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Implementing national guidelines and standards: A model for action

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Implementing National

Guidelines and Standards

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In 1995 the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) engaged Public Communications Inc., a professional marketing firm, to undertake an extensive survey of the field to assess the professional needs of members and nonmembers that might be met by their national association, and the reasons professionals join or do not join AASL.

Among many related findings, conclusions and recommendations, the study affirmed the continuing education requirements of teacher-librarians, identified time and money as the chief barriers to professional development, made suggestions for improved communications and identified the need for a long-term advocacy and public relations program.

At the same time the Association's Continuing Education Task Force developed a statement of principles for effective continuing professional education which provided a research-based philosophical framework for continuing education and professional development activities. It too recognized that the major barriers are expense, time and lack of local opportunities but that teacher-librarians do want relevant, affordable continuing education with time flexibility; they acknowledge that one-shot sessions are not effective for changing behavior.

In 1996, during a period of extensive restructuring, the AASL Board of Directors established the mission of the Association to advocate excellence, facilitate change and develop leaders for the school library media field. The Board established advocacy as a priority for the Association. In the fall of 1996 the Association invited each state school library media association affiliated with AASL to send a delegate to a national summit on advocacy for teacher-librarians and school library media programs; the summit was held in February, 1997 in Washington, DC in conjunction with meetings of the AASL Affiliate Assembly, the network of state school library media associations. Working with a professional marketing consultant, Pat Cavill of Pat Cavill Consulting <pcavill@telusplanet.net>, the affiliates identified strengths of the current situation, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They also identified needs and requirements met best by the national association. With the consultant they defined advocacy as "a planned, deliberate and sustained effort to gain awareness and understanding for an issue or issues incrementally," thus necessitating a long-term commitment by

all involved. A refinement of needs, requirements and direction occurred at a second consultative meeting in July, 1997 in San Francisco.

In September, 1997 the AASL Executive Committee reviewed reports from its task forces on advocacy, continuing education and implementation of the anticipated guidelines and standards and noted duplication of effort and the need for improved coordination and congruence. With the concurrence of the chairs of the groups involved, the three committees were collapsed to one special presidential task force, with representation by geographic area, type of position and school environment. The task force developed a draft plan with the consultant and presented it for response at the third national meeting with state associations in January, 1998 in New Orleans; this preliminary plan was drafted based on the work undertaken at the consultative meetings. It is important to acknowledge the time, commitment and expense devoted by the individuals and associations involved in these planning and working sessions.

From the initial focus on advocacy it became obvious that advocacy was the framework, the process, but the introduction of the new guidelines and standards provided the "content" and afforded an exceptional opportunity for focusing advocacy efforts across the country.

The Presidential Task Force for

Coordinating the Implementation of *Information power: Building partnerships for learning* took a broader and longer-term view of advocacy while focusing on a coordinated approach to implementing the guidelines and standards in each school, district, state and national venue. The Task Force wanted to ensure a planned, deliberate, sustained effort over time to advance common agendas with the school library media profession and educational decision-makers. It worked to avoid these classic communication pitfalls outlined by the marketing consultant:

• concentrating on getting the message out rather than assisting in advancing the agenda of the target audiences to be reached;

• focusing efforts on telling decision-makers how important school libraries are and about the critical role of library media specialists, not realizing how self-serving that sounds to decision-makers;

• spending AASL's limited resources on expensive communication tools (e.g., videos, brochures, teleconferences) without assessing the needs of the target group or providing measures for evaluating if the tools actually contributed to awareness, understanding and action;

• "dusting off" some of the promotional activities from 1988 when *Information power* was last released without a clear understanding of how the current political and economic environment may require different tools and approaches.

Library marketing tools, techniques and models are considerably more sophisticated and more widely available than before. More strategic marketing approaches will be taken this time around, with more carefully defined target groups.

AASL, through this task force, has created a structure that allows all implementation and related advocacy activities to be strategic, accountable, consistent and carefully measured.

Only one planning model is used and has been endorsed by the AASL Affiliate Assembly; it is used to pro-

vide focus and assure the greatest possibility for success. The Association has also adopted a "trainer of trainer" model, with national leadership and support, to enable continuing education programs and resources to be adapted and delivered locally, making awareness and training sessions more accessible and relevant.

In the short-term, the AASL has developed a budget and assigned staff resources to the project, has begun fund-raising efforts with considerable initial success, has identified separate national, state and district responsibilities in the effort, has accessed the resources of the ALA, and has identified and begun training of state coordinators.

The summary of individual objectives provides an overview of implementation efforts, but does not include the entire plan for each objective; indeed the implementation plan is more than 80 pages in length. The planning model used for each objective is applied, however, for the National Association of Secondary School Principals below; in addition, the implementation plan includes the name of the person or group to whom each individual objective and task is assigned, the date for completion and progress notes.

Template for Preliminary Reporting

Preliminary information has been gathered on more than 50 national education and library associations according to this template. An individual or group will next be assigned responsibility to gather additional information and develop an action plan with specific, measurable, active, relevant and timed [smart] objectives.

Association Name
 numbers of members:
 Executive Director's Name:
 address:
 voice:
 fax:
 e-mail:
 web site:
Current Executive Board

• names and locations [preferably school and school district name]
 Publications
• name/frequency of newsletter
• name and address of editor
• name/frequency of journal/ magazine
• name and address of editor
• what are the major issues? Focus?
 Upcoming Annual Conferences
• dates and locations
• what have conference programs featured in the past two or three years?
 Professional Development Programs
• what sorts of activities does it carry out?
• What continuing education activities does it typically sponsor?
 Other
• Does it conduct research or provide incentives for research?
• What are its research priorities?
• Have library issues featured anywhere on its agenda in the past few years?
• Any other useful information, e.g., are members likely to have any negative perceptions of school librarians? What are they likely to know about school libraries and their role? How might partnerships advance each group's agendas? Catalog of merchandise? Carry products from other groups?

In order to demonstrate the planning model and the approach used in preparing for work with educational decision-makers the example of the National Association of Secondary School Principals is given here.

Model Plan for One Target Group:
National Association of Secondary School Principals

OBJECTIVE (SEPTEMBER, 1998)
 To introduce the guidelines and standards to the national educational and administrative organizations which will have the most influence over their implementation.

Planning and Implementation Objectives

January, 1998
1. To work with (a) the ALA Public Information Office and (b) the ALA Library Advocacy Now! Committee in promoting the interests of library media specialists. [COMPLETED]

May, 1998
2. To ensure that AASL members are aware of the new *Information power* through the Association journal *Knowledge Quest* [COMPLETED]

June, 1998
3. To create promotional items for sale and give away. [COMPLETED]
4. To create a visual identity for the implementation of *Information power*. [LOGO COMPLETED]
5. To create visual products for AASL members to assist them in implementing and advocating for *Information power*. [COMPLETED]
6. To develop a basic implementation kit for building level library media specialists. [DRAFT COMPLETED]
7. To stage a high profile launch of *Information power* at the ALA annual conference in Washington, DC in June, 1998. [COMPLETED]
8. To provide initial orientation/ training and support to *Information power* coordinators at a preconference day in Washington, DC. [COMPLETED]
9. To profile major teacher and library associations to enable productive collaboration and encounters. [SEE THE ASSOCIATION TEMPLATE FOR PRELIMINARY REPORTING BELOW AND THE MODEL FOR THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS BELOW; COMPLETED]
10. To develop an action plan with specific, measurable, active, relevant and timed ["smart"] objectives to enable work with each teacher and library association. [COMMENCED]

June, 1998—December, 2000
11. To ensure that AASL members who attend conferences are aware of the new *Information power* by December, 2000. [COMMENCED]

August, 1998
12. To create visual products for AASL members to assist them in implementing and advocating for *Information power*. [objectives 5, 12, 18 and 19 appear to be the same but the strategies and communication tools [E.G., BROCHURES, VIDEOS, POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS, TELECONFERENCES, ARE DIFFERENT; COMMENCED]

August, 1998— December, 2000
14. To train trainers at a National *"Information power* Training Institute"* in early August, 1998, 1999 and 2000. [COMPLETED FOR 1998; SCHEDULED FOR 1999]

September, 1998
15. To devote a special issue of *Knowledge Quest* to *Information power*. To have a regular column in Implementation. [COMMENCED]
16. To introduce the guidelines and standards to the national educational and administrative organizations which will have the most influence over their implementation. [COMMENCED]

September, 1998—December, 2000
17. To have 25 percent of each state's library media specialists attend an *Information power* session (national, regional, state, local) in the first two years that it is offered. [COMMENCED]

October, 1998
18. To create visual products for AASL members to assist them in implementing and advocating for *Information power*. [COMMENCED]

January, 1999
19. To create visual products for AASL members to assist them in implementing and advocating for *Information power*. [COMMENCED]
20. To identify exemplary models for implementation and transferable visual products for support for implementation at the district, state and national levels.
21. To gather and disseminate research to support *Information power*. To develop a template, both print and electronic, for affiliates to report research data. [APPLIED FOR AND RECEIVED ALA/WORLD BOOK GRANT IN 1998 TO DEVELOP TEMPLATE]
22. To develop a plan to build capacity of library media specialists to model the principles outlined in *Information power*. [COMMENCED]
23. To introduce the guidelines and standards to the Association for Library and Information Science Education [ALISE] with implications for professional programs of education for school library media specialists. [COMMENCED]
24. To introduce the guidelines and standards to architects who work with school districts to plan new and renovated facilities.

January, 1999— December, 2000
25. To ensure that AASL members who do not attend conferences are aware of the new *Information power* by December 31, 2000.

June, 1999
26. To identify at least two states willing to mount a pilot project to promote the effective use of library media specialists in teacher education programs.
27. To identify at least two states willing to promote the effective use of library media specialists in programs of education for school administrators.
28. To identify two states willing to promote the effective use of library media specialists in continuing professional development for teachers and administrators.
29. To establish a national parent advocacy program with chapters in a minimum of five states.
30. To develop a national roster of celebrity advocates for school library media specialists and programs.
31. To develop a publishing plan for the Association based on the guiding principles outlined in *Information power*.

This will be a priority activity for 1998 and 1999.

One individual/group will take responsibility for each national organization following the development of the preliminary data as outlined for the template following.

State affiliates will develop similar plans for state organizations and coordinate activity at the district level.

This planning model can be used any time a national or state association or organization is targeted.

Target Group

National Association of Secondary School Principals

These are some of the questions to which we need answers:
• How large an organization is the NASSP?
• Where is it headquartered?
• Who is the Executive Director; who is on its Executive Board?
• Where do they meet, what time of year?
• What is its decision-making and communications structure?
• What sorts of activities does it carry out? When is the annual conference and what is its planning cycle?
• What continuing education activities does it typically sponsor?
• What have conference programs featured in the past two or three years?
• Does it do research or provide incentives for research? What are its research priorities?
• Does it have a newsletter or journal, and can we get copies from the past two or three years?
• What are the major issues?
• Where are the Executive Members from? Are any of them from places where we have strong AASL members, strong local champions or strong school library media programs? Are any of them former library media specialists, or married to them? Are any of them from places where the reverse is true? (E.g., not much school library support?)
• Have library issues featured anywhere on its agenda in the past few years?

• What collegial relationships do they have to other national associations?
• Do they have a catalogue of publications? Would they distribute *Information power*?

Much of this information is available from the associations' web sites and reference works; other information can be gained through telephone calls. Individuals will need to assume responsibility for gathering this information from the various associations and move forward to develop specific and concrete plans. Once we have answered all these questions we are ready to move into Strategies.

Strategies

What?

What are the obstacles that could get in the way of our achieving our objective? These will be depend-

ent on the answers we get to the above questions. If our research shows that
• a couple of the key Executive Members come from areas of strong school library programs,
• libraries have been mentioned as an emerging issue at conferences and in the newsletter,
• subsequent strategies will be quite different than if our research shows that school libraries have never appeared anywhere as a concern, or the President comes from an area of the country where school libraries are in serious decline.

The obstacles we should consider will fall under the following categories:

Physical: Are the key people in NASSP in easily accessible parts of the country to AASL leaders? Who are the member leaders? What about time-zones? What time commitment can AASL Executive Committee members and staff devote to this? How much money can be spent?

Personal: Are the members of the NASSP likely to have any negative perceptions of school library media centers or school librarians? What are they likely to know about school libraries and their role? What might their attitudes be? Do AASL leaders have any negative perceptions of NASSP that might unwittingly surface? Do they see these decision makers as "the enemy" or as potential partners? How might partnerships advance each group's agendas?

Semantics: What are *their* buzz-words? What are the key new concepts? What educational jargon has been overused and now has a negative impact?

Environmental: Does our association and their association have goals that conflict in any way? If we are fighting for the survival of school libraries and they don't see it as an issue, is there an "agenda gap" that has to be closed? If their job is finding new ways to finance education, how receptive are they going to be to a message asking for more support for school libraries? We must provide

them with solutions to some of the problems they are addressing. If attitudes are negative toward school libraries, what would it take to change their minds? What argument can be made that is more compelling than their need to "hang tough" in the current environment? Spend most of the planning time on these three steps:
1. Determine your objective
2. Identify your target group (and find out everything you can about them.)
3. Identify the obstacles

People do things for *their* reasons, not yours. People pay attention to the things that *they* love and value, not to the things that *you* love and value. If you understand the priorities, agendas and passions of your target group, you will have a better idea of how to motivate them to act on your behalf. (Assuredly, it is not a group of school librarians telling them how important the school librarians are.) The above steps will tell you a great deal about how to proceed. In fact, the rest of the process falls into place when you have done your homework this far.

When:
on their schedule

Where?
on their turf

Who (will do it)?
• match carefully for credibility
• match members in school districts with NASSP leaders

How? (The message)
• Information Power: Because student achievement *is* the bottom line.

Communication Tools

What communication tools will be most appropriate for the target group, given all of the above? (Hint: if you can get your target group small enough that one-on-one communication can occur, this is ultimately going to be the most effective.)

e.g., co-sponsored events and programs, presentation, meeting,

video, promotional materials, new publications [new advocacy handbook? New titles in Lessons Learned series?]

Evaluation

Measurable objectives mean that activities have to be put in place to ensure that measurements are taken. If you can't measure it, you probably shouldn't be doing it.
• What questions did they ask?
• What commitments did they make?
• Whom else did they suggest that you contact?
• How much time did they give you?
• What kind of follow-up have they requested?

The Task Force assigned responsibility for gathering this information and developing an action plan to one individual. The plans and their implementation will be reviewed regularly by the Task Force. Of interest to teacher-librarians, the NASSP has recently committed to publishing a special issue of the *NASSP Bulletin* on information literacy in 1999; guest editor will be Ken Haycock.

Research is our business; collaboration is our specialty; planning is our priority. These three essential skills and tasks need to be applied to any successful advocacy effort. Too often we expect a commitment to careful planning from our colleagues but engage in less thoughtful and more speedy approaches to our own planning efforts in order to encourage a "quick fix". This implementation plan ensures that we are reflective and focused, while evaluating our successes at every step to allow for refinement and reconsideration.

The implementation plan was approved in principle by the AASL Board of Directors in January, 1998 and subsequently revised based on considerable input and feedback prior to final presentation in July, 1998. The Association expressed its desire in January to continue a coordinated approach to implementation with its co-author, the Association for Educational Communications

and Technology (AECT), subject to an equal allocation of human and financial resources by each partner to the project; regrettably this was not forthcoming. Nevertheless, each association is proceeding with its own implementation activities.

With a priority on training trainers, with support for implementation coordinators in each state, with congruence in planning, coordination of effort and focused assignment of resources, the American Association of School Librarians will provide consistent and effective leadership in advocating excellence, facilitating change and building leaders — because student achievement *is* the bottom line.

State Coordinators for Implementation

[accurate to 1998/07 but does not include additional participants in the first trainer of trainers institute held in Chicago in 1998/08]

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References

American Association of School Librarians. Presidential Task Force for Coordinating the Implementation of Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning . (1998). *Information power: Because student achievement is the bottom line.* Chicago, IL: American Association of School Librarians. 80 pp. — This national plan has been through a number of drafts but still represents a "work-in-progress". As such it has been distributed to AASL leaders and state coordinators but is not generally available. Following a final revision in late 1998 it should be available for general distribution in 1999.

Ken Haycock
is immediate past president of the American Association of School Librarians and chaired the Presidential Task Force for Coordinating the Implementation of Information power: Building partnerships for learning. He can be reached at <ken.haycock@ubc.ca>. For continuing news of implementation activities and events, check the AASL web site at <http://www.ala.org/aasl/>.