SCHOOL LIBRARIANS SUPPORT THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

by

Kristen M. Bradley

An Abstract
of a research paper presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Library Science and Information Services
in the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development
University of Central Missouri

April, 2013
ABSTRACT

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The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were developed with the belief that students in the United States will be taught the same standards and held to the same expectations as students all across the globe. This paper explores how the school librarian effectively collaborates with classroom teachers, becomes a leader in the educational setting, and becomes the technology expert in schools. Peer reviewed literature determined that school librarians know and understand how to connect the Common Core State Standards to the 21st-Century Learning skills and have the capabilities to help students become self-directed learners.
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Students in the United States must be able to compete on an even playing field with students from other developed countries around the world in terms of academic achievement. Employers in the United States want a more educated workforce. In response, the Common Core State Standards were developed in 2010 by two powerful and influential organizations, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The Common Core State Standards include rigorous academic expectations in the K-12 education of students. One area of focus is on the expectation of high student achievement results in the area of critical thinking skills and in understanding complex text.

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) clarifies the association between high student achievement and the ability to think critically, possess higher order inquiry skills, reflect on learning and be socially aware. In the 2007 AASL Standards for the 21st Century Learner, school librarians set forth a solid foundation of standards for critical thinking skills and understanding complex text, which result in higher student achievement. At the grassroots level, school librarians are poised and ready to lead local schools and school districts in collaborating with teachers and administrators in implementing the CCSS throughout the curriculum. School librarians are poised and ready to teach students to become self-directed learners and apply higher order thinking skills (Loertscher and Marcoux 9).

Research supports the central role of school librarians as evolving from an “old stereotype of warehouse, book lover and teacher of library lessons” (Loertscher 52) to that of an equal educational leader and partner at the table with teachers. The adoption of the CCSS has given school librarians the opportunity to align those standards (CCSS) with the process of
inquiry based learning. Teaching teachers as well as teaching students how to become independent learners is an opportunity for school librarians that will benefit all learners. A recent survey showed that 99.4% of students believed that the school library and school librarian helped them achieve a higher level of learning both in and outside of school. (Jami Jones, et al. 15).

School librarians have the unique background and skills to make reading cross-curricular and to collaborate with the classroom teacher in doing so. The Common Core State Standards call for “reading” to be a balance between informational text and fiction. In making sure that the balance is achieved at every grade level, school librarians will be tasked with finding non-fiction resources such as books, digital media, and videos that embrace different perspectives, challenge the reader, provide evidence, include complex text, and are content driven. School librarians will be helping core content teachers develop projects that span multiple content areas.

Research supports the use of text complexity measures that school librarians understand and implement when choosing resources for students and teachers. Measures include quantitative, qualitative, and reader and task considerations. While experts do not agree on the reliability level of all of the different tools, they do agree that the task of measuring must be completed so that text complexity can be monitored and applied when choosing resources (Common Core State Standards Initiative Appendix A 5).

**Statement of the Problem**

Adoption of the Common Core State Standards has opened the door for many challenges for school districts and teachers along with many opportunities to improve student achievement. The CCSS present a clear set of expectations of learning that were created to help students in the
United States become college and career ready. But what the CCSS did not do was set forth expectations of teachers as to how they are to teach or what their instruction should look like. That poses a problem for many classroom teachers who are not prepared to understand the CCSS terminology, expectations, and outcomes. The Common Core State Standards contain information for classroom teachers that can seem overwhelming. The outcome of this research was to find ways for the school librarian to translate the terminology into practices that classroom teachers understand. School librarians are able to demonstrate to classroom teachers how to help students become life-long, self-directed learners by applying the critical thinking skills and inquiry based learning.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to define the role of the school librarian in light of the Common Core State Standards requirements that include reading and understanding complex text, making reading cross-curricular, collaborating with teachers to prepare students to be college and career ready, and providing the necessary technology training to classroom teachers. Literature was reviewed regarding the Common Core State Standards and how the librarian can be at the forefront of guiding and leading the classroom teachers as the CCSS are implemented into the curriculum. Results of this study reveal the importance of the school librarian in executing the Common Core State Standards and collaborating with classroom teachers in developing the teachers’ ability to teach students to be self-directed learners. The study provides a redefining of the school librarian as a leader within the school district and has provided a basis for school librarians to come to the “instructional table” as a productive partner.
Research Questions

The following research questions guided the research into how the school librarian, as a leader in the educational and technological, can support classroom teachers in implementing the Common Core State Standards.

1. What were the reasons that two major educational groups came together to create the Common Core State Standards?

2. Why are school librarians set to be leaders in the adoption of the Common Core State Standards?

3. What should the role of a school librarian be in unpacking and rolling out the Common Core State Standards?

Limitations of the Study

When thinking about the Common Core State Standards and all that it connects to, the topic can get very broad. A limitation to this study was deciding in which direction to go and what directly connects to study. This research paper was also limited by a designated time-frame which was allowed to collect research, read peer-reviewed journals, and document the findings on how librarians can support the Common Core State Standards. Another limitation to this study was a lack of recent peer-reviewed articles that discusses the Common Core State Standards and the connection between them and the library because the Common Core State Standards are still fairly new.
Definition of Terms

21st-century learner: Learners who engage in an education that introduces new technology, more rigorous class work, and fosters innovation and creativity.

AASL: American Association of School Librarians (www.ala.org/).

Anchor standards: Standards that define what students should be able to understand and do at the end of each grade. Anchor Standards include: key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, and range of reading and level of text complexity (Common Core State Standards Initiative: Standards for English language arts & literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects).

Book 2Cloud: A digital tool that lets readers interact with an e-book and think outside the written text. Books attract online groups whose members are invited to build on and create their own ideas about the text (Loertscher).

Collaborate: Teachers and librarians working together to achieve a common goal.

College and career readiness: College and career readiness refers to the content knowledge, skills, and habits that students must possess to be successful in postsecondary education or training that leads to a sustaining career (Hill, “Common Core”).

Common Core State Standards: A clear set of shared goals and expectations developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association to define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate from high school able to succeed in college courses and in the workforce.
Complex text: Text that is complicated, academic, implicit, figurative, or that may require specialized knowledge to understand (Hill, “Common Core”).

Complex literary text: Text that may include reference to other types of transcripts or records, may be rooted in cultural knowledge and include multiple perspectives (Hill, “Common Core”).

Core content areas: Language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO): A nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions.

Cross curricular: Curriculum that covers more than one academic subject and approaches topics from several perspectives and viewpoints, applying knowledge and experience from an individual standpoint.

Digital information age: A period in time in which the economy is based on the information computerization (Wikipedia).

Digital media: A form of electronic media in which data is stored digitally, as opposed to analog form (Wikipedia).

Digital text: An electronic version of written text.

Flesch-Kincaid Formula: “A way to measure and report the difficulty of the text a student is reading. The Flesch-Kincaid formula considers the average number of words per sentence (average sentence length, or ASL) and the average number of syllables per word (ASW) within a given passage in order to estimate the complexity of the text. The
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formula then converts that complexity level into a score that roughly equates with a grade level (K-12) in the United States” (Readability Formulas).

Flesch Reading Ease Formula: A standard readability formula that is used to assess the difficulty of a reading passage (Scott).

Google Docs: Online applications that allows you to create and work from any computer, allows other people to work on the same document at the same time from another computer, and save documents as online files that can be accessed from anywhere (Midler).

Guided inquiry: Teachers provide the students with a research question and allow them many opportunities to experiment, learn, and work until they have reached a conclusion or end result.

Information literacy: The ability to know when information is needed and to be able to use that information for the issue in question (Wikipedia).

Information literacy skills: Skills that allows one to search, find, and retrieve information from a variety of print and electronic sources (Wikipedia).

Informational text: Informational text informs the reader about the natural or social world. It is a type of non-fiction, but the two terms (non-fiction and informational text) are not to be used inter-changeably.

Inquiry: A request of information, research, and questioning (Merriam Webster).

Knowledge Building Center: A collaborative learning space where adults and students can work together to build their own personal learning environments (Midler).

Learning commons: A learning space, often created by a conversion of the library, that is both physical and virtual – allows the facilitation of learning to take place by various means.
Encourages the student to think critically and be active participants in research and the development of their knowledge (Midler).

Lexile: A scientific approach to reading level and text measurement, placing both readers and text on a common scale (How to use a Lexile Measure).

Library Media Center Tips (LMCTIPS): Guidelines for parents and students on how to use various databases and conduct research from home (Midler).

Media literacy: the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information in a variety of forms, including print and non-print messages (Wikipedia).

Narrative text: The telling of a story or an account of a sequence of events (Wikipedia).

National Governors Association (NGA): Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association (NGA) is the collective voice of the nation’s governors and is a respected public policy organization.

Personal learning environment: Environments where anyone can take charge of their own learning. It is student directed and student led (Midler).

Primary source materials: Reference or resource materials that are the original sources of information (Wikipedia).

Qualitative measure of text complexity: Part of a three-part model for measuring text complexity. This uses a continuum that provides a guide to text difficulty in four dimensions: 1) levels of meaning or purpose; 2) structure; 3) language conventionality and clarity; 4) knowledge demands (Common Core State Standards Initiative, “Appendix A 5”).

Quantitative measure of text complexity: Part of a three-part model for measuring text complexity. This uses a readability formula to look at word length and sentence length as
proxies for semantic and syntactic complexity (Common Core State Standards Initiative, “Appendix A” 7).

Readability formula: A formula for evaluating the difficulty of a text.

Reader and task measures: Part of a three- part model for measuring text complexity. This focuses on a reader’s knowledge about the specific topic, motivation to want to read and learn, and prior experiences. This assessment is given by the teacher or librarian while using their best professional judgment, experience, and knowledge of the student (Common Core State Standards Initiative, “Appendix A” 9).

Remedial level: Having deficient skills in a specific subject, most often associated with reading and math.

Social awareness: Aware of problems that different communities face on a day to day basis (Wikipedia).

Student directed learning: Individuals acquire and apply the thinking skills needed that will enable them to learn on their own (Martin).

Trade books: Books that are written for the general public, they can be fiction and non-fiction. Often the non-fiction covers topics that are taught in science and social studies.

Visual literacy: Ability to interpret, analyze, and make meaning from pictures and images (Wikipedia).

Web 2.0 tools: These are tools that allow students to work online, either independently or together. Examples of Web 2.0 tools include blogs, wikis, Twitter, Facebook, and podcasts.
Research Design

The research and information that was collected during this study was previously published in academic journals, and at no time was actual research being conducted. Research and literature relevant to the topic, school librarians and how they support the Common Core State Standards, was reviewed and analyzed for the purpose of this study. During the research process, many articles were retrieved from the J. C. Kirkpatrick Library at the University of Central Missouri. The articles were found by doing various searches for terms such as “Common Core State Standards”, “librarians AND Common Core State Standards”, “librarians AND collaboration”, “technology AND Common Core State Standards”, “21st Century learner AND librarian”, “AASL”, “librarian AND leadership role”, “technology AND education”, “inquiry based learning”, “critical thinking skills AND library”, and “librarian AND college readiness”. The databases that were accessed include Education Research Complete, Academic Search Complete, and Academic Search Premier.

Conclusion

This study includes three chapters that demonstrate the importance of the school librarian and the essential role the school librarian has as a leader and an expert on the Common Core State Standards. The next chapter reviews the literature that connects the librarian to the Common Core State Standards. The final chapter includes the answers to the research questions that were posed in chapter 1. It also contains a conclusion and recommendations.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This research explores the history and the background for Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the integration of those standards with the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards for the 21st Century Learner. The research will demonstrate that reading and understanding complex text is a foundation of the Common Core State Standards and as such, is the critical skill that colleges say is lacking when students arrive in the higher education classroom. The research will also demonstrate that school librarians provide teachers with the tools and best practices, including applicable and useable technology that teachers can rely on in order to help students read and understand complex text. The research explores how school librarians provide valid and necessary leadership to district and building level teachers in relation to the following areas: a) making reading cross-curricular in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, b) leading collaboration efforts and, c) leading the effort to increase student directed learning initiatives.

Reviewed literature presents school librarians as subject experts in text complexity and inquiry and recommends that district level curriculum committees save a place at the table for them. Identifying non-fiction literature in the core content areas and providing reading materials for students at their correct ability level is a role that school librarians embrace in support of the CCSS. In developing a collection of suitable resources for students, the school librarian also plays a critical role in collaboration with teachers in areas where they might not feel comfortable, such as understanding the terminology of the CCSS. Teachers can look to the school librarian to assist in lesson plan development and creating collaborative learning environments. The literature will discuss these issues as well as the surge of student directed technology based
Learning initiatives, such as a virtual learning commons developed by and lead by the school librarian. This paper is broken up into three main sections. The first section provides a background of the Common Core State Standards, explains why the CCSS were developed and how they connect to the AASL Standards for 21st Century Learners. The second section of this paper explains the importance of reading and understanding complex text. This section elaborates on how school librarians can are useful when establishing text complexity levels, helping to prepare students so they are college and career ready, and providing technology training to the teachers. Finally, the last section of this paper explores the leadership role of the school librarian in executing the Common Core State Standards. This section pulls together the need for collaboration between teachers and the librarian, as well as emphasizing the importance of making reading cross-curricular. This section also discusses the importance of student directed technology based learning initiatives.

**Background on Common Core State Standards**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), completed in 2010, were developed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (“Common Core Standards” 49). The standards were developed to provide common expectations in schools around the nation. They also offer students a consistent structure to prepare them for college and their future employment (Dagget and Gendron). A positive difference from standards that have been written in the past is that Common Core State Standards reflect a commitment to having fewer standards that are clearer and reflect high expectations (Haycock 14).
**Reason for Developing CCSS**

The Common Core State Standards were created with the mindset that students in the United States, K-12, have the same expectations as students from other countries and that all students, K-12, are able to compete with students from other countries. The Common Core State Standards have been accepted and are in the process of being implemented by 45 out of 50 of the states in the United States. David Loertscher and Elizabeth Marcoux write:

The expectation of these standards is to create a focused and coherent set of standards that will cross all state boundaries in the United States and be a set of rigorous expectations that a student will be able to find at any school he or she attends. It is for this reason that the CCSS will always take precedence over any other set of standards known presently. This does not mean the other sets of standards are not important. What matters is to figure out how they fit together. Teacher-Library Media Specialists are the most well-equipped to do just this (9).

The Common Core State Standards were designed with college and career qualifications in mind. Loertscher and Marcoux note there are three major ideas that apply to the role of the teacher-school librarian. Those three ideas are to “read widely, read informational texts, and read complex text” (10).

**Crosswalk of the Common Core State Standards to the AASL Learning Standards**

AASL has created a crosswalk between CCSS and the Standards for 21st-Century Learners. To emphasize the importance of the crosswalk, Brian Mayer (47) examined the fundamentals of the Common Core State Standards and the fundamentals of the AASL standards and found they complement each other. The fundamentals of the AASL standards include
inquiry, critical thinking, reflection, and social awareness. The foundation of the Common Core State Standards is to “seek to establish fluency in the fundamentals with a shift toward experience-based application at the secondary level and an emphasis on the importance of literacy experiences across all curricular areas” (47). Mayer draws a conclusion that the meat of both sets of standards is the very foundation of the school librarian profession. Both standards call for a different way of immersing students in learning by doing and through experience that is meaningful to the student (51).

Reading and Understanding Complex Text

Reading to learn and understand text is a critical, foundational skill that is essential to the 21st century learner and for becoming a student who is ready for the business or higher education world. According to Manzo, Manzo, and Thomas, students in primary and elementary grades will be developing reading skills that will allow them to “read to learn”. Content area literacy will most likely emerge as a skill teachers help primary and elementary students develop (182). Rebecca Hill mentions that reading is the most essential skill needed to be successful through higher education and out in the work force. According to her, “51% of incoming college freshman read at remedial level” (Hill, “Common Core” 44). She goes on to discuss that while textbooks used in the classroom are written at lower reading level, the reading material outside the classroom is becoming increasingly more difficult (44).
School Librarians are the Educators of Choice for Understanding/Applying Text Complexity

As the Common Core State Standards are established, it is apparent that the text complexity levels are being increased to ensure that students are able to read and comprehend literature they encounter when they get to college or join the workforce (Hiebert, “Beyond Single Readability Measures”, 33). In the CCSS, the “what and how” a student reads is covered in Reading Standard 10, which includes a three-part model that blends qualitative and quantitative measures of text complexity with reader and task considerations. The measures not only look at the meaning and purpose of the text and word length or sentence length, but also at what the reader’s motivation, knowledge, and experience are.

Qualitative Measures

Qualitative measures use a continuum that provides a guide to text difficulty in four dimensions: 1) Levels of meaning or purpose; literary texts can have different levels of meaning, there are literary texts with multiple meanings or hidden meanings that are more difficult for some to comprehend versus a literary text that has one simple and clear meaning. 2) Structure; literary texts that have an easy to follow sequence of events, a genre that stays the same throughout the entire text, and graphics that don’t interfere with the meaning are examples of a text with a low complexity and simple structure. Literary texts that are considered to be high complexity and have unconventional structures, whereas the text might not read in chronological order or the graphics might be extremely complex or have to be understood to comprehend the passage. 3) Language conventionality and clarity; literary texts that have a clear and precise language are examples of a simple, non-complex text. Literary texts that have uncommon
language, figurative language, and or unfamiliar vocabulary are examples of a more complex text. 4) Knowledge demands; a literary text that does not assume the reader has any background knowledge or prior experience is consistent with a non-complex text, whereas a more complex text will assume that the reader can make text to self connections and has prior experiences that can relate to the content (Common Core State Standards Initiative, “Appendix A 5”).

**Quantitative Measures**

Quantitative measures of text complexity use readability formulas to look at “word length and sentence length as proxies for semantic and syntactic complexity (Common Core State Standards Initiative, “Appendix A 7”). There are several widely accepted quantitative readability formulas discussed below that are in use by school librarians to assess the level of a text and whether or not it is too difficult or easy for a particular student. Library collections can be labeled by ability level by using the Lexile grade level equivalencies, librarians and classroom teachers can code the books in each collection to match the reading level of that book (How to Use a Lexile® Measure). If a child in third grade can read on a fifth grade level, they can look at the code on the book and make sure it is at the appropriate reading level.

The most common quantitative readability used in a K-12 classroom is known as the Lexile. The Lexile is a “scientific approach to reading and text measurement, placing both readers and text on a common scale” (How to Use a Lexile Measure). According to Burke and Greenberg, research shows there are two other readability formulas that are quite common and are practiced because of their ease of use. These two formulas are the Flesch Reading Ease Formula and the Flesh-Kincaid Formula.
The Flesch Reading Ease Formula uses 3 samples of 100 consecutive words, taken from the beginning, middle, and end of the text. The formula has a numerical value between 0-100, and it does not give a grade level equivalency. The higher the score means the more people with an education above fourth grade can understand it. A score with a 30 would be suitable for college level students, whereas a score of 70 might be understood by seventh or eighth graders.

The second formula, The Flesch-Kincaid Formula, converts the Flesch Reading Ease Formula into a grade level equivalency. It uses sentence length and word difficulty to determine an equivalent grade level.

**Reader and Task Measures**

Finally, reader and task measures are the third part to the Common Core State Standards approach to text complexity. This essential piece to the three part model does not focus entirely on text complexity; instead it is based on reader motivation, prior knowledge of that specific topic, and background experiences. Reader and task measures depend on the classroom teacher or librarian using their professional judgment and knowledge of the student before assigning them a passage or book containing complex text (Common Core State Standards Initiative, “Appendix A” 9). Reader and task measures focus on the student and his or her experience and what that student is capable of. School librarians can be instrumental in assisting the classroom teacher with the development of interest based content that will be individualized to the student to help stir motivation to read and write beyond his or her ability. Librarians can help stretch the student and, at the same time, help teachers understand the actual level that the student is comfortable with.
Preparing Students to be College and Career Ready

The Common Core State Standards focus on college and career readiness. Susan Ballard mentions that with the combination of the AASL Standards for the 21st Century Learner and the Common Core State Standards, students have the means to be equipped and ready for college and the workforce (Ballard “Opportunity Knocks”). Ballard states “The school librarian provides a library program that contains multiple instructional avenues and resources in various formats for the authentic application of the information literacy skills required by the CCSS (Ballard “Opportunity Knocks”). Students will have the opportunity to engage in more complex text (Haycock 17).

The Common Core State Standards include College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards. These anchor standards cross all grade levels and as students get older, the texts they read should become increasingly more difficult. The anchor standards include: 1) Key ideas and details; being able to summarize the main idea and key details of the literary text. 2) Craft and structure; analyze the structure of the text and assess the author’s point of view. 3) Integration of knowledge and ideas; compare and contrast similar texts and evaluate content presented in various formats. 4) Range of reading and level of text complexity; ability to read complex text on an independent and competent level (English Language Arts). The CCCS will require students to focus on complex informational text versus narrative stories. The CCCS calls for a 50/50 balance between informational and fictional text in elementary while it calls for a 30/70 balance in secondary schools (Hill, “All Aboard”).
It is the responsibility of the school librarian to collaborate with the classroom teacher to make sure the students are reading complex text that is on their level, then challenging them to improve. By doing this, students are more likely to be successful in college and in their careers.

In addition to increasing reading skills, the Common Core State Standards Initiative also dictate that students be able to provide evidence or demonstrate skills that show that they can use technology effectively, that they can relate to different cultures and provide different perspectives, that they are able to understand the content and provide critiques as evidence of that understanding, that they can be responsive to multiple audiences, that they can formulate a response to multiple tasks and purposes, and that they can be independent learners. Then they will be ready for the next level of their education in a college or trade school or they will be ready for a career. (English Language Arts).

School Librarian’s Provide Technology Training and Resources to Teachers

Because reading is at the very core of the CCSS, school librarians are positioned to assist teachers with making the necessary connections between content, research, complex text, and student directed learning. This assistance to teachers can begin with technology, whether it is used by the teachers as a teaching aide or by students as a self-directed learning aid. In an interview with Joyce Karon (former librarian and member of the Illinois State Board of Education), Ms. Karon explained that students who are college and career ready will have to “use technology and digital media strategically” (Kramer 10).

Elfrieda Hiebert proposes that school librarians are the leaders of the 21st century classroom and have the obligation to share information regarding the digital information age (Hiebert, “Common Core” 15). Simply providing computers and hooking them up is not the
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type of training that teachers and students need. In addition today’s teacher candidates might have technological skills, but they lack skill in integrating technology into daily lesson plans (Dutt-Doner, Allen, and Corcoran 65, 66). The school librarians are experts in the field of technology within the schools and are the ones who can share and teach how the new Web 2.0 tools can enhance learning (Koechlin, Zwaan, and Loertscher 9).

Support and advocacy of school librarians in the role of technology experts can be found in research published by Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston. Data were collected and analyzed to determine, among many other criteria, whether or not school librarians were confident in their own ability to be technology leaders. Eighty-six percent (86%) believe they are. Another finding in that same report was that eighty-four percent (84%) of school librarians believe that they are maximizing access to technology for the learning community. When questioned about their role in training teachers in the use and application of technology in instruction, ninety-three percent (93%) said that they use technology to align to professional and technology standards; eighty-seven percent (87%) use technology to differentiate instruction and seventy-nine percent (79%) model the use of technology (9, 11). Technology is an essential component of a 21st century classroom and school librarians are responsible for providing training and supplying resources to the teachers so they are best equipped to meet the needs of the 21st century learner. Melissa P. Johnston believes that “Technology is transforming not only access to information, but also the skills needed to interact with and use it as well” (1, 2). Technology will only make sense if it is incorporated in teaching and learning in ways that are efficient and meaningful to both the classroom teacher and the student.
The Leadership Role of School Librarian in Executing the CCSS

In 2008, then President of AASL, Ann Martin, describes the visionary leadership of the school librarian. Martin believed that the power of the 2007 AASL “Standards for the 21st-Century Learner” provided school librarians with more opportunity to be instructional leaders within their school buildings. When looked at as instructional leaders, school librarians have the ability to provide guidance to teachers in instituting programs that make reading cross-curricular, as required under the Common Core State Standards.

School librarians use their collaborative and analytical skills to integrate the AASL Standards with the Common Core State Standards. AASL has developed an online tool that provides a crosswalk between the Standards for the 21st Century Learner and the CCSS. They have also developed a database of lesson plans that crosswalk the AASL Standards to the Common Core State Standards in several subject areas. School librarians can use this tool collaboratively with their teachers in creating best practices and creative lesson plans (Habley).

Martin introduces the leadership role of school librarians in the realm of student-directed learning. Martin is referring to the AASL Standards for the 21st Century Learner that “demand that all individuals acquire the thinking skills that will enable them to learn on their own.” Martin encourages all school librarians to maintain their own professional development to include life-long learning of skills that include leadership and she invites all school librarians to continue to make use of all extensive resources available for this purpose (4, 5).

Ross Todd expands on the foundation of leadership discussed in the Standards for the 21st Century Learning. Through a series of different stories about the value that a school librarian adds to a building, Todd hits on the reason for the visibility of school librarians when providing
the groundwork for developing life-long learning skills. In one particular story he talks about the importance of developing self-learning skills and quotes an unnamed supervisor of instruction "There are the ideas such as media literacy, visual literacy, information literacy, they've all sort of been folded under the umbrella of twenty-first-century inquiry skills" (13). When the librarian is present in the students’ academic lives, they can develop the inquiry skills needed to conduct research in the content areas. Todd believes that the heart of the CCSS is the journey that teachers and students will take as they use informational text to understand content. Librarians will not only find informational text for students, but they will match it to their skill and reading ability, their understanding of complex text, and to their information need based on personal inquiry.

**Leading the Effort to Make Reading Cross-Curricular**

Researchers, such as Lucy Calkins, Dr. Mary Ehrenworth, and Christopher Lehman agree that non-fiction reading across the core content areas is critical to our students’ future academic success (19). They discuss how students migrate from reading for information’s sake to include reading that allows the students to compare and contrast facts and ideas, take a point of view, and analyze their own point of view on the topic. This indicates that the school librarian will be in a position to lead the classroom and content area teachers to an array of resources to introduce to their students such as “primary source materials, trade books, and digital texts related to those topics of study” (19). School librarians can provide guidance on how to use the resource materials. For example, a comprehensive project on civil rights might include guided inquiry, research, a media presentation, and collaboration with other students. It could touch history,
English language arts, and math (i.e. write a description of the economic impact of labor disputes on wages in the 1940s).

School librarians have been placed in the spotlight to lead the integration of cross-curricular reading required by the Common Core Standards as evidenced by timely articles written by Rebecca Hill, Kimberly Shearer, and Catherine Gewertz. Rebecca Hill points out that the Common Core State Standards emphasize reading across the entire curriculum. This provides school librarians with an opportune time to lead as text and inquiry specialists and to join the district level curriculum mapping committee or participate as a member of the district’s instruction design team (43 “Common Core”). Meghhan Walk, the library director of New York City’s Bard High School puts it this way, “Because with the implementation of Common Core, advanced literacy instruction will go beyond simply providing resources and being a search specialist or helping kids distinguish between informational and opinion texts” (qtd in Hill, “All Aboard” 28).

Kimberly Shearer takes the student perspective on utilizing the lead role of school librarians. She believes that students will succeed when school librarians are able to provide non-fiction books in core content areas that stimulate the student to read. Students will become stimulated to read non-fiction books in the context of being given the opportunity to determine a point of view in the non-fiction literature, and they can be asked to compare and contrast sources and form their own point of view (Shearer “Why You Need Your School Librarian”).

Catherine Gewertz pulls this paradigm together by pointing out that school librarians will be working to build skills with both students and teachers. Librarians can help teachers and students by finding them “a range of reading materials in printed or online form and
collaborating to develop challenging, cross-disciplinary projects” (2). She views “the Common Core Standards, with its emphasis on explanation, complex text, and cross-disciplinary synthesis, as an unprecedented opportunity for library media specialists to really strut their stuff” (18).

**Leading the Collaboration Effort with Teachers**

Ann Carlson Weeks provides insight on the relationship between the classroom teacher and the school librarian. She believes that the school librarian can be the building leader to fill the gap in student learning by collaborating with teachers to help them understand the terminology of the Common Core State Standards and then in the practical application of cross curricular reading goals. School librarians can network with their teachers and equip themselves with the tools to be the in-house experts on Common Core State Standards (54-55). Weeks recommends that the librarian be involved in decisions regarding curriculum, both on a school and district level. Librarians embrace change, always trying to stay on the cusp of new and evolving knowledge (54-55). Weeks also suggests for librarians to go into the general education classrooms and observe the teachers. She believes the best way for the librarian to become an effective educator is to learn various teaching techniques (54).

Scott and Plourde explain that if the teachers and the school librarian are collaborating and working together, then the students are achieving and making gains in the classroom (421). Research has been done by Michael Lonsdale who provided findings from 75 studies of school library programs. Jamie Jones et al. referenced Lonsdale's research which concluded that school library media programs led to improved student success on state standardized tests and that a key component to improved student success is collaboration between the school librarian and general education teachers (15).
Olga Nesi takes this argument a step further. Not only does Nesi agree with Weeks that the school librarian should network with teachers frequently, she wants the school librarian to lead the Common Core State Standards conversation. Nesi argues that the librarian can be the leader of these conversations because the Common Core State Standards include inquiry based standards, and librarians understand inquiry.

Inquiry based learning is a staple of any school librarian’s toolbox and inquiry based learning is at the “core” of the Common Core State Standards. Inquiry based learning is learning through asking questions, seeking answers, and using various levels of questioning to understand. The task of translating the Common Core State Standards language for teachers and for school librarians must go beyond simply using the AASL Crosswalk of AASL Standards to Common Core State Standards. The presentation of and the understanding and application of inquiry based learning might be a vital leadership role that the school librarian will undertake in implementing CCSS.

As role models for collaboration and execution of the CCSS, school librarians can demonstrate to classroom teachers how inquiry based learning can be valuable to the ideas that are put forth in the CCSS. Montiel-Overall discusses how many teachers often have no idea what the school librarian’s role is or what collaboration between a teacher and librarian should look like. She goes on to argue that some teachers do not understand the school librarian’s role as an educator and it is imperative to gain the trust and confidence of those teachers before the students can maximize their full potential (48). By validating the connection between the CCSS and the AASL Standards through providing guidance on inquiry based learning, establishing cross-curricular reading goals, and helping teachers understand the terminology of the CCSS,
school librarians can work side by side with classroom teachers to build that trust as they raise student achievement.

**Leading Student-Directed Technology Based Learning Initiative**

A discussion of the leadership role of the school librarian would not be complete without addressing student-directed technology based learning initiatives. David Loertscher discusses the importance of school librarians taking the offense in the world of technology and student learning. Loertscher introduces the use of Book2Cloud, a web-based, student-directed learning application that challenges the student to not only read content but to work together with teachers and specialists on developing critical thinking and inquiry skills. This type of application helps the student to learn how to learn. The school librarian can add applications like this to a knowledge building center, where teachers, librarians, and other specialists don’t give written assignments, instead they guide inquiry and project based learning. While students are working in these virtual knowledge building centers, they will be creating their own personal learning environments. Personal learning environments are those where students take charge of their own learning and preferred sources of information.

Loertscher advocates for and provides a template for re-inventing libraries in the digital realm. A virtual library is a collaborative learning space that will include participatory communities of learners. The platform will allow students to be engaged in exploration, experimentation, and collaboration through a culture that changes the way students learn and teachers teach. There are five main portals that a virtual learning commons should include: an information center (home page); a literacy center (digital book clubs, writing clubs, etc); knowledge building center (where collaborative learning exists); school culture (living school
Elementary school librarian, Zoe Midler, provides insight on the use of Google Docs in the virtual learning commons as an avenue to equip students and teachers with research skills imbedded in the curriculum. Midler added a link to a Google Docs document with directions that students could follow on how to do research through the different databases. The Google Docs document can be updated by Midler or one of the other teachers that she collaborates with. In addition, parents are brought into the process and taught how to assist their children and also how to keep them safe while researching specific topics. The 5th grade students in Flagstaff Academy have a weekly homework assignment that requires them to do research and ask questions based on a topic that begins with a certain letter of the alphabet. Students direct their own research, using imbedded Library Media Center Tips (LMCTips) created by Midler. These are guidelines for parents and students on how to use various databases and conduct research from home. The LMCTips keeps students on track and helps them not get frustrated. Midler provides an instant reward for students who use the LMCTips correctly in the form of a badge that is earned by the student (14). A badge is a virtual incentive that students can earn when they demonstrate their ability to navigate through a selected database skillfully (14). The conclusion that is drawn is that school librarians that focus their student-directed strategies on proven best practices or successful interventions and not on specific technology will ultimately be more effective (65).
Conclusion

School librarians are primed to lead their schools in providing teachers with best practices to help students become college and career ready. That is the genesis of why the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were developed, to help students be better prepared for life after graduation. School librarians are taking on more active roles in helping teachers and students develop the collaborative inquiry skills called for by the CCSS and that the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) outlined in their standards in 2007. School librarians are ready to integrate the AASL standards with the CCSS.

By being at the forefront of understanding the Common Core State Standards, school librarians are collaborating with teachers by breaking down the critical foundation of Common Core State Standards, reading, and understanding complex text. School librarians understand how to make that connection to the curriculum and are willing and able to use 21st century learning tools and technology to help not only teachers, but also help students become self-directed learners.
CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2010, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers identified reading and understanding complex text as a critical skill that anchors the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In 2007, the American Association of School Librarians Standards for the 21st-Century Learner identified reading and understanding complex text as critical to student success. The AASL described the skills needed to read and understand complex text as: inquiry, critical thinking, reflection, and social awareness. School Librarians have the background knowledge and ability to lead the classroom teachers in executing the CCSS, in helping students become career or college ready, and for leading their schools in the creative and effective use of technology that is relevant to the 21st Century Learners. Questions relevant to all educators today include:

What were the reasons that two major educational groups came together to create the Common Core State Standards for the students in the United States? Why are school librarians set to be leaders in the adoption of the Common Core State Standard? And what should the role of a school librarian be in unpacking and rolling out the Common Core State Standards?

**Developing Common Core State Standards**

The Common Core State Standards were developed jointly by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to provide a consistent platform of academic standards across the United States. The consistency of the rigorous CCSS sets forth a set of expectations that is the same for students in 45 out of 50 states across the United States. The CCSS raises the bar to help make students in K-
12 schools throughout the country able to compete on a national and international level. There are fewer standards to meet, but the expectations are higher.

An impetus for the NGA and the CCSSO to develop the CCSS includes setting competitive standards for students that will also make them college and career ready. Many university students come to school lacking the ability to read and understand complex text in non-fiction literature. The CCSS includes an entire set of anchor standards directed at college and career readiness. By gradually increasing the percent of reading that is done with informational texts from 30% in grade school to 50% in secondary schools, students will become more comfortable with the non-fiction, complex, instructional text.

**Updating the Role of the School Librarian**

In the 2007 American Association of School Librarian Standards for the 21st Century Learner, the AASL laid the foundation for school librarians to play an integral leadership role in the unpacking and implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Prior to the CCSS introduction in 2010, school librarians were already teaching skills that lead to understanding complex text. The AASL standards emphasized the need to develop learners that were self-directed and could apply higher order critical thinking skills needed to be independent learners.

Researchers suggest that school librarians are the “go-to” subject matter experts in the area of media literacy, visual literacy, and information literacy. School librarians can provide teachers with relevant training in technology that allows them to access and use technology in the classroom. In a recent survey of school librarians, ninety-three percent (93%) said that they use technology to align to professional and technology standards.
Teaching students to teach themselves how to learn through technology based applications will be another leadership role of the school librarian. Setting up knowledge building centers and allowing the students to work collaboratively with the librarian, teachers, and other specialized educators will challenge the student to read, understand, and turn content into context. The students can then develop their own personal learning environment, where they are responsible for their own learning.

**The School Librarians Role in Implementing CCSS**

The CCSS and the AASL Standards both focus on reading and understanding complex text. A crosswalk of the AASL Standards to the CCSS was created that includes a web-based tool that can also be used to access a database of lesson plans that meet the rigorous standards of the CCSS in several subject areas. Researchers agree that reading non-fiction across content subject areas is critical to a student’s success.

Research has shown that collaboration between the librarian and general education teachers helps increase student achievement in the classroom and on standardized tests. In addition the librarian is an essential component to teaching and modeling inquiry based learning skills that guide students as they increase their information literacy and reading skills through the use of complex, informational texts. Because of this, school librarians can be the in-house CCSS experts. Librarians play a vital role in making sure the classroom teachers and students have the resources they need at their fingertips. By collaborating and becoming familiar with the curriculum, librarians can help the classroom teachers know and understand the CCSS terminology and requirements.
Works Cited


