Assignment 3: Evaluation plan to improve reference services

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Introduction

Children are curious by nature; one of the first words my children ever learned was "why?" Although children have an innate desire to ask questions and search for answers, the skills needed to "determine what information best fits our needs at any point in time involves a skill called 'information literacy' and a process called "information inquiry'" (Riedling, 2013, p. 3).

The school library provides information through quality references sources and instructs or guides the use of this information. Both are instrumental components to increase student achievement. This second component of instruction for information literacy skills has been a 'hit and miss' endeavor in my school. Currently, my school does not have any policies or procedures in place regarding the library and/or information literacy skills. Some of the skills are taught in isolation within the library, while other skills are taught within the classroom setting as parts of curriculum units. However, the absorption and adoption of these skills is most effective when the teacher-librarian collaborates with the classroom teacher. (Haycock, 2003)

To clarify, the term '**information literacy'** includes "students' capacity to find, evaluate, organize and transform information" (People for Education, 2011). Although there is a growing recognition on the importance of these skills in the 21st Century, many schools are lagging behind. When Ontario principles, for example, were asked if their school had an information literacy plan, most principals pointed to plans to improve test scores in reading and writing and ignored the need for information literacy (People for Education, 2011, p.2). Because of the importance of information literacy skills, I would like to develop a scope and sequence plan that can be incorporated through collaboration between the teacher-librarian and the classroom teachers.

Analysis of Current Practice

To begin with, I wanted to get a sense of the current practices in my school as described by the teachers. So, I developed a google form survey. Realizing that it is report card week and teachers' time is so limited, I tried to create the form to be simple to use and quick for teachers to complete. My initial hunches were confirmed. Teachers were implementing some form of information literacy skills into their lessons and units but these were disconnected to the library and were sporadic in nature. There did not seem to be a common, shared vocabulary among the staff as teachers were 'doing their own thing'.

Rationale for Improvement

Because information overload faces 21st century students, explicit information literacy instruction is crucial to increase student achievement and to develop lifelong learners. Haycock (2003) states "such contributions are essential to student achievement and [are] most successful when the teacher-librarian works collaboratively with the classroom teacher" (p.22). Furthermore, "information literacy is most effective when integrated with classroom instruction through collaborative planning/ team teaching; in other words, the school library extends beyond its walls as an integral part of every classroom experience" (p.22). Teaching these skills in isolation of real-life, practical or classroom applications diminishes the effectiveness of the lessons. Through a scope and sequence that is mutually agreed upon and collaboratively planned between classroom teachers and teacher-librarian, the benefits of integrated information skills instruction will be maximized (p.23).

During a recent project on Ancient Egypt, my grade seven students engaged in the research process and reflected on the information literacy skills learned along the way. The following student quotes taken from DeWith's blog (Feb. 15, 2017) demonstrate the effectiveness of incorporating skills within classroom application.

- "I learned that books actually have a lot of useful information since I always used the internet" (Note, I insisted they had to start with 3 books)
- "It was hard to think of a question that I really wanted to do...I learned that books are REALLY helpful".
- "Facts are not only on websites but there are a lot of facts in books!"
- "I learned that you should be organized and know where you got those facts".
- "I learned that I shouldn't rush through looking for facts but instead, I should look thoroughly and also keep track of where my information was from."
- "I learned that sometimes you have to look at multiple books and websites to find facts and also to verify facts."

In collating background research to develop a scope and sequence, I looked at the following resources:

- Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Library Programs in Canada
- Alberta's Curriculum https://education.alberta.ca/
- British Columbia's Curriculum https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/
- New York Department of Education Curriculum http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/LibraryServices/StandardsandCurriculum/default.htm
- Ontario's Curriculum http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html
- Surrey School District Library Handbook https://www.surreyschools.ca/departments/EDSC/CurriculumInstruction/Library/Documents/SD36%20TL%20Handbook.pdf

As the basis of my scope and sequence, I used the Points of Inquiry (BCTF, 2011) to structure the categories.
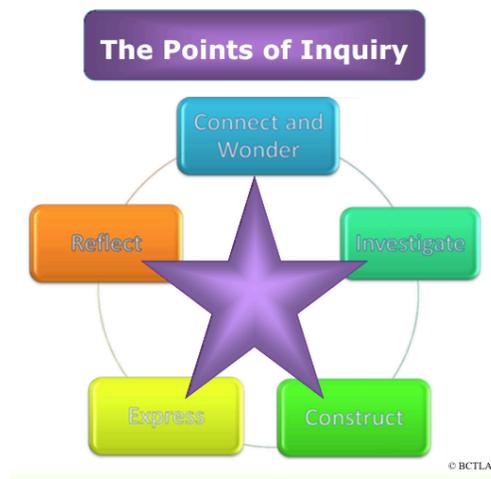
Points of Inquiry Document

The Plan

The Leading Learning Document is a great resource to use when guiding a school through transition. Although the guide's primary target is to bring a school towards a Learning Commons approach, I adapted the steps of the process to my plan of integrating a shared vocabulary and a scope and sequence for information literacy skills.

    a. **Consult phase**

As part of the **consult** phase of leading a school through a transition and to create an environment conducive to change, I would enlist the support of my administration and primary/intermediate coordinators. I will share my rationale for developing a scope and sequence.
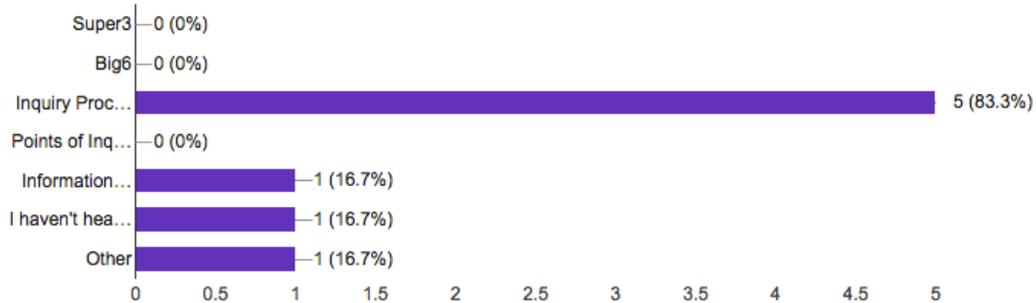
    b. **Plan phase**

I would assess the current practice at my school regarding information literacy skills through

- Informal conversations with teachers and with the librarian
- Google form survey for teachers

I created a google form survey but due to the busy time of year, only a limited number of responses were recorded. In the future, I would conduct this survey during an August staff meeting. However, the results did show some interesting trends. I found it interesting that 'inquiry process' was most familiar with teachers and that none of the teachers had heard of 'points of inquiry'.

Have you heard of the following research process methods? If so, which ones? (check all that apply)

(6 responses)

Method	Count
Super3	0 (0%)
Big6	0 (0%)
Inquiry Proc...	5 (83.3%)
Points of Inq...	0 (0%)
Information...	1 (16.7%)
I haven't hea...	1 (16.7%)
Other	1 (16.7%)

As recorded, skills in isolation at the library were infrequent.

What research or information literacy skills have your students done in the library so far this year?

(6 responses)

Using the index and glossary to help find facts related to a topic; using World Book Online encyclopedia

Finding information and reliable sources

Found books on a topic of interest

Not sure

N/A

None

By looking closely at the skills of each stage of the research process, I was able to get a sense of what the teachers expected of their students at grades 2, 4 and 6. I was curious to see how many teachers value collaboration and was pleased to see that 100% of the respondents would love to collaborate on a unit.

If you had the opportunity to collaborate with another teacher or a teacher-librarian to incorporate information literacy skills, would you be interested?
(6 responses)

- Yes
- No

100%
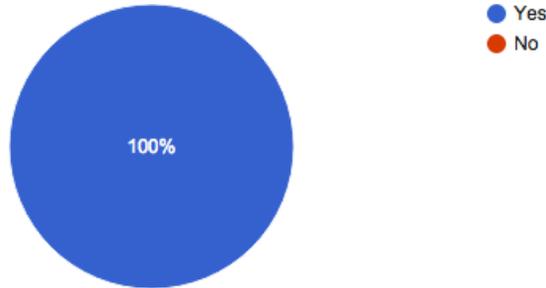
Develop a suggested scope and sequence as a draft document *(August Staff Meeting)*
- As a staff, preview the suggested scope and sequence I developed
  Information Literacy Skills Scope and Sequence PDF

- Meet in grade level groups and primary/intermediate for feedback and suggested changes or additions
- Revise the scope and sequence

Share finalized scope and sequence with administrators and staff *(September Staff Meeting)*
- Points of Inquiry research process Points of Inquiry Elementary Planning Package
- Encourage a 'shared vocabulary' throughout the school for the research process
- Provide posters of Points of Inquiry to each classroom teacher Points of Inquiry Poster

c. **Implement Phase**

Invite teachers to collaborate with the library
   (begin in October and continue throughout the year)
- Co-plan lessons to target specific information literacy skills
  i. Points of Inquiry lesson planning resources may be helpful

- Lead professional development sessions for primary and intermediate staff to target specific skills such as how to teach 'effective keyword searches' and 'how to use databases for searching'

Encourage and support teachers as they continue to teach information literacy skills within their curricular topics and units.

d. Monitor Phase

Encourage the use of information literacy skills and a shared, common vocabulary through brief monthly check-ins at monthly staff meetings. Each month, I would draw attention back to the scope and sequence and invite feedback on how the process is going and inquire if help is needed in any area. Through this, I can also then target mini professional development workshops to assist teachers in developing these skills.

e. Evaluate Phase

At the end of the year, I would create a short google form survey to ask for feedback on the effectiveness of the scope and sequence. Did they notice an improvement in information literacy skills of their students? Were students more prepared for the inquiry process? What gaps were found? What skills will be needed to target those areas?

f. Follow Up Phase

If any changes are necessary, revisions will be made and an updated scope and sequence will be drafted for August's staff meeting. Due to the nature of a fluctuating staff, I will meet with new staff members each August/September to share the scope and sequence plan, to invite collaboration with the teacher-librarian, and to highlight resources and professional development assistance offered through the library.

References:

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