

Creating the Link: Aligning National and State Standards

by

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Media specialists have always had student learning at the forefront of what we do, seeking ways to embed critical information skills in the curriculum of their schools. With the introduction of Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning, media specialists are given a tool for making critical connections with classroom teachers. Comprising a significant portion of *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*, the guidelines signify the importance of information literacy to our evolving instructional and leadership roles. They provide a clear, clearly articulated definition of information literacy, a rationale for an integrated and collaborative approach to its instruction, and a vehicle for connecting with all areas of the curriculum, including those not traditionally thought of as users of media centers and information resources.

Standards are nothing new--good teachers have always known what they want their student to learn--but standards have received renewed interest in recent years as states are implementing benchmarks, graduation standards, and assessments. The national information literacy guidelines offer an opportunity for media specialists to align their standards to state and content area standards. Busy classroom teachers concerned with implementing their own content area standards will be most receptive of the information literacy guidelines when media specialists show how information literacy can help students achieve success in content areas, weaving information literacy into existing and developing curriculum at the local level. Collaboration, technology, and leadership as described in *Information Power* are critical to making this happen.

Familiarity with state standards, benchmarks or other initiatives is critical to the process. Involvement on curriculum committees is not new, but it is of greater importance in an era of assessment and accountability. Media specialists will want to become even more involved and seek opportunities for furthering their knowledge of standards by participating in training and staff development opportunities and working with local educators who are implementing standards and developing assessments.

Currently almost 40 states have technology standards and several provide specific curriculum and matrices for information literacy. Other state standards include information literacy within the curriculum framework of specific content areas. Visit the Putnam Valley School Web site, *Developing Educational Standards* < <http://www.putwest.boces.org/standards.html> > for a complete list of state standards. One outstanding example of an information literacy specific state curriculum is Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Information & Technology Literacy (Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Information & Technology Literacy, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Madison, Wisconsin, 1998) a detailed guide with grade level benchmarks. The Georgia Department of Education Web site < <http://admin.doe.k12.ga.us/gadoe/qcc.nsf/MainNav?OpenNavigator> > embeds specific objectives in the language arts Quality Core Curriculum for students in grades 9-12: Examples include:

* Reads critically, asks pertinent questions, recognizes assumptions and implications, and evaluates ideas.

- * Uses research process: selecting topic, formulating questions, identifying key words, choosing sources, skimming, paraphrasing, note-taking, organizing, summarizing, and presenting.
- * Uses appropriate criteria to evaluate the messages and effects of mass media.
- * Uses a variety of print and non-print resources as parts of the study of literature.

Minnesota's Graduation standards do not specifically address information literacy, but it is an underlying theme in all ten standards. The accompanying Profile of Learning, a series of teaching and learning activities designed to assess student achievement is very dependent on both the use of information and on independent learning. The inquiry standard has a research component which requires students to access information; the managing resources standard states:

A student shall use appropriate technology to access, evaluate, and organize information and to produce products by:

- * (1) gathering and evaluating information from electronic sources
- * (2) applying appropriate technology processes to an identified need or problem
- * (3) producing products and selecting language, format, and graphics appropriate for purpose and audience by using word processing, graphics, multimedia, spreadsheets and databases; and
- * (4) maintaining, using, or creating a technological system

Media specialists recognize the language as nothing new, but know that as a standard the language has more meaning than it did as a past media outcome curriculum. Indeed, the standards present "challenges and opportunities and for school library media programs to have an integral part in student learning at all levels. Through the curriculum planning process, library media specialists can help teachers embed information literacy indicators in performance packages and facilitate student learning." (Minnesota Educational Media Organization, "National Standards for Information Literacy and Student Learning and Minnesota Graduation Standards", 1998)

At Winona Middle School we are weaving some of the information literacy guidelines into schoolwide delivery of the Managing resources standard. All students in grades 6-8 will complete a series of 7 tasks designed to meet the standard < [Capstone Project](http://wms.luminet.net/wmstechnology/capstone/capstone_project.html), http://wms.luminet.net/wmstechnology/capstone/capstone_project.html > Their final project will be a multimedia portfolio showcasing their work. The project is cross curricular, involving language arts, social studies, industrial technology, and science. As the school media specialist I am involved in co-designing the lessons, implementing staff development, and coordinating much of the standard implementation. Through much of the curriculum development process the information literacy guidelines and key indicators were explored; in some instances teachers used direct statements from the guidelines as they wrote curriculum. Still yet at the beginning stages of standards implementation, it is evident that teachers are taking the managing resources standard and the information process seriously.

The inherent nature of information literacy in other standards allows other opportunities to hone in on information literacy instruction. Research, ethics, and resource selection and evaluation are among the literacy components embedded in a decision making standard asking students to analyze a current issue. A research process is used in science; social responsibility is taught as students use the school's network. Information access comprises a portion of a health standard on personal physical fitness; collaborative group skills are part of multiple standards and art students use information creatively as they study local architecture and create digital self portraits. Students completing a careers standards reach out to the learning community as they interview and shadow adults. The standards build on good things already happening; as teachers realize the need for students to succeed they see the connections between their

standard and our standard; It is up to us to help teachers see the connections and the importance of information literacy. A teacher noted "the kids truly need this, this makes so much sense."

To help media specialists align the National Information Literacy Guidelines with the Minnesota State Graduation Standards, the Minnesota Information Power implementation team developed a tool to help media specialists articulate the standards. Only two pages in length and highly visual, it is a tool for mediaspecialists to share with administrators and teachers, showing them how we can help them and their students succeed. The document also includes pertinent research from "The Impact of School Library Media Centers on Academic Achievement" (Lance, Welborn and Hamilton-Pennell). A portion of the document is included with this article and media specialists are encouraged to adopt it for their own use. If the task of aligning state or even local curriculum with the national guidelines is overwhelming, begin with just one or two standards and see what you can do to show alignment. In doing so you will create an instrument concisely depicting the connections.

The concise, specific nature of the national standards and the content area examples, make them well suited for sharing. They are a hook, but how good of a hook they are depends on how prepared media specialist is to reach out and make the connections. Promoting information literacy may be a lonely job but unless media specialists are information literacy champions it may be difficult for students to obtain critical skills. Who else can make it happen?

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