

The SDSL School Library Monthly Update

September 2026

Setting the Tone: Building a Strong Library Culture

A new school year brings new students, new routines, and a fresh opportunity to establish what your school library will feel like. Clear expectations help students know what to expect, while a strong library culture shapes how they experience the space and their place within it. September is a great time to

look beyond rules and procedures. What do you want students to know, do, and feel when they enter your library? How can your routines and interactions help create a space where students are ready to learn, explore, read, create, and connect?

Read more on page 2

Keep Learning and Connecting

Want to explore this topic, and other school library topics, throughout the school year?

School Librarian Inservice PD Package

A series of ready-to-use professional learning sessions designed to support school librarians throughout the year.

School Library Collect + Connect

Join upcoming online conversations with fellow South Dakota school librarians to share ideas, discuss challenges, and learn from one another.



SCHOOL LIBRARY RESOURCES

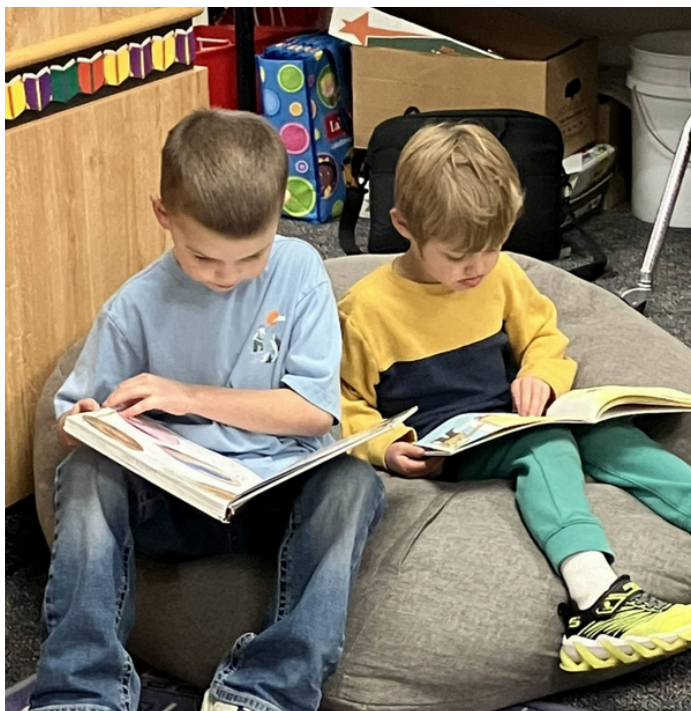
- ➔ [SDSL CE Catalog](#)
- ➔ [SDSL Training Catalog](#)
- ➔ [School Library Services Handbook](#)
- ➔ [SDSL Electronic Resources](#)
- ➔ [Monthly Update Archives](#)
- ➔ [Guides for School Librarians](#)
- ➔ [PD Opportunities](#)
- ➔ [School Library Scoop](#)
- ➔ [School Library Pulse](#)

SDSL School Library Services

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- 🌐 library.sd.gov/LIB/SLC/index.aspx
- 👤 facebook.com/LibrarySD
- 📍 800 Governor's Drive, Pierre, SD

From Expectations to Culture

Library expectations are more than a list of rules. Students need to understand what is expected, have opportunities to practice routines, and see those expectations consistently modeled and reinforced.



The Process

Start With the Experience You Want

Teach, Don't Just Tell

Build Culture Through Consistency

Revisit & Reset

Before creating or revising expectations, think about the experience you want students to have in your library.

- What should students be able to do here?
- How should students interact with one another?
- What routines help the library run smoothly?
- What do students need to know to feel confident and successful?

Let these questions guide the expectations you establish rather than creating a long list of rules.

A sign that says “Use Quiet Voices” doesn't teach students what that means. Explicitly teach important routines, especially at the beginning of the year. Demonstrate what an expectation looks and sounds like, let students practice, and explain why it matters.

Students learn what matters by watching what adults consistently reinforce. Consistency means having clear expectations and responding thoughtfully when students need reminders or redirection.

Expectations may need to be revisited throughout the year. If a routine isn't working, ask whether it has been clearly taught, whether students have had opportunities to practice, or whether the routine itself needs to change.



GALE PRESENTS: PETERSON'S TEST PREP

Keep on Prepping

TIME SAVING TIPS

Use “My Resources” to Keep Class Organized.

Students can save tests, tutorials, schools, scholarships, and goals in one place.

- Reduces repeated instruction.
- Teachers can ask students to share screenshots of saved goals for quick progress checks.

Lean on the explanations provided in practice tests.

Peterson's gives answer explanations. Point students to use these before asking for help. This reduces 1:1 follow-up time.

DID YOU KNOW?

When guiding students to ACT practice, encourage them to open the ACT Course inside Peterson's Test Prep. It's where the updated ACT practice tests appear, complete with the new 50-minute, 45-question math format and four answer choices.

Give your middle and high school students easy access to SAT/ACT/AP practice tests, college and scholarship search tools, and helpful study resources, perfect for supporting classroom learning and college readiness.

IDEAL FOR CLASSROOM USE

Activity 1: Bell-Ringer Test Questions

Purpose: Strengthen daily test-taking habits using real practice questions.

Instructions:

1. Choose any test section
2. Select 3-5 questions from a practice test.
3. Students answer individually for 5 minutes.
4. Review as a class and discuss strategies.

Activity 2: College Exploration Challenge

Purpose: Build awareness of college options and financial aid.

Instructions:

1. Students open Find a School.
2. Use filters for tuition, region, test scores, and program type.
3. Complete a worksheet listing:
 - Three possible schools
 - Top degree programs
 - Tuition range
 - Admission test requirements
4. Optional: Explore Find a Scholarship and record two scholarships.

Activity 3: Resume Builder Workshop

Purpose: Develop a professional résumé.

Instructions:

1. Open the Online Resume Builder.
2. Choose a template and create a résumé.
3. Add work experience, volunteer activities, skills, and education.
4. Export or print final résumé.

[Direct Link](#)



Alcester-Hudson Elementary and Jr High/High School Libraries



Librarian: Nola Conner



Librarian Nola Conner has the unique responsibility of leading both an elementary and a junior high/high school library, and she has created welcoming, student-centered spaces in both. From flexible seating and accessible collections for younger readers to genre-fied fiction, coffee, and spaces for studying and socializing with older students, Nola thoughtfully adapts each library to the needs of its community. She builds strong connections across generations through programs like library buddies, One School One Book, and the annual creative writing contest, while also drawing on strong community partnerships to expand what her libraries can offer. Across both schools, Nola's work reflects a simple philosophy: a good library should always show signs that people are using it.



Intentional Spaces

Nola has created library spaces that reflect the different needs of her students. The elementary library offers dynamic shelving, themed nonfiction tubs, Spanish-language materials, and accessible collections, while the secondary library provides spaces for reading, studying, collaboration, gaming, and socializing.

Building Connections

One of Nola's unique programs pairs kindergarten and sixth-grade students as library buddies, creating opportunities for mentorship and connection. She also builds family and community connections through One School One Book, storybook pumpkin activities, and partnerships with the local public library.

Supported by Community

Nola's libraries benefit from strong community support. In the past three years, approximately \$3,400 has been donated for library purchases at the book fair, while local businesses and civic organizations provide additional support. A recent grant also funded an updated 3D printer.

Celebrating Student Voices

Nola's annual creative writing contest gives students a chance to share their writing. Entries are anonymously judged, and age-group winners receive prizes, making this an event that students look forward to year after year.