Helping Students and Teachers
Develop their Independent Learning Skills
in the Modern School Library & Information Services Programme

Допомога студентам та викладачам у розвитку
їх навичок самостійного навчання у рамках програми
«Сучасна шкільна бібліотека та інформаційні послуги»

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Introduction

We need to see Independent Learning Skills in the context of the larger total school library and information services model. The skills are the tools to help one become an independent life-long learner. They must be taught. They are best learned in practical activities that relate to the level of student learning, and to their current and particular interests. These skills permeate all the other components of the model.
Definitions

1. Independent Learning Skills are the skills that a student must develop in order to become a productive user of information; to be able to sort out truth from fiction, to build one’s own understanding of a concept or ideal; and then be able to communicate what has been learned to others. The ultimate demonstration of learning comes with a change in one’s knowledge, habits or behaviour.

These are the skills that enable a learner (of any age) to use the practical and conceptual tools of information technology (print, non-print, and electronic), to understand the world around them … regardless of their age … and to develop meaning for themselves, and their lives. Our role is to guide them in this process, to nurture their creative response to learning new things, and to enable them to share what they have learned. Our assessment tools must always be geared to helping the individual grow in wisdom and understanding.

1.1 What do Independent Learning Skills (ILS) look like?

1. Does the Ministry have an ILS scope and sequence chart showing the expected skill development needed to develop independent learners across the grades and according to the subjects taught?
2. Are these ILS imbedded in the curriculum documents for teachers?
3. Orientation programs are offered for all students and teachers new to the school library
4. Directional services, e.g. pamphlets, signs, maps, charts, and sections of the school Handbook describe the arrangement and services of the library
5. Individual students are assisted with information study skills as needed
6. Individual assistance is provided to students with problem-solving strategies as needed
7. Specific instruction is tailored to meet the needs of units planned with teachers
8. Some skill instruction is provided in the library; some in the classroom as appropriate to the topic, the class size, and best teaching environment
9. The library is organized to allow for a variety of types of groups to work at the same time.
10. A flexible schedule makes it possible to provide appropriate working spaces for different groups.
11. A common skill list for students in each subject, and in a particular grade is established each year in cooperation with the teacher, and according to the needs of the children in that class.
12. Methods of recording student skill acquisition by subject and grade are developed.
13. A common Student’s Style Handbook is developed collaboratively across the grades and subjects.
14. The common Style Handbook is available in both print format, and also on the school website.
15. The school library website provides links to high quality websites for quick student reference.
16. Assistance is provided to students in the materials production design of projects or activities which need additional support resources, expertise or equipment.
17. Students are encouraged to self-evaluate their skill level.

1.2 Some Suggested Strategies for Implementation ILS

1. The library is attractive and welcoming
2. The library has clear directional and informational signs
3. The school library website is clear, directional, and provides links to the public catalogue, and to high use tools or databases
4. The school has adapted its own ILS Scope and Sequence document, with specific flags attaching it to specific courses, projects and teachers
5. The ILS Scope and Sequence document is a common reference in the lesson planning process
6. A common Problem-Solving Strategy is adopted by the teachers for all classes
7. Skill lessons are planned in collaboration with the teacher, and decisions about whom should teach the lesson are worked out at the planning time.
8. Booking schedules for use of the library facility, and equipment are readily available to teachers.
9. Style Handbook development is discussed with the teachers across several departments
10. Individual students are guided to find information by themselves, rather than having the information simply found for them.
11. Bibliographies, Webographies, and Choice Reading lists are readily available to students.
12. Charts and directions for use of equipment are visible and accessible.

1.3 How is the ILS Component Evaluated?

1. Are assignments given that require use of library and information resources in the school or on the Internet?
2. What percentage of the students use the school library to undertake their projects?
3. What proportion of the students use the public library or other libraries or electronic sources to complete their projects?
4. How many planned units have been implemented this school year?
5. Are there sections of the assignment that focus on ILS development?
6. Is the ILS Scope and Sequence used in lesson planning?
7. Are lessons organized to introduce a skill, review a skill, or re-enforce a skill as appropriate to the age and ability of the students and the topic?
8. Are the ILS evaluated as the project progresses, and when it is completed?
9. Were additional lessons prepared to meet evolving student needs for ILS?
10. Were students invited to give feedback on which skills and activities worked for them?
11. Were teachers invited to evaluate which skills were working, and which need further attention in follow up projects?
12. Are the planned units filed for future reference?
13. Is there a common Style Handbook for the school?
14. Is the use of common Style Handbook required by all teachers?
15. How many individuals or groups received an orientation to the library?
16. How many classes had formal lessons on library operations?
17. How many classes attended another library as part of a project?
18. Was the scheduling of external library visits planning in advance? Did the library staff receive a copy of the assignment in advance?
19. Was the school library staff involved in planning or implementing external visits or tours?
20. Are successful units and projects displayed for other students, teachers and parents to examine?
21. Are teachers who collaborate well in their planning and implementation of ILS invited to do professional development sessions with their Departments, or other teachers?

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<th>Research Strategy: K W L</th>
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<tr>
<td>What do we KNOW?</td>
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<td>What do we WANT to learn?</td>
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<td>What have we LEARNED?</td>
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The object of teaching a child is to enable the child to get along without the teacher. We need to educate our children for their future, not our past. — Arthur C. Clark

1.4 Conclusion

Students learn from the people around them. As teacher-librarians we can model the productive use of independent learning skills on a constant basis. If we show that a personal problem-solving model will help to make their work both more efficient and more effective, both teachers and students will adopt the model. The skills needed to make the model work must be developed on a daily basis, as an integral part of the learning of all subjects.

Using this approach to learning and skill development can be very exciting. It will help set the school library as an integral part of the total educational process. You can be the leader to do this in your community.

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