

# Assessing the Authentic Learning Assessment Project

*Report for the Spring 2009 Authentic Assessment Project*

*Post to <http://informationliteracymactc.pbwiki.com>*

*Due June 19, 2009*

The purpose of this report is to reflect on your learning and to create a repository of shared ideas and strategies for Washington state community and technical college libraries.

## **Project Summary** (about 200 words)

Students in this Level 4 (intermediate) Integrated Skills ESL class learned about the resources and services offered by our library in order to find, check out, and renew books for their class reading assignments and book-review project. Students were also asked to extend their learning beyond the NSCC Library to other libraries. As extra credit, students were asked to visit a public library of their choice, describe it, ask a question that was relevant to their needs (story times, computer classes, etc.), and write about their experience and what they learned. These students brought back information and other material from their visit to the public library. Many students came back with a new library card.

At the end of the quarter, students' final book reviews, along with a photograph of themselves holding the book they reviewed, were displayed in the library's ESL area as recommended reads for their peers.

## **Participants** – Who worked on this project?

Librarians: Elinor Appel

Faculty: Jill Bauer

Class name(s) and approximate number of students involved: ESL4A, 24 students

## **Learning Outcomes or Project Outcomes** – What did you want the students to be able to do? OR What did you intend to accomplish?

This project addressed the library anxiety that we have noticed among our ESL students. Among the barriers we identified: communication, vocabulary, technology, and limited knowledge about libraries. We hoped that through increasing familiarity with library services and resources, students would acquire the skills, knowledge, and comfort-level they needed in order to use libraries for both school work (the assigned book reports for this class) and personal needs in the future (for instance computer classes and citizenship information).

## **Curriculum** – What did the students need to know? What content needed to be covered?

Students needed to know how to locate, check out, and return library books in order to do extensive reading and write a book review as a part of their ESL coursework. Additionally, the book review assignment called for students to summarize the book that they read and include information on the type of book (i.e. fiction or non-fiction). An introduction to the college library resources (books, DVDs) and its services (checkout, renew, media room) as well as necessary vocabulary and some concepts (fiction/non-fiction) needed to be covered. Finally, students needed to practice using the new vocabulary, and speaking and listening in this new environment.

**Pedagogy** – What were the setting and learning activities for the students to gain/develop these abilities?

Students were asked to reflect on their previous library use and experiences. They were given the choice to write about their experiences in the U.S. or their home countries in order to help them consider their initial understandings and knowledge. Following the reflection piece, students worked in small groups to generate questions for the librarian.

The librarian visited the ESL classroom, answered questions, and showed a ppt. of pictures to visually demonstrate various important library procedures and rules (checkout, return, etc.). At the library the librarian taught students how to locate, renew, and check out books, and how to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction books via a hands-on sorting exercise.

Soon after, students were given a library quest worksheet to reinforce the library introduction and the on-site orientation. Students completed the library quest, which directed them to find information in the catalog, find books by topic on the shelves, and check out a book in pairs. Students then blogged about their experience on a class blog in the computer lab.

The ESL instructor asked students to keep reading logs for three weeks and to check out additional books if necessary to continue their extensive reading. At the end of the three weeks, students were instructed to pick one book to review. Students were told that their book reviews would be displayed in the library for others to read. (Nearly all the students were delighted and proud to show their work. Those who were unwilling did not have to.) Over the quarter, the ESL instructor did a series of lessons on summarizing their books and how to write and type their book reviews.

Near the end of the quarter students were given a bonus assignment that asked them to apply their new library knowledge in a public-library setting. This bonus worksheet invited students to visit a public library, describe it, and ask a librarian a question on a topic of interest (possible questions were included). Students were also asked to bring back a tangible item from their visit, such as brochures, books or a library card for additional credit. These items were helped us track successful library transactions, as well as student interest and needs. (For instance, 11 of the 19 students who completed this exercise returned with a new library card.)

**Assessment** – How did the students demonstrate the learning? What assessment did you design for students? (Attach any assessment tools you used)

Pre- and post-assessment writing prompts asked students to reflect on what they knew about libraries or previous library experience, what they wanted to learn, and what they learned. Students who completed the public-library exercise were also asked to ask a question they needed an answer to and to bring back an item from the library. These items provided us with an additional way to count successful library transactions.

**Criteria** – How did you (instructor and librarian) know the students had done this well? How did you judge/evaluate the performance?

We read the narratives written by students to identify what they learned. We also asked the students to tell us what they learned.

**Data** – What data did you collect? How did the students perform? Please include the data (even if you have to mail it to us) if at all possible.

Student writing – on handouts and on a blog. Materials students brought back from libraries.

**Best Practices** – What Best Practice would you pass on to other librarians or discipline faculty?

In order to prepare the students for the visit to the library, have the librarian visit the students in their own classroom setting first. Beginning the discussion of library vocabulary and procedures in a familiar setting seemed to help the students absorb the information so when the terms and concepts were reintroduced in the library they were already somewhat familiar with them.

Teach and assess library vocabulary that students will need to communicate effectively in the library. For example, many students previously used the word “rent” to communicate that they borrowed a book. Assess the vocabulary as the instructor would assess other important vocabulary during the course to give it validity.

When doing hands-on assignments that require speaking or technology skills, partner less proficient students with students who have strong skills or provide additional scaffolding. This is especially important if students are required to use the computer to access the online catalog. Be prepared for a wide range of technology skills within the class.

Create library assignments that are relevant to the students’ needs and questions (identified in class). Allow the students to choose from a variety of library tasks. For example, students were asked to find information at a public library by asking a librarian a question. Many choices were provided to meet the range of student interests in the class (i.e. questions about computer classes, story time for children, citizenship information, etc.).

**Key learning** – What’s your observation or reflection on this project? What did you or the faculty member learn from this project?

Most students were familiar with the library; however, their post-reflection writing showed that students’ understanding of the services that libraries provide increased. The library assignments, specifically the public library assignment, greatly increased their exposure to libraries. Furthermore, students expressed that they are now more comfortable using libraries and asking librarians for help. Most plan to use the library more in the future.

Additionally, students that were already comfortable with technology appeared to adapt quickly to using the library websites to find books and renew books. According to students’ feedback, they did not previously know that they could use library websites for these purposes. However, other students would require much more support to use library technologies like online catalogs, due to their low computer literacy levels.

We also learned that adding this level of library work to the regular curriculum was challenging. Owing to a shortage of time we were unable to require students to visit a public library (which was originally the second half of our lesson plan) and so only a portion of our students did so.