

Rationale & Vision Statement

The South Dakota School Library Standards have been thoughtfully revised to reflect the evolving nature of literacy, learning, and information in today's world while maintaining the strong foundation established in the 2019 standards. These revisions preserve the original structure, including the three strands, grade spans, and organizational design, while updating the language to ensure alignment with current educational practices and the needs of learners in an increasingly complex, connected, and digital environment.

Today's students engage with information in ways that extend beyond traditional print. They read, view, listen, and interact with texts across a variety of formats and platforms. They are not only consumers of information, but also creators, collaborators, and contributors. As such, these updated standards reflect a broader and more inclusive definition of literacy; one that encompasses textual, information, and civic and ethical dimensions.

The revised standards emphasize three key shifts:

1. From Consumption to Engagement and Creation

Students are expected not only to access and understand information, but to actively engage with it: analyzing, synthesizing, and creating new knowledge. Across all grade levels, the standards highlight opportunities for students to communicate their learning in meaningful ways and for authentic audiences.

2. From Skills to Inquiry and Critical Thinking

The Information Literacy strand has been refined to center inquiry as an ongoing, dynamic process. Students develop the ability to ask questions, locate and evaluate information, and adapt their thinking as they build understanding. Increasing emphasis is placed on evaluating credibility, recognizing diverse perspectives, and making informed decisions.

3. From Awareness to Responsible Participation and Leadership

The Civic and Ethical Literacy strand moves beyond awareness of digital citizenship to active, responsible participation in interconnected communities. Students learn to understand the impact of their actions, use information ethically, and contribute respectfully and thoughtfully in both physical and digital spaces. By high school, students are expected to demonstrate leadership, agency, and ethical decision-making.

These updates also reflect the realities of modern learning environments, including the use of digital tools, multimedia resources, and emerging technologies. Rather than naming specific technologies, the standards are designed to remain flexible and future-ready, allowing educators to adapt implementation as tools and platforms evolve.

Importantly, the standards remain intentionally written as guides rather than curriculum. They are designed to support school librarians and educators in creating meaningful, integrated learning experiences that align with local contexts and student needs.

The 2026 South Dakota School Library Standards reaffirm the essential role of the school library in fostering curiosity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. They position school libraries as dynamic spaces where students grow not only as readers and researchers, but as informed, ethical, and engaged members of their communities.

Together, these standards support a vision of learners who are prepared to navigate, contribute to, and thrive in an ever-changing world.