how to read nonfiction and technical material, as well as for the student to master and learn how to write with the diverse types of information bombarding their audiences. This is a fast-paced digital explosion of briefings, tutorials, apps, manuals, and symbols, like the ever popular emojis that fill text and tweets with implied emotion and meaning in a much more casual and brief style than that of the classic research essay.

Educational change arrives slowly. This is due in part to a lack of financing and also because instructors and administrators may not have sufficient experience or confidence to control the Internet and tools that deliver this information. Even so, educators cannot ignore the impact of social media. Effective use of social media must be taught so that students and teachers learn to efficiently use the tool not just for casual messages, but also for intellectual pursuits and conversations. This demands a comprehensive understanding of the digital media itself and the changing face of storytelling formats. It is critical to have patience. People need to know how to edit for fact-checking and writing skills so that before they accept the most accessible surfing posts or before they push send, they are confidently delivering appropriate information and stories. Message boards, Facebook, instant messaging, texts, tweets, Instagram, and so many other ways to send information will evolve into new formats, but instant information sources will not disappear.

Because there is so much information in both the print and digital realms, the acquisition of it is often overwhelming. Students and teachers will start researching a topic but fail to continue to dig and search for better resources, additional perspectives, and/or more valuable or reliable sources because the seemingly endless possible resources are exhausting. Those inexperienced in the
Because there is so much information in both the print and digital realms, the acquisition of it is often overwhelming.

Research process just take the easy route without really becoming more experienced Internet and media travelers. Thus, the one area where librarians become most critical is in their ability to help filter some of the noise found in digital media, so that students and their teachers can find the best sources of information—often in places they had not thought about looking or did not even know about.

Fact-checking is time-consuming, but accuracy is imperative. In a world where information, multiple perspectives, and platforms in a 24–7 timeframe inundate the reader, viewer, and listener, knowing how to decipher and interpret fact from opinion and fiction has to be a skill practiced by all people. This means that educators must teach their students higher level thinking and problem-solving skills: analysis, comparison and contrast, and judgment. These learner outcomes are specified in the Common Core State Standards and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (see tables 1 and 2). However, these are not skills to be memorized. These valued abilities need to be practiced in lifelong learning. Knowing how to be accurate in communication—whether that be what we compose in conversations, speeches, articles, essays, or reading—will be essential in our success in the 21st-century job market as well as in our intrapersonal relationships.

Table 1. English Language Arts Common Core State Standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8</strong></td>
<td>Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1</strong></td>
<td>Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.7</strong></td>
<td>Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6</strong></td>
<td>Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All of these formats and the education of how to appropriately use these tools could be placed into the hands of competent librarians who could provide an essential service by developing actual workshops or courses taught in the library much in the same way the use of the card catalog was once taught to freshmen or elementary children. Journalism workshop courses use this technology, teach these writing styles, and moderate their use, but advisers reach a limited number of student staff members. Librarians have a much wider influence, reaching a larger number of students and teachers.

As librarians work to better partner with instructors, simply making the effort to reach out to other educators and their students on an individual basis will help them discover what teachers and students really want and need. It would add a collaborative incentive for more frequent library use. Surveys do not always give the most precise answers, and focus groups do not often provide thorough information because many teachers and students are afraid to speak up. Reaching out, even for short conversations in passing, could be a great help for both librarians and the students and teachers they serve. Digital media has diminished the importance of face-to-face interaction. Needless to say, those of us who work in this digital information era often need to be reminded of the tremendous impact that actual dialogue has on authentic learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>P21 outcomes</th>
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| Critical Thinking | 1. Reason effectively  
                      2. Use systems thinking  
                      3. Make judgments and decisions  |
| Communication     | 1. Communicate clearly                                                      |
| Information Literacy | 1. Access and evaluate information  
                          2. Use and manage information  |
| Media Literacy    | 1. Analyze media                                                            |

Table 2. Partnership for 21st Century Skills—Student Outcomes.

Linda Ballew has advised at Great Falls High School in Great Falls for the last thirty-two years. She works with the student staffs of the “Iniwa” newspaper, “Roundup” yearbook, and interactive video and website, <www.iniwa.com>, as well as Facebook and Twitter. She has represented journalism advisers, as the 2005 Dow Jones National Newspaper Teacher of the Year and as the Journalism Education Association’s 2006 National Distinguished Yearbook Adviser. She has been a Freedom Forum delegate, Montana Teacher of the Year finalist, and Montana Environmental Teacher of the Year.

Recommended Resources:


Circa 1969 the United States had placed a man on the moon, and libraries were a place where students went to quietly study and utilize stacks and stacks of hard-bound books. The research process for a paper required a student to examine the large, green bound periodicals, write out small white slips of paper, and hope against hope that the library had the resource. Technology was the menacing microfiche machine.

Today’s librarian is no longer the keeper of the silence, and the library is not an institution of bound books and research stacks. Today’s library is a dynamic multimedia resource with personnel who assist students and teachers with everything from arranging a webinar to assisting with online instruction. Librarians are advocates for instructors and students, integrating current materials into their collections at the request of instructors to bridge the connection between the core curriculum and the requirement that students connect technology and societal effects with their instruction.

Personally I have been blessed with librarians who have been willing to purchase software and lobby for hardware and probeware to allow my students to conduct inquiry investigations and to begin developing the engineering design process. Students must understand the relevance of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to their everyday lives to become employable in the rapidly changing, technologically driven economy.

The intent of the Common Core State Standards is to prepare students to be college-, career-, and citizenship-ready. The school libraries of today allow students equitable access to the knowledge that will allow them to become literate in all areas of their lives. Literate members of society become experts at taking their current knowledge and using it to solve new problems. In order to communicate the knowledge of a given concept, students must be able to analyze information and data and present their understanding orally and through writing or a project.

Case in point: When my students were assigned a rocket construction project their first stop was the library to research effective designs to maximize the rocket’s range. The librarian directed them to YouTube videos and online resources on payload, fin designs, and launch angles.

As an instructor for a strategic freshmen science course I rely heavily on the librarians to assist
with the War Fair project. The War Fair project is designed to incorporate the core subjects into a research-based history project that culminates in an open-to-the-public presentation in March. Students working alone or with other students must make meaningful literate connections among science, mathematics, and history for a specific event, person, theory, or experiment and discuss how this topic changed scientific theory and influenced society. Without the school librarians’ expertise, the core instructors would need to invest their classroom time to teaching those skills as opposed to devoting class time to integrating the information.

Topics are chosen in November and before the project is over the librarians will have dedicated five full days of library use to working with students to refine their topics and teaching them how to locate and use specialized resources to drill down for meaningful information. The librarians also assist with hands-on and classroom instruction about the presentation methods, whether a display board, PowerPoint, or building a web page.

When the elementary particle known as Higgs boson was discovered and the Perimeter Institute hosted a live feed with three nuclear scientists, the librarians set up the necessary technology to allow my students to participate in an international interactive webinar. Imagine the excitement of one of my students when the panel of physicists chose to answer his question. Those physicists had no way of knowing that the question being asked was from a high school senior as opposed to a nuclear physicist. Without the days of preparation supplied by the librarians my student would not have had that opportunity. The webinar was not during a normal class time and required the installation of software in the computer lab. The librarian remained with my class to troubleshoot if necessary and provide technical support.

With the need for more students to have post-secondary education and the increasing number of careers requiring STEM preparation, the demand for a multimedia, multi-access library is critical. From providing students access to simulations for concept development, instructing students in navigating Moodles and blogs, assisting students with online instruction and web page development, the librarians and libraries of today truly are integral pieces to ensure that students will be successful in becoming proficient in the Common Core State Standards, as well as the Next Generation Science Standards. These proficiencies will ensure economic security and re-establish the United States as a leader in education and technology.

Jan Mader is a nationally recognized high school physics teacher and a national lecturer and workshop presenter. She has authored or co-authored three physics textbooks and curricula, an elementary physics and chemistry curriculum, and a high school chemistry curriculum.
Augmented reality is a direct or indirect view of what is real in the actual physical world, but with a layer of augmentation. This layer can include sound, data, and visuals and is computer generated. This technology is meant to enhance a person’s perception of reality (Mashable 2013). For example, a site that focuses on maps offers users the option to view a street but will enhance the sight with information about restaurants, shops, and other establishments. A library-based site could offer options in how students see books on the shelves and then enhance the image with information about books, videos about titles, and even go so far as including recommendations from peers. Augmented reality is limited only by imagination and offers many exciting ideas for our school libraries.

What Is Marqueed?
Marqueed [www.marqueed.com] is an image-markup tool that falls into the category of augmented reality online sites. Users can upload their pictures, mark them, collaborate with others, have real-time discussions for editing, as well as embed discussion points into the images for a layer of augmentation. In Marqueed it’s not just about the image itself; the user and his or her collaborators can bring in other images, compare, draw, add, converse, and make decisions all within the Marqueed site. As the Marqueed site says, the process is “speaking visually.” With the Marq It button added to a browser’s bookmark bar, students and teachers can quickly grab images (giving proper credits and citations, of course) from other websites. Images from Marqueed can also be shared with popular cloud tools such as Google Drive and Dropbox, or shared via e-mail.

Ideas for Using Marqueed
Marqueed is one of the 2013 winners of AASL’s Best Websites for Teaching and Learning in the category of Social Networking and Communications. It’s not surprising that it won; Marqueed is a site that supports many possibilities for students and educators to enrich learning experiences.

The most obvious way to use Marqueed is for image collaboration. This could be for a variety of projects. Online art galleries, classroom designs, group projects, group photography work—the list goes on. Students can load their images to the site and then can discuss each image, mark it up, and decide what needs to be added, edited, or changed. They can use Marqueed is an effective tool to help students develop competencies within the framework of AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner.

Augmenting Learning with Marqueed

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the site at school or work away from their school location and continue their collaboration from home or anywhere else with an Internet or WiFi connection. Marqueed will work on handheld devices but only the mobile site is offered at this time; an app has not been made available. (If you are looking for a somewhat similar site that comes in app form, try ThingLink.)

School librarians could use Marqueed in multiple ways. The site allows users to take snapshots of full websites. If a librarian were doing a session on webpage reliability, Marqueed could be a great tool to use. Students with a snapshot of the assigned website could collaborate with group members, mark up the website to highlight weaknesses and strengths, and present their impressions to the class at the end of a library session. This process would also work for assessing website design.

Marqueed could also be used for book commercials or book displays. Students could be assigned a book to “sell” to their peers. The process could include creating a design, loading it into Marqueed, and then, through the site, meeting, discussing, and collaborating on the design. Once discussions were complete and the design finished, the book advertisements could be loaded onto library computer stations, printed on posters, or included in slide shows for peers, parents, teachers, or school administrators.

Marqueed and Professional Development

When it comes to collaboration Marqueed is the site. For school librarians who want to build a website, blog, poster, or anything image-based, this site can truly be an asset. Educators and fellow librarians can meet online, across school districts, states, and the country. Group work has no distance limitations; Marqueed makes it so easy to view websites, design pictures, plan posters, and critique online designs. It is also easy to see how a site like this could be used in school library planning and proposals, furniture placement, classroom management, and student location. Whenever an image is involved, Marqueed facilitates collaboration and discussion.

Marqueed and 21st-Century Learning Standards

Marqueed is an effective tool to help students develop competencies within the framework of AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. For example, among the responsibilities listed in the standards are “contributing to the exchange of ideas within the learning community” (1.3.4) and using information technology responsibly (1.3.5). Marqueed is tailor-made for demonstrating these responsibilities and allowing students to put them into practice. This site could also aid students as they “collaborate with others to exchange ideas, develop new understandings, make decisions, and solve problems” (2.1.5) (AASL 2007).

Augmentation of Student Learning

Marqueed is a site that encourages users to think visually. Through layers of information, images, websites, and collaboration this website is one that takes students and their educators to another level of group work and discussion. It’s a fun site to use, attractive, and intuitive. Students will enjoy using it with their peers. Give it a try and see if it’s right for a project or lesson that you have in mind.

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Works Cited:


Which library stakeholder would you like to better understand your role? If it’s your school administrator, you are in luck! AASL’s Learning4Life (L4L) website <www.ala.org/aasl/learning4life> has new advocacy materials available to assist you in demonstrating to your administrator the essential role that school librarians play in supporting and instructing teachers and students.

This year participants of ALA’s Emerging Leaders (EL) program partnered with Karen Gavigan, chair of AASL’s Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force and assistant professor in the School of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina. Dr. Gavigan submitted a proposal for this year’s School Library EL team to create an updated advocacy brochure and presentation intended for administrators. The brochure would maintain the strong, positive messages provided in earlier materials, while providing necessary connections to the Common Core State Standards. It would also include quotes from the most recent research, which demonstrates that schools and students thrive when the school library is staffed with a full-time, certified school librarian.

The 2013 Emerging Leader Team A, comprised entirely of school librarians, built upon the previous L4L advocacy products created by AASL and previous Emerging Leader teams. The work began during an initial meeting at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Seattle. Virtual meetings and online collaborations ensued to develop the advocacy documents. The resulting materials were created with the intent that L4L state coordinators will disseminate the information to school librarians and stakeholders.

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in their respective states, as well as anyone who has a need to advocate to administrators, school boards, and parents to convince them of the importance of school librarians.

Ultimately, the completed brochure and presentation were showcased during the Emerging Leaders poster session at ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. Complete materials are now available online. Both the brochure and the presentation are customizable and can be downloaded for free from the L4L resources page <www.alaaasllearning4life/resources#resources>.

The updated, administrator-friendly brochure will likely look familiar. It has the usual L4L/AASL branding—including colors, images, and font—so the brochure is easily recognizable as being L4L-focused. The four tenets of L4L are prominent, and it describes how school librarians are essential to teaching AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner and fostering learners’ abilities to think, create, share, and grow in school and beyond. These four principles are then linked to the Common Core State Standards, and examples are provided to illustrate how school librarians actually impact student learning day by day. The presentation echoes the themes of the brochure, adding supporting quotes and expanded information about school librarians’ roles and activities.

One panel of the brochure prominently displays quotes from current studies such as the following example, taken from the 2012 Pennsylvania study conducted by Keith Curry Lance: How Pennsylvania School Libraries Pay Off: Investments in Student Achievement and Academic Standards <http://paschoollibraryproject.org/research>.

“Students performed better on reading and writing tests where the principal placed high value on the librarian collaborating with teachers in planning and teaching and providing in-service education to teachers, met regularly with the librarian and appointed the librarian to serve on key school committees.”

Both the brochure and presentation emphasize the correlation between AASL and Common Core State Standards. School librarians’ activities in support of the standards, as well as student outcomes linked to these activities, are also included.

**Above:** Displayed here are some of the ways school librarians impact student achievement.

**Below:** "Learning4Life School Library Programs Improve Student Learning: Administrators" brochure.
Both the brochure and presentation emphasize the correlation between AASL and Common Core State Standards. School librarians’ activities in support of the standards, as well as student outcomes linked to these activities, are also included. For instance, the CCSS requires that students be able to think critically about sources, evaluating them for relevance, accuracy, and credibility. School librarians regularly work to support this goal by collaborating with teachers, selecting quality materials, modeling critical thinking, and providing explicit instruction and practice in the library. Because of this work, students can leave the library able to do the following:

- Draw clear and appropriate conclusions supported by evidence and examples.
- Evaluate sources using established criteria.
- Filter information effectively.
- Formulate the topic, problem, or question independently.
- Question sources for bias and omission.
- Weigh the “pros and cons” of sources and media based on audience, purpose, and desired message.

Acknowledging the busy schedules of administrators, the new materials are succinct and straightforward. They speak to administrators’ current priorities. As principals face the growing pressures of standards and assessment implementation, they need to see how school librarians can provide direct and essential support of classroom and school priorities.

Ensuring that building- and district-level administrators understand and value the role of the school librarian is crucial to the school library program’s success. Use these powerful advocacy tools to educate your school and district leaders. Not only will they better understand your role, but you will have gained additional allies who will advocate for the essential program you have developed.

Maegan Coffin Heindel is a school librarian serving third- through fifth-graders at Marquette Elementary in Madison, Wisconsin. Prior to receiving her master’s degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she spent six years teaching first and second grades. Maegan has also provided instructional-technology professional development to pre-service and in-service teachers with MERIT Library at UW-Madison. She is vice president of the Friends Board of the Cooperative Children’s Book Center in Madison. She was named an ALA Emerging Leader in 2013.

Kathleen Riopelle Roberts is the school librarian at Rivers Edge Elementary for the Henrico County (VA) Public Schools. She was 2011 Teacher of the Year for Rivers Edge Elementary, and her school library program was awarded the 2011 AASL National School Library Program of the Year Award. Kathleen is the chair of the Scholarships and Awards Committee for her state-level school library association. She is currently serving on AASL’s Best Apps for Teaching and Learning Committee and was also named an ALA Emerging Leader in 2013. She blogs at <http://blogs.henrico.k12.va.us/krroberts>.

Amy Jo Southworth is a school librarian at Bay Shore High School in Bay Shore, New York. She taught high school English for twelve years in New York and New Mexico before earning an MLS degree from Queens College, where she also works as an adjunct instructor. She is the president of the Suffolk School Library Media Association. In 2013 she was awarded the Frances Henne Award and named an ALA Emerging Leader. Amy Jo was also named T.H.E. Journal Innovator of the Month in April 2013. She recently had an article, “Poised to Partner: The 21st-Century School Librarian,” published in English Journal. Her website is at <www.bshcommoncore.wikispaces.com>.

Stephanie A. Thomas has been a school librarian for eleven years at both elementary and high school levels. She earned her MS in Information and Library Science from the University of Michigan and her MEd from Wilkes University. She has taught in Livonia Public Schools in Michigan and Parkrose Public Schools in Oregon. Stephanie is also an adjunct instructor in the curriculum and instruction and library media program at Portland State University. She is president-elect of the Oregon Association of School Libraries. She was named a 2013 ALA Emerging Leader and received the OASL Conference Grant Award in 2013. Visit her website at <https://sites.google.com/site/stephaniethomasvita/Home>.
But storytelling is more than just an instructional tool supporting the CCSS. It’s really the oldest tool in the teaching toolkit. An integral part of the human experience is using stories to make sense of our world.

Storytelling Your Way into the Common Core and Beyond

Margaret Read MacDonald, Jennifer MacDonald Whitman, and Nathaniel Forrest Whitman
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One of a school librarian’s greatest delights can be the moment when you gather the children close, look directly into their eyes, and tell them a story. They lean toward you, taking in your every word. The group bonds, entering a moment of quiet intensity or playful joy as the story unfolds.

Recently, school librarians have said they miss the pleasure of sharing stories, but they don’t have time with so many standards to address. Well now you have the perfect reason to tell tales—they fulfill many of the Common Core State Standards objectives!

As we worked on Teaching with Story: Classroom Connections to Storytelling, we examined how storytelling links with Common Core State Standards. Speaking, listening, and writing standards link naturally to storytelling. Several standards apply specifically to storytelling and to folk literature. For example: RL 2.9, Compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story (e.g., Cinderella stories) by different authors or from different cultures; RL 3.2, Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures…; and RL 4.9, Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics…and patterns of events…in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2012a, 2012b, 2012c).

In school library settings, storytelling offers a pleasant pathway for exploring Common Core requirements. By listening to orally told stories and telling stories themselves, our students viscerally experience important elements of narrative such as story structure, characterization, and setting. They wrap their mouths around beautiful patterned language as they chime in on chants or retell stories themselves. Teaching with Story includes a chapter citing Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that can be linked instructionally to storytelling. Consult that chapter if you need to justify storytelling in your school library.
But storytelling is more than just an instructional tool supporting the CCSS. It’s really the oldest tool in the teaching toolkit. An integral part of the human experience is using stories to make sense of our world. Current brain research increasingly offers support for the notion that our brains are wired for story and that narrative is an extremely effective way to fix ideas in the mind. In other words, story is an essential tool for teaching anything.

Throughout the ages, stories have been used by parents and teachers to impart lessons that build character and set expectations for behavior. Teachers and librarians with whom we work find “first week of school” stories can set the tone for the coming year. Your telling a simple story whose main characters learn a lesson you want to emphasize helps the class get the point that cooperation, sharing, and kindness are qualities your community will value. As the year progresses, refer back to stories of the lazy koala or the kind chipmunk, now a common reference point for your students. By listening to tales, children share an adventure, and they emerge from each storytelling experience a more closely knit group. In the school library setting, a told story allows you to quickly create a sense of community with your classes.

Bringing storytelling into the school library has many other benefits. In Teaching with Story we explore what we call the “7 C’s of Storytelling in the Classroom”: Community, Character, Communication, Curriculum, Cultural Connections, Creativity, and Confidence. We also include twenty of our favorite folktales that are easy to learn and particularly fun to tell.

GRANDFATHER BEAR IS HUNGRY:  
A Folktale from the Even People of Siberia

Grandfather Bear woke up. It was spring!  
“I am SO hungry!” said Grandfather Bear. “I am SO hungry!”

Grandfather Bear looked for berries.  
He looked and looked.

“NO BERRIES! Too early in the spring.”

“I am SO hungry!” said Grandfather Bear. “I am SO hungry!”

Grandfather Bear went to the river to find fish.  
He looked and looked. “NO FISH! Too early in the spring.”

“I am SO hungry!” said Grandfather Bear. “I am SO hungry!”

Grandfather Bear went to find bugs in the old log.  
Grandfather Bear began to shake that log.

That was the home of Little Chipmunk!

“Grandfather Bear! Grandfather Bear! What are you DOING!”

“I am SO hungry!” said Grandfather Bear. “I am SO hungry!”

“Grandfather Bear, don’t shake my house! I have food. I will SHARE with you.”

Chipmunk ran down in his hole. He filled his cheeks with nuts.  
He ran back to the top. “Here Grandfather Bear!”

“Thank you Little Chipmunk. But I am STILL hungry!”

“Wait, Grandfather Bear.”

Chipmunk ran down. He filled his cheeks and ran up again.  
“Here Grandfather Bear!”

“Thank you Little Chipmunk. But I am STILL hungry!”

“Wait, Grandfather Bear.” All day Chipmunk ran.  
Down and up. Down and up. Down and up.

At last Grandfather Bear was FULL.

“Thank you Little Chipmunk! I want to give you a reward.  
Stand very still.”

Grandfather Bear pulled his heavy claws SO gently...right down Chipmunk’s back.  
He left five black stripes!

“Now when anyone sees your stripes they will remember that you were kind and shared with Grandfather Bear.”
Story is an essential tool for teaching anything.

Grandfather Bear Is Hungry is one of our favorite short tales to get you started right now. The simplified language in this version of the story makes it useful for work in ESL settings, and it is a fun story to act out with your students. We hope you’ll give it a try and that you will continue to look for ways to bring the magic of storytelling back into the school library, all while supporting the CCSS!

You can easily see how sharing a story like Grandfather Bear Is Hungry, can not only be used effectively in the curriculum to meet the Common Core State Standards but also to transform a classroom by building community, reinforcing character traits, enhancing confidence, extending creativity, improving communications, and connecting with other cultures. It is hard to imagine another teaching tool that can have so much positive impact on a child’s learning. So why not select a story today and share it with a classroom full of expectant faces? It will not only expand their experience beyond the boundaries of the classroom, it will also brighten your day.

Works Cited:


Margaret Read MacDonald is author of over sixty books on folklore and storytelling topics, including Fat Cat (August House 2001), Mabela the Clever (Whitman 2001), Give Up Gecko (Amazon 2013), and The Storyteller’s Start-up Book (August House 1993).

Jen and Nat Whitman are educators and storytellers. They work at the International School of Bangkok, where Jen teaches kindergarten and Nat is the elementary school librarian. The three have combined their experiences with storytelling in schools to create Teaching with Story: Classroom Connections to Storytelling (August House 2013).