A Matrix for School Librarians: Aligning Standards, Inquiry, Reading, and Instruction

by JUDI MOREILLON

WHEN NEW INITIATIVES such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (http://corestandards.org) are being launched, it is imperative that school librarians get “out in front” as part of the decision-making team. Aligning library work with classroom teachers’ requirements is essential to ensuring that the expertise of the school librarian and the resources of the school library are integrated into the classroom curriculum. With the proliferation of standards, it is also important for school librarians to continue to focus on library values and responsibilities that help optimize students’ learning experiences in the 21st Century.

STUDENT LEARNING

Within CCSS there is an emphasis on the inquiry learning process and reading comprehension, both of which are integral to the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards for the 21st-Century Learner (2007). The alignment matrix (see pages 30-31) provides school library professionals with a framework for the CCSS and AASL standards, the inquiry process, and reading comprehension strategy instruction, along with sample applications to support student learning.

It is important to start with standards when coplanning a lesson or unit of study with classroom teachers and specialists. Effective instructional design begins with determining student learning outcomes (Wiggins and McTighe 2005). “Backward planning” requires that educators first determine learning objectives based on curriculum standards and on pretests, student inventories and reporting, teacher observation, standardized test results, or other data. Before educators can develop the learning tasks and the criteria on which student work will be assessed, they must have the end in mind. In addition, the backward design framework is ideal for gathering evidence to document the impact of classroom-library collaborative instruction on student learning.

SETTING OBJECTIVES AND PROVIDING FEEDBACK

Results of a 2010 McREL study showed that setting objectives and providing feedback had a positive effect on student achievement on standardized tests—percentile gains of 12 points for setting objectives and 28 points for providing feedback (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, and Stone 2012, 3-4). Setting objectives for learning is important because they serve as guideposts for students. Objectives help students determine how to focus their attention so that they meet expectations for the learning event. Learners also use objectives as they self-assess their process as well as final products (self-assessment is a strand in the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner). Objectives guide the work of educators as well. By referring back to the objectives throughout the planning and implementation stages, educators can evaluate whether or not their input, presentation, and modeling and the students’ learning tasks are aligned in order for students to achieve the desired outcomes; they can adjust their teaching accordingly.

Objectives are also important in determining the kinds of feedback students need during guided and independent practice. As students and educators monitor the learning process, they refer back to the lesson objectives to identify gaps in understanding, assess comprehension of the tasks at hand, and determine progress toward reaching outcomes. When learners require support in any of these areas, educators can provide targeted feedback and interventions throughout the process. Objectives are the common language shared by learners and educators that make instruction comprehensible.

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### A MATRIX FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIANS: Aligning Standards, Inquiry, Reading, and Instruction

This matrix is a reference guide that can be useful to school librarians when co-planning with colleagues. It serves to put the pieces of the puzzle together to align library programs with standards initiatives (CCSS and AASL), the inquiry process, reading comprehension strategies, and applications that guide teaching and learning in schools. The matrix is based on the CCSS for English Language Arts and the AASL Standards for Learning, Teaching, and Using Information. The table provides a matrix of potential strategies, applications, and learning outcomes that can be integrated into the classroom or library setting.

#### CCSS and AASL Standards Indicators

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<th>Learning Applications</th>
<th>Inquiry Process</th>
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<td><strong>Constructivist Approach: Building on Learner’s Background Knowledge</strong></td>
<td><strong>Using Brainstorms, K-W-Ls, Mind Maps, Webs, Discussions, Journaling, Sketching, and Prior Knowledge to Activate Prior Knowledge</strong></td>
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#### Inquiry Process

1. Motivation—Lapping into what is personally-meaningful, relevant
2. Plan—Locating, evaluating, and using appropriate resources throughout the process
3. Construction of new knowledge—Providing a rationale for drawing conclusions by demonstrating that the pattern of evidence leads to a decision or conclusion
4. Engagement—Collecting and responding to ideas and information
5. Synthesizing
6. Presenting

#### Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what is explicitly said
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas
3. Continue an inquiry-based research project, observing, planning, and taking a stance or position, refining
4. Display initiative and engagement by posing questions and investigating of superficial facts
5. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources as well as more sustained research projects, demonstrating the subject under investigation
9. Synthesize
10. Present

#### Reference

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| Key Ideas and Details: 2. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly; make logical inferences from it. | Read, view, and listen for information presented in any format (e.g., textual, visual, media, digital) in order to make inferences and gather meaning. (1.1.6) | Construction of new knowledge—Providing a rationale for drawing inferences | Drawing inferences | Taking a stance or position, refining a thesis statement, or hypothesis |
| Craft and Structure: 6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text. | Employ a critical stance in drawing conclusions by demonstrating that the pattern of evidence leads to a decision or conclusion. (2.2.3) | Construction of new knowledge—Demonstrating the ability to provide evidence from texts | Using fix-up options (make an inference) | Using graphic organizers that categorize information in terms of point of view, purpose, style, or bias |
| Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. | Make sense of information gathered from diverse sources by identifying misconceptions, main and supporting ideas, conflicting information, and point of view or bias. (1.1.7) | Construction of new knowledge—Demonstrating comprehension through negotiating conflicting information or bias | Using fix-up options (write about the confusing parts) | Recording and resolving discrepancies, conflicting information, tensions |
| Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. | Continue an inquiry-based research process by applying critical-thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation, organization) to information and knowledge in order to construct new understandings, draw conclusions, and create new knowledge. (2.1.1) | Construction of new knowledge—Developing a framework for expressing conclusions and new understandings | Synthesizing | Composing outlines, flow charts, storyboards, drafts, or using other strategies to demonstrate new understandings |
| Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: 5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations. | Use strategies to draw conclusions from information and apply knowledge to curricular areas, real world situations, and further investigations. (2.1.3) | Presentation—Demonstrating ability to integrate knowledge and apply it to answer inquiry questions | Synthesizing | Using multiple literacies to create and share final products that inform, persuade, or explain new understandings |
| Research to Build and Present Knowledge: 9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. | Reflect on systematic process, and assess for completeness of investigation. (2.4.2) | Reflection—Assessing the learning process and outcomes | Using fix-up options (define/refine the purpose for reading the text) | Using exit slips, oral or written reflections, and other self-assessment instruments to reflect on process and product |
| Production and Distribution of Writing: 6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others. | Use writing process, media and visual literacy, and technology skills to create products that express new understandings. (2.1.6) | Presentation—Demonstrating ability to integrate knowledge and apply it to answer inquiry questions | Synthesizing | Using multiple literacies to create and share final products that inform, persuade, or explain new understandings |

THE MATRIX: A FRAMEWORK FOR ALIGNMENT

The matrix (pages 30-31) first presents the CCSS College and Career Readiness Standards, which are identical across grade levels in the English Language Arts (ELA) standards. In schools across the nation, many educators are now required to cite the CCSS on their lesson plans. As of this writing, four states (Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia) have not adopted the ELA CCSS. However, these states have college and career readiness standards that are comparable to those set out by the CCSS (see Resources, pages 2 and 8, and online: http://www.schoollibrarymonthly.com/CCSSresources).

The AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner are the next part in the matrix. These are included to remind school librarians of a commitment to teaching the more in-depth standards indicators developed by the national association.

Inquiry concepts are the next part of the matrix. The inquiry process is a theme running throughout AASL’s standards indicators. Drs. Carol Kuhlthau and Barbara Stripling are two scholars who have authored books and articles to help school librarians implement inquiry learning. Inquiry may be a new concept to classroom teachers who may have had more experience with fact-finding research projects. Advocating for student-centered guided inquiry during collaborative planning is an essential role for school librarians.

A 2012 report by the ACT found that only 52% of high school graduates met the reading benchmark (http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/cccr12/readiness2.html). The matrix shows that while these processes use different terms, learners engage in compatible processes during these activities.

According to the International Reading Association, educators should “teach research-proven reading comprehension strategies using gradual release of responsibility approaches” and “guide students to apply strategies when reading particularly challenging texts” (2012, 2). Since classroom teachers may be more familiar with reading comprehension strategy terms, connecting those terms to inquiry concepts can support more effective co-teaching and learning success for students.

Finally, the matrix provides sample applications for implementing these standards and concepts in lessons and units of instruction. These applications come from research as well as practice and provide school librarians with possible strategies and types of graphic organizers to integrate into co-taught standards-based instruction.

REFERENCES: