

## STANDARDS COLUMN

# Working with Administrators Towards Effective Evaluations & Meaningful Goals

Do you ever wonder whether your administrator truly understands your role as a school librarian?

Whether you serve elementary, middle school, or high school learners—or rotate across multiple buildings—the reality is often the same: school librarians play one of the most essential, yet frequently misunderstood, roles in education.

But what can we do about that?

If administrators lack a complete understanding of our work, it becomes difficult for them to evaluate us fairly or support us in setting meaningful professional goals. Fortunately, the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* provides a framework we can use to advocate for our roles, communicate our impact, and build strong, collaborative relationships with school leaders.

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## Highlighting the Ten Components of Effective School Libraries

The *School Library Evaluation Rubric* featured in the second edition of the *National School Library Standards* (AASL 2026) was explicitly developed with administrators in mind. It identifies the ten core components of a high-functioning school library:

1. Instructional Responsibilities
2. Curriculum Alignment
3. Collection Development
4. Policy Development
5. Technology Integration
6. Advocacy for and Promotion of Resources and Services
7. Facilities and Learning Environment
8. Management of Personnel and Resources
9. Budget Development
10. Professional Development

In the book, these components are explored through three lenses:

- What does this activity look like to a building-level administrator?
- What happens behind the scenes in a school library to make this activity happen?
- What needs to happen at the district level to make this activity possible?

The components are also grounded in AASL's Common Beliefs, Shared Foundations, and five roles of the school librarian. Let's take a closer look at how this comes together in practice.

## Component Focus: Instructional Responsibilities

### TO A BUILDING-LEVEL ADMINISTRATOR:

Instruction varies depending on the grade level. When teaching information literacy skills at an elementary level, we might introduce young learners to the parts of a book or introduce basic research skills using the table of contents or index. In middle school, instruction shifts toward digital citizenship, helping learners navigate the online world safely and responsibly. High school librarians often guide learners in more complex research skills, such as avoiding misinformation, critical thinking, and even responsible AI use, preparing them for college or the workplace.



District leadership plays a crucial role in supporting equitable access to library instruction. If your district has a supervisor or coordinator for school libraries, schedule regular one-on-one check-ins and ideally, district-wide meetings with all school librarians.

### BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE LIBRARY:

While responsive library scheduling that allows school librarians to assist learners at their point of need is ideal, elementary librarians often find that fixed or hybrid schedules provide the consistency necessary to build strong relationships and support regular learner engagement with the school library. Yet, to make deeper connections for learners that align skill development with classroom content, elementary librarians may need to advocate for opportunities to collaborate and plan with classroom educators.

In middle schools and high schools, a responsive school library schedule is more common, allowing for the development of collaborative partnerships with other educators and the integration of library instruction with classroom content. However, the librarian may still need to advocate with administrators to ensure time to work directly with learners. Without regular access, it is challenging to build learners' research and information literacy skills. For high school learners, not having access to a certified school librarian will disadvantage them later when they move on to college or enter the workforce. Advocating for face time with our learners is essential.

### SUPPORT AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL:

District leadership plays a crucial role in supporting equitable access to library instruction. If your district has a supervisor or coordinator for school libraries, schedule regular one-on-one check-ins and ideally, district-wide meetings with all school librarians. Identify alignments with district-wide initiatives and develop a common language to use when working with administrators to advocate for the vital role of school libraries.

If you do not have a district-level school library leader, build relationships with curriculum directors or academic leads. Help them understand how strong school libraries support curriculum goals, student achievement, and college and career readiness. Create a strong instructional advocate at the district level.

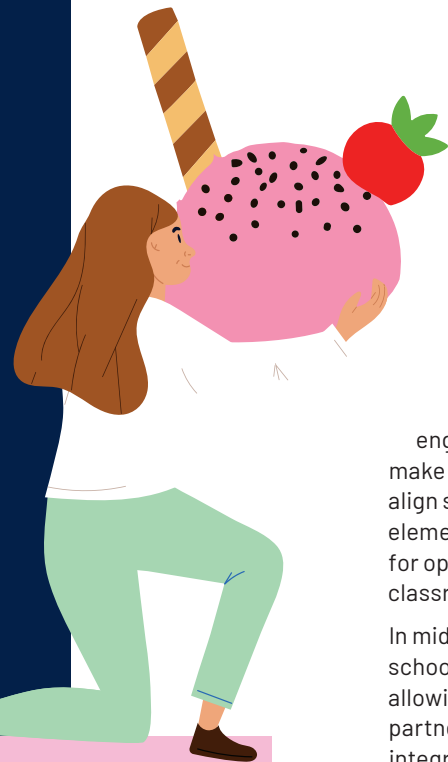
### Evaluating the School Librarian Through the Lens of Our Professional Roles

Chapter 10 in the second edition of the *National School Library Standards* highlights how school librarians can use their five professional roles—leader, instructional partner, information specialist, teacher, and program administrator—to guide performance evaluations. These roles align with Competencies in the AASL Standards and offer concrete ways to measure both professional growth and observational student impact.

### TO A BUILDING-LEVEL ADMINISTRATOR:

Many school librarians are evaluated using teacher evaluation rubrics. When preparing for evaluations, bring your administrator into your world: familiarize them with your varied roles and responsibilities, as well as your library's strategic plans and goals. Share strong lesson plans, explain how your roles align with learner Competencies, and invite them to observe active, inquiry-based learning. This approach showcases your strengths while creating opportunities to develop roles that promote personal growth and advocacy opportunities.

One way to do this is to collaborate with a new classroom teacher while highlighting two roles: *instructional partner* and *information specialist*. Through this collaboration, the administrator



learns about and may observe your co-planning and co-teaching, as well as your guidance in using new digital resources to integrate information literacy into unfamiliar curriculum. Also, when you integrate AASL Standards, both you and the teacher can clearly identify observable learner behaviors in the library, as well as the information literacy skills students should know and be able to demonstrate.

For example, at the elementary level, you might focus on the Shared Foundation Explore C.2., in which learners co-construct innovative means of investigation. Together with the teacher, you could design an academic research unit that includes research stations where pairs of learners answer an essential question through a structured note-taking process. Similarly, middle and high school learners may use a variety of resources for collaborative research. As part of the unit, you and the classroom teacher can develop an assignment rubric that measures students' works cited entries, including source types and proper formatting.

In this scenario, the administrator observes co-teaching in action, as well as engaged students accessing library collections, reading deeply to acquire new knowledge, and citing sources appropriately. You assess the works cited component, an artifact of the learning that can be shared with the administrator as evidence.

### BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE LIBRARY:

When preparing for a formal teacher evaluation, reflect on your strengths and areas for growth in order to create a S.M.A.R.T. goal. Consider what measurable evidence you will collect, and what activities will allow you to observe that evidence, and how learners will engage with the library. Then identify the role or roles you will emphasize.

Building on the earlier example, meet with the classroom educator well in advance of the academic unit. If you work on a fixed schedule, meet with the relevant educators to explain that you will incorporate their content into your observation. Discuss the academic learning objectives, along with the associated AASL Standard and Key Commitment, and include these in your lesson or unit plans. This demonstrates your role as an *instructional partner*, while your selection of resources highlights your expertise as an *information specialist*.

After developing the unit plan together, review your teacher evaluation rubric to determine which criteria will be used in your evaluation. Map out lessons that build toward the formal observation and create a student learning rubric to collect measurable evidence. Once completed, share your plan with grade-level or content-area teams for feedback. When possible, invite the collaborating educator to participate in pre- and post-observation meetings with the administrator. You might also invite the administrator to attend team meetings. This level of collaboration reinforces your role as a *teacher* and *instructional leader*.

### SUPPORT AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL:

Seek opportunities to participate in curriculum mapping, instructional design teams, or professional learning initiatives. These activities highlight your role as a *leader*, foster collaboration, and position you as a valuable *instructional partner*. Offer to facilitate district-wide instructional technology workshops where you can demonstrate your expertise and showcase your role as an *information specialist*.

Additionally, consider collaborating with your district's teacher evaluation team to better align evaluation rubrics with the roles and responsibilities of school librarians. Sharing circulation stats, co-teaching logs, library event highlights, and professional learning evidence with school and district leadership demonstrates your *program management* skills and underscores the impact that high-performing, certified school librarians have on both academic achievement and extracurricular engagement.

## Goal Setting for the School Library and the School Librarian

Goal setting is a powerful advocacy tool. As school librarians, our goals should reflect not only our personal professional growth but also the broader development of the school library. These two areas—individual practice and program development—may intersect but deserve separate attention.

### USE THE STANDARDS TO SET MEANINGFUL GOALS

In Chapter 11 of the second edition, goal setting is supported through:

- A S.W.O.T. analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
- Evaluation using the Shared Foundations and their Key Commitments
- Development of S.M.A.R.T. Goals



After completing the S.W.O.T. analysis and examining the school library through the Shared Foundations, we might identify, for example, two potential goals related to Explore:

1. Overhaul the school library's website to include interactive tools for readers' advisory and homework help.
2. Expand the number of design challenges offered in the school library.

Both goals focus on one of the ten components of an effective school library and support growth in your program, rather than your professional role, and both are measurable and meaningful.

For your performance evaluation, pair these library goals with learner-focused goals grounded in the AASL Standards. Measurable performance tasks created for formative and summative learner assessments can often be remodeled as goals for school librarian performance evaluation. Choosing a Competency to define what learners should know, be able to do, and exhibit for an assessment helps identify measurements, artifacts, and learning behaviors for evidence and observation. Continuing with the Explore Shared Foundation, consider this example performance goal:

*By May 2026, 80% of 7th-grade students will independently use and cite a variety of print and digital resources in their Harlem Renaissance Artist Exhibition projects.*

This S.M.A.R.T. goal demonstrates an impact on student learning and aligns with the school librarian's role as *teacher* in support of the Explore Shared Foundation. Chapter 10 in the standards book describes the significance of completing a self-assessment to determine the role(s) for which you would like to demonstrate professional growth. Use the *School Librarian Evaluation Rubric* (AASL 2026, Table 10.4) to map your goals to school librarian roles and criteria.

## Gaining Confidence Through Evaluation

When used intentionally, evaluation becomes more than a compliance task—it becomes a platform for advocacy, reflection, and growth. By aligning our goals and evidence with the *National School Library Standards* and communicating our work and impact, we strengthen our credibility with administrators and demonstrate the full value of school libraries. This leads not only to more effective evaluations but also to greater professional respect, stronger partnerships, and increased opportunities for leadership.

## WORKS CITED

American Association of School Librarians (AASL). 2026. *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, 2nd Ed. American Library Association.

