Information Literacy as an Outcome of Cooperative Planning and Teaching in the Modern School Library & Information Services Programme

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Introduction

What is it that we do when we teach?

We do things that we thing (or hope!) will bring about learning for students. If we take a moment to think about what learning is, the responsibility of the teacher and teacher-librarian becomes very serious. Learning implies a change in the students — a change from a previous behaviour to a different behaviour,
from a previous belief to a new belief, or from a previous way of thinking to a new way of thinking. We are usually dissatisfied with superficial changes. We are seeking deep, lasting, and substantial changes.

So what is our motivation, or our inspiration «to teach»?

Thinking about information literacy as a habit or a ‘way of life’ is a powerful framework for thinking about the goals of our instructional efforts. Training in information literacy prepares a student for lifelong learning … whether in the classroom, with friends, or in the community at large.

This view of teaching … as preparing a ‘way of life’ … puts demands on all of us as teachers. We must model that way of life. It means teaching methods and approaches that model the principles of information literacy in practice. Since Information Literacy means knowing when information is needed, how to find that information, thinking about it carefully and critically, and then using it, all in a legal and ethical way, our role as teachers provides us with a subtle opportunity to demonstrate an information literacy way of life.

- So what are the implications for teachers and teacher librarians?
- What information do we need?
- What information do students need?
- What strategies will help us locate the information that we both need?
- How can we best think about what we find?
- What should we do with the information once we have gathered it?
- What legal and ethical issues should concern us?
- How can we best demonstrate that our knowledge, attitudes or behaviour have changed as a result of our interaction with new information and rigorous thinking processes?

These are the things teacher-librarians do in a modern school library and information services program. Let us explore how they relate to Information Literacy and where it fits in the SLIS program.
Definitions

1. Information Literacy is the ability to recognize the need for information to solve problems and develop ideas; pose important questions; use a variety of information gathering strategies; locate relevant and appropriate information; assess and evaluate information for quality, accuracy, authority and authenticity; demonstrate that the knowledge has made a different in one’s personal attitudes and behaviour.

Information Literacy includes the abilities to use the practical and conceptual tools of information technology (print, non-print, and electronic), to understand, form, format, location and access methods, how information is situated and produced, research processes, and to format and publish textual and multimedia formats, and to adapt to emerging technologies.

1.1 What does Information Literacy Look Like?

1. Teachers have studied and adopted a unified model of problem solving in the school
2. Students use some aspect of the problem-solving model in all assignments
3. Assignments are planned to developing critical thinking skills
4. Students are encouraged to take an active role in defining the key questions that are central to their research process
5. Students are expected to use a variety of media to obtain their information
6. Students have options in the methods of presenting the results of their systematic problem solving activities
7. Assessment of assignments involves both content and process used in reaching the finished product.
8. Rubrics are developed to assist students in understanding the levels of achievement needed to successfully complete the projects.

1.2 Some Suggested Strategies for Implementation Information Literacy Activities

1. Principal will be encouraged to have the staff investigate various problem solving models, and to develop one that can be used commonly among all classes
2. Teachers are encouraged to use the problem solving model as a key step in the collaborative planning process
3. Charts, developed to describe the problem solving model, are displayed for ready reference
4. The common language of the model is used frequently to help students clarify their thinking and «name» the activities being done.
5. Samples of student work are displayed
6. Small projects are attempted to ensure success, rather than larger complex activities that can get bogged down.
7. Staff are encouraged to share their successes with each other

1.3 How is the Information Literacy Component Evaluated?

1. Is there a common problem solving model used in the school?
2. Have there been training sessions to help teachers understand how to use the model?
3. Does the Principal encourage the use of the model as part of his/her evaluation process with teachers?
4. Can the students enunciate the stages of the model?
5. Do students automatically refer to the problem solving model when they begin a new project?
6. Are there samples of the students work using this approach on display?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis /Problem/ Question</th>
<th>Information Seeking / Selecting &amp; Evaluating</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
<th>Product/Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Student(s) posed a thoughtful, creative question that engaged them in challenging or provocative research. The question breaks new ground or contributes to knowledge in a focused, specific area.</td>
<td>Student(s) gathered information from a variety of quality electronic and print sources, including appropriate licensed databases. Sources are relevant, balanced and include critical readings relating to the thesis or problem. Primary sources were included (if appropriate).</td>
<td>Student(s) carefully analyzed the information collected and drew appropriate and inventive conclusions supported by evidence. Voice of the student writer is evident.</td>
<td>Student(s) developed appropriate structure for communicating product, incorporating variety of quality sources. Information is logically and creatively organized with smooth transitions.</td>
<td>Effectively and creatively used appropriate communication tools to convey their conclusions and demonstrated thorough, effective research techniques. Product displays creativity and originality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Student(s) posed a focused question involving them in challenging research.</td>
<td>Student(s) gathered information from a variety of relevant sources--print and electronic</td>
<td>Student(s) product shows good effort was made in analyzing the evidence collected</td>
<td>Student(s) logically organized the product and made good connections among ideas</td>
<td>Student(s) documented sources with some care, Sources are cited, both in-text/in-product and on Works-Cited/Works-Consulted pages/slides. Few errors noted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Student(s) constructed a question that lends itself to readily available answers</td>
<td>Student(s) gathered information from a limited range of sources and displayed minimal effort in selecting quality resources</td>
<td>Student(s) conclusions could be supported by stronger evidence. Level of analysis could have been deeper.</td>
<td>Student(s) could have put greater effort into organizing the product</td>
<td>Student(s) need to use greater care in documenting sources. Documentation was poorly constructed or absent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Student(s) relied on teacher-generated questions or developed a question requiring little creative thought.</td>
<td>Student(s) gathered information that lacked relevance, quality, depth and balance.</td>
<td>Student(s) conclusions simply involved restating information. Conclusions were not supported by evidence.</td>
<td>Student(s) work is not logically or effectively structured.</td>
<td>Student(s) clearly plagiarized materials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We must be prepared to help students become knowledge navigators in a sea of information.
Freeston, 1995

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