

Testimony by the New Jersey Association of School Librarians  
Presented to the  
New Jersey State Board of Education  
February 17, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Nina Kempf and I am the Chairperson of the Standards Committee for the New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL). On behalf of the officers and members of NJASL, I want to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts.

NJASL advocates high standards for librarianship and library media programs in the public, private and parochial schools in New Jersey to ensure that students and staff become effective users of information. School librarians and language arts teachers share a strong common interest in making sure that students learn the reading and communication skills as well as the information literacy skills that they need to become life-long, independent learners.

As we reviewed the draft Common Core Standards for English Language Arts we were pleased that they show many direct correlations to other well researched national standards including those from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, the National Educational Technology Standards developed by the International Society for Technology in Education, the Standards for the 21st Century Learner developed by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) as well as New Jersey's content standards.

The Common Core Standards for English Language Arts state that, "The Student Practices in Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening undergird and help unify the rest of the standards document." We applaud this strong foundation for the development of individual standards statements in English Language Arts. AASL's Standards outline similar life-long learning skills as cornerstones for success in school and in life. These standards are built upon the following common beliefs.

- Reading is a window to the world.
- Inquiry provides a framework for learning.
- Ethical behavior in the use of information must be taught.
- Technology skills are crucial for future employment needs.
- Equitable access is a key component for education.

Two examples of practices outlined in the draft anticipate that students who are college and career ready demonstrate independence as readers, writers, speakers, and listeners and the ability to use technology strategically and capably. School library media specialists are uniquely prepared to assist students and scaffold their learning as they gain independence in applying these skills.

The standards for Reading Informational and Literary Texts on page 1-B of the draft are addressed daily by school librarians as they work with formal classes of students or with individual students. The dispositions, responsibilities, and self-assessment strategies outlined in the AASL Standards can be used as a guide by both school librarians and classroom teachers to help students master the core reading, writing, research, and media skills. As students work to create new understandings and communicate new knowledge and solutions, school librarians teach them to efficiently locate relevant information, to analyze the credibility of print and online sources, to organize information effectively for analysis, and to present their information to others using a variety of traditional and current technological media. As leaders in the integration of technology in education, school librarians instruct students and school staff in the use of technology for information retrieval as well as organization, knowledge creation, and communication. No other school staff possess the unique education and level of expertise to provide the assistance students need to master the core research and media skills outlined in the draft standards.

School library collections are professionally selected by school librarians to support the implementation of standards such as the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts, along with the other national standards I have mentioned, as well as the school district's curriculum at all grade levels. These collections include a variety of materials to insure that students have access to high quality materials that reflect diverse viewpoints, as well as the most authoritative information available. Working together, school librarians and classroom teachers will be able to help students master these standards.

Finally, the New Jersey Association of School Librarians is ready willing and able to assist the Department of Education in the development of guidelines for students and teachers to use the dispositions, responsibilities and self evaluations contained in the AASL Standards to develop the higher-order thinking skills included in the Core Language Arts Standards and in the articulation of the standards for grades K-12 to ensure that they are developmentally appropriate.

The AASL standards can be reviewed at:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/learningstandards/standards.cfm>