



INSPIRING EXCELLENCE
IN LIBRARIANSHIP
IN LEARNING

**Testimony to the New Jersey State Board of Education
Presented by Ewa Dziedzic-Elliott, NJASL President
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Hello members of the New Jersey State Board of Education. My name is Ewa Dziedzic-Elliott, the President of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians currently working as the Education Librarian at The College of New Jersey and formerly a School Library Media Specialist.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the proposed revisions to the English Language Arts New Jersey Student Learning Standard. I sincerely appreciate the partnership of the Department of Education in developing and revising standards that will provide a foundation for students to develop an interest in lifelong learning and critical thinking skills. The New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) is also looking forward to the opportunity to work with DOE to infuse information literacy as appropriate within ELA standards. I am proposing a few considerations to the standard revisions related to the work of school library media specialists (SLMS). In the interest of time, I have outlined them in detail below for your review, but would briefly like to address them and their importance to the work that school library media specialists do with students and teachers.

First, thank you for condensing ELA to four domains: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and Language (page 10 of [technical document](#)). The straightforward approach with the four domains will make for an easy integration of information literacy within ELA standards. Additionally, students will have a simpler pathway to meeting the ELA requirements and educators will be better prepared to incorporate and implement information literacy standards.

Thank you also for the vision statement for the ELA Standards (p. 11):

“An New Jersey education in English Language Arts builds readers, writers, and communicators prepared to meet the demands of college and career and to engage as productive global citizens.”

According to [UNICEF](#), a global citizen is a person who understands interconnectedness, values and respects diversity, takes action in meaningful ways, and has the ability to challenge injustice. The term “global citizen” is meant to unite students, not divide them which would help students to develop a broader understanding of the world.

The concept of global citizen is embedded as part of the vision of NJASL that all NJ students are empowered to achieve success through inquiry-based, collaborative school library programs. The role of SLMSs is to lay a foundation of wonder, questioning, exploration, and discovery with students where they can not only recognize their place in the world, but how they can impact it. Both fiction and informational texts are selected, vetted and curated for students providing them with an opportunity to critically engage with resources. This brings me to my first

two “asks”: clearly define informational text to ensure a standardized definition for all districts, and add the words “with opportunities” to the statement about reading voluntarily for pleasure. For what is the use of resources without opportunities to use and read them?

The vision statement also includes the language that students will “evaluate the reliability, credibility, and perspective of authors and speakers across all forms of media” (p. 11). Thank you for recognizing this critical aspect of working with information. This ties in directly to the information literacy standard and is a key component of the instruction provided by SLMSs: verifying information by determining original sources and citing the source of their information. This is the third ‘Ask’ - add the words “citing sources for claims” in the **Valuing Evidence in Argumentation** practice. Citing sources lends credibility to arguments.

A few years ago a group of New Jersey school librarians and academic researchers conducted a study that focused on college readiness, myself included. The survey-based research project directed by Dr. Joyce Valenza from Rutgers University explored whether first-year college students who have had previous interactions with library instruction, services, and resources at the high school level feel better prepared to undertake information literacy challenges and are better equipped to adapt to the rigors of academic research. In this collaborative project, academic librarians across six colleges in New Jersey surveyed first-year students regarding their research preparation and their experiences in high school and in their first year of college. Additionally, the team surveyed a group of vetted, certified high school librarians in New Jersey regarding their resources and instructional practices and followed members of their senior class to college. Based on student survey responses we found that students with prior high school research experiences, especially those followed from schools identified as having certified librarians, felt more prepared for academic research at a higher level relating to their understanding and use of research tools and strategies.

Additionally, SLMSs provide support for teachers assisting them with recommendations for the most current and relevant texts, databases - print, digital, and multimedia, that have been reviewed and vetted by SLMSs. Reviewing, vetting and curating resources is a critical task that SLMSs across the state provide for their students and teaching colleagues.

The recommendations from NJASL are listed below with supporting documentation.

ASKS

1. Include a Definition of informational text

Rationale: Providing a definition of informational text would ensure a standardized interpretation of informational text for all school districts.

Informational texts rely primarily on exposition rather than narration. Informational texts describe, explain, and inform the reader. Informational texts, particularly documents, encyclopedia entries, reference books, technical guides, scientific journal articles, reports, and question-and-answer text, use exposition. Unlike narrative forms, which are primarily linear (i.e., there is a beginning, a middle, and an end to the story), informational texts are nonlinear.

Instead, their major point of organization centers on a process or phenomenon. Informational texts that use an expository form are characterized by elements that can challenge a reader's comprehension.

International Literacy Association:

<https://www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/bonus-materials/9415-chapter-4.pdf>

Informational text employs a variety of structures to assist the reader in finding information quickly and efficiently. These might include a table of contents, an index, bold or italicized text, glossaries for specialized vocabulary, embedded definitions for specialized vocabulary, realistic illustrations of photos, captions and other labels, and graphs and charts.

University of Maine:

<https://umaine.edu/edhd/research-outreach/lifespan-literacy-community/programs/correll-book-award/what-is-informational-text/>

2. Under Vision add the terms “with opportunities” Page 11
 - **Learn to persist in reading complex texts, establishing lifelong habits with opportunities to read voluntarily for pleasure, for further education, for information on public policy, and for advancement in the workplace.**

Rationale: In [Becoming a Reader](#), an international study of avid readers indicated both fostering access, students' access to book recommendations, and support for book choice were important for students to develop lifelong reading habits.

“Librarians and teachers featured strongly in this context as key social influences that extended their role to connect respondents with books and genres that these readers subsequently enjoyed”.

It is important to provide opportunities as well as resources for students to voluntarily read for pleasure, for further education, for information on public policy and for advancement in the workplace.

3. Under Practices add the terms as listed below (page 12)
 - **Valuing Evidence in Argumentation: Constructing viable claims and evaluating, defending, challenging, qualifying the arguments of others and citing sources for claims.**

Rationale: As stated by [Ohio State Press Books](#), citing sources in an argument lends credibility and authority to an argument and places information within an academic context.

4. Addition of Sourcing as listed in Standard 9.4

As “sources,” “evidence,” and “resources” are regularly cited in English Language Arts anchor standards and progress indicators there should be similar clarification as listed in Standard 9.4 (listed below).

Rationale: This would provide consistency between the standards.

[Standard 9.4 \(page 18\)](#)

Sourcing

Throughout 2020 NJSLS-CLKS 9.4 Life Literacies and Key Skills, the core ideas and performance expectations contain terms “sources,” “evidence,” and “resources.” Indeed, as students develop necessary skills and strategies to evaluate sources and recognize bias, these references should invoke the engagement of a certified school library media specialist to not only select and curate appropriate sources but also to provide professional development to fellow educators in this area.

On behalf of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians, I appreciate the opportunity to present this testimony. If you would like to discuss our recommendations, please contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

Ewa Dziedzic-Elliott

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