

Speech Text for AASL Candidates Forum, Sunday, Feb. 1, 2015, Chicago IL

I am **Dorcus Hand**, a school librarian and member of AASL and TASL since 1978. I so enjoy supporting student achievement through my work with kids, teachers and families. I also love the work I have done in AASL and in the Independent Schools Section.

Pauline Anderson, founder of the AASL Independent Schools Section, taught through her actions her bone deep beliefs in leadership, in strong school libraries for all, in school libraries as an essential equalizing force for students disadvantaged by economics, geography, race or any other factor. Access to books and digital resources is a right, and librarians to light the path to independent learning are essential. I share those beliefs and do my best to further them every day in my local and state advocacy work, and in behalf of AASL's larger voice to our allies and opponents.

I am fiercely determined that excellence at home relies on a broad community of knowledgeable practitioners. I have both enjoyed and been challenged by my 36 year adventure in AASL. I rely on this community for a steady stream of high standards, new ideas and persistent moral support. I have also been honored to be able to contribute to discussions of new standards and methods and to work on the AASL Board. AASL is home; I am excited to consider representing you as the lead voice and face of the association, working to re-establish broad awareness of our positive impact on K-12 student achievement. AASL must be nimble as we seize new opportunities to forward our well defined agendas, finding new approaches to persistent issues while honoring our traditions of excellence and diversity.

Leadership and Commitment are my Bone Deep Beliefs; our membership faces much stiff opposition in a world of extremely tight budgets and invasive high-stakes testing. No news to you who are listening today, but a point of challenge for me whether elected or not. In my role as Co-chair of the TASL Legislative & Advocacy Committee, I recently wrote to the State Board of Education Committee on Certification in defense of current school library certification standards; I look forward to contributing to similar efforts for AASL, and by AASL in support of other state efforts. My work on the AASL Advocacy Committee has also kept me aware of the difficulty of making the breadth of advocacy support tools AASL already has easily accessible to membership. My leadership of Students Need Libraries in HISD, a local advocacy effort, has taught me the need to approach school board members and district administration with stories that get their attention and data to support the examples. Just like the Grammar.ly memes that float through my Facebook feed, it is moments and memes that will capture the attention of administrators and legislators. However, we must also tie these images to solid data – of which AASL already has much and is developing more.

Gloria Meraz of the *Texas Library Journal* wrote this month of how easily we tell EACH OTHER our successes, but we often find it much more challenging to tell our stakeholders and communities. I will work with the AASL Board and staff to find ways to encourage membership to take our message to all our allies - and even our opponents. We need to build bridges to our parent supporters, teachers, campus and district leadership as well as legislators. That's a lot of talking to be done – but we love words, so how hard can it be? We will tell our stories again and again with bone deep belief in our students' capacity to learn and progress towards excellence.

Our Bone-Deep Beliefs are the foundation of the clear compelling message AASL will continue to broadcast. We are the most versatile teachers in our schools as we connect to every student in every area all year long. I will work to offer a strong example to school librarians in my daily efforts in their behalf, as well as in behalf of our collective student body. I look forward to working with every member to achieve progress towards our goals.