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AASL

The Instructional Role of the School Librarian

POSITION:
The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) supports the position that "school librarians are instructors as well as collaborators with fellow educators" (AASL 2018, 223). Additionally, AASL believes that school librarians play a prominent role in instructing learners, faculty, and administrators through literacies, including print, textual, visual, information, media, news, and digital literacies (AASL 2018).

As information specialists and instructional leaders of both learners and fellow educators, school librarians are uniquely positioned to teach every student and the school community through traditional, blended, and distance learning (AASL 2018).

The role of instruction by the school librarian centers around the six Shared Foundations: Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage.

Inquire:
The school librarian collaboratively plans and teaches engaging inquiry-based learning experiences designed to encourage learners to think critically, identify problems, and develop strategies for solving problems (AASL 2018, 47). School librarians:

- Devise and implement teaching and learning to fill knowledge gaps.
- Encourage learners to display initiative and curiosity when formulating questions and seeking knowledge to create and share products that illustrate learning.
- Guide learners to develop the tools and skills needed to support an inquiry process.

Include:
School librarians demonstrate a commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity by establishing opportunities for learners to broaden their awareness of the global learning community (AASL 2018, 48 and 76). School librarians:

- Design inclusive instruction for learners and school communities respective of all diverse developmental, cultural, social, and language needs.
- Create an atmosphere of respect by modeling empathy and equity in interactions with all learners as part of the global learning community.
- Collaboratively plan and implement engaging lessons that provide learners opportunities to expand awareness of the global community.

Collaborate:
The school librarian is an instructional partner who creates a culture of collaboration and facilitates the learning of strategies necessary to work effectively with others to increase academic achievement, broaden perspectives, and work toward common goals. School librarians:

- Collaborate, co-teach, and co-evaluate the planning and implementation of learning opportunities and assessment strategies.

- Collaborate to promote, model, and embed print, textual, visual, information, media, news, and digital literacy practices that deepen learning.
- Foster learners' abilities to "work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals" (AASL 2018).
- Empower learners to work together to constructively assess their own work and that of their peers (AASL n.d.a).

Curate:
School librarians curate a wealth of resources that complement the curriculum and learners' interests. They instruct and model curation techniques for the school community. School librarians:

- Curate quality, diverse, inclusive, and relevant resources that support the school mission, curriculum, and learners' interests.
- Instruct the learning community to select, organize, and share resources relevant to their information needs and personal interests (AASL 2018, 99).
- Empower independent learners to make meaning for themselves through instruction in collecting, organizing, and sharing information.

Explore:
School librarians promote a growth mindset in all learners by providing opportunities for exploration and encouraging continuous reflective thinking through instruction. School librarians:

- Guide learners to view and practice learning as an iterative endeavor through which learners build stamina and reflect on their learning and inquiry process.
- Cultivate exploration, discovery, creation, and innovation in a growth mindset.
- Support learners' success by guiding them to read for understanding, breadth, and pleasure (AASL 2018, 104).

Engage:
School librarians promote learners' engagement and empowerment by modeling and explicitly teaching information and resource use. School librarians:

- Develop and maintain a teaching and learning environment that is fun, inviting, safe, flexible, collaborative, inclusive, and conducive to learning (AASL n.d.b).
- Engage with learners to teach, model, and champion digital citizenship and safety.
- Provide instruction and modeling in adherence to copyright and fair use requirements.
- Teach all members of the learning community to engage with, use, and create information in a global society.
- Champion equity, access, and intellectual freedom for users including providing anytime, anywhere access to the online library catalog, digital and audio books, various information resources, devices, and tools at the point of need (AASL 2018, 111).

Background:

The AASL Instructional Role of the School Librarian Task Force was asked to review the statement previously adopted and/or revised by the board titled "Instructional Role of the School Librarian" (revised 6/25/16). The task force considered and employed language from the AASL *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* (2018) in developing a comprehensive

position statement that supports school librarians in achieving a fully collaborative and integrated school library philosophy in which they serve as instructional leaders in teaching and learning for their school communities. The school librarian provides a vital instructional role in the ever-changing information and education landscape.

Definitions:

Blended learning: education in which students learn via electronic and online media as well as traditional face-to-face teaching.

Collaboration: school librarians working with educators and/or administrators to provide instruction.

Deeper learning: the process of learning skills and ideas that can translate to deeper understanding.

Digital citizenship: the quality of habits, actions, and consumption patterns that impact the ecology of digital content and communities (Heick 2018).

Digital literacy: the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills (ALA's Literacy Clearinghouse n.d.).

Distance learning: students learning without needing to be physically present in a school building or library.

Global community: the idea of being closely connected to communities around the world via the Internet.

Growth mindset: the belief that ability and knowledge can be deepened through the willingness to learn and grow.

Inclusive: including all learners and educators.

Information literacy: a set of abilities requiring individuals to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" (ALA 2019).

Inquiry-based learning: student-centered approach to learning where the learner is engaged in asking questions and finding answers.

Intellectual freedom: the right to seek and receive information without restriction.

Learning community: learners, staff, administrators, parents, and community members who share common academic goals and meet to improve instruction and academic achievement for all learners.

Learning environment: physical and virtual locations where learning takes place

Literacies: competence or knowledge in a specific area.

Literacy: the ability to read and write.

Media literacy: the ability to identify different types of media and understand the messages they're sending (Common Sense Media n.d.).

References:

ALA's Literacy Clearinghouse. n.d. "Digital Literacy." <https://literacy.ala.org/digital-literacy/> (accessed June 19, 2020).

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American Association of School Librarians. n.d.a. "School Librarian Job Description." <https://standards.aasl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SL-Interview-Matrix.pdf> (accessed June 9, 2020).

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Heick, Terry. 2018. "The Definition of Digital Citizenship." TeachThought. https://www.teachthought.com/the-future-of-learning/the-definition-of-digital-citzenship/ (accessed June 19, 2020).

Recommended Reading:

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Deskins, Liz. 2019. *Content-Area Collaborations for Secondary Grades*. Chicago: ALA.

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Moreillon, Judi. 2018. *Maximizing School Librarian Leadership: Building Connections for Learning and Advocacy*. Chicago: ALA.

Schlosser, Maureen, and Rebecca Granatinti. 2019. *Lessons Inspired by Picture Books for Primary Grades*. Chicago: ALA.

Weisburg, Hilda. 2017. *Leading for School Librarians There Is No Other Option*. Chicago. ALA.

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