

MINI-GRANT REPORTING & ASSESSING AUTHENTIC LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Report for the Winter/Spring Authentic Assessment Mini-Grants Post to <http://informationliteracywactc.pbwiki.com> -- Due June 18, 2010

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 (limit to 200 words)

The purpose of this project was to help developmental education students recognize and select quality sources for their research assignments. Participating classes, one winter quarter (Class 1) and another spring quarter (Class 2), came to the library for three one-hour instruction sessions, and the librarian visited their classroom once. On each occasion the librarian reviewed a slide titled: *How do you know if it's good information?* As students searched the catalog, reference and article databases, and the web, they were asked to consider five aspects of quality: *Accuracy, Authority, Relevance, Currency, and Objectivity*. At the end of each quarter, students were given four citations and summaries for materials about Lou Gehrig's disease. They were asked to choose the best source for a college research paper, and to explain their selection. Responses were scored using a rubric based on information literacy standards from the Association of College and Research Libraries (attached). In spring quarter, the same rubric was applied to an annotated bibliography students submitted as part of their group research projects.

Participants – Who worked on this project?

Librarians: Margaret Thomas

Faculty: Angela Holley and Lynda Swanson, both developmental education instructors at SPSCC

Class name(s) and approximate number of students involved: Reading 96 (2 classes). Approximately 40 students participated.

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

The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically (ACRL Standard Three)

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

Students needed to know the criteria for evaluating information. The five aspects of quality were identified as: *Accuracy, Authority, Relevance, Currency, and Objectivity*. The librarian defined and discussed each term and helped students apply the criteria to various types of information sources.

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

The students worked in the library classroom and on their own. In preparation for group presentations, they learned to find books, reference sources, journal articles and web sites. Topics were related to the books they were reading. As she introduced each new format or type of information, the librarian emphasized quality considerations.

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

At the end of the last library session, students were asked to look at a list of four citations and summaries. They were

instructed to choose the “best” source for a college research paper on Lou Gehrig’s disease, and explain their selection. The instructions noted that there might be more than one “right” answer, and that the more important part was the student’s explanation, which was to be at least three sentences long. This assessment was completed in class in about 15 minutes. Regardless of their responses, the students got points for completing the assignment.

Afterward, the librarian then came to the classroom to explain the scoring and reemphasizes the five aspects of quality discussed during the quarter. Later, Class 2 students turned in annotated bibliographies for their research projects. The instructor graded the bibliographies, while the librarian assessed them against the same information literacy rubric used for the library assignment.

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

Students were evaluated based on how many of the *five aspects of quality* they mentioned in the library assignment, and later in their annotated bibliographies. Students were not required to use the specific words used in class. For instance, one student wrote in his annotated bibliography, “This book is six-years old but it did have some good information on how false documentation is obtained.” For this response, the student got a point for considering *currency*.

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.

Using a rubric developed for the project, the Class 1 instructor and the librarian evaluated the Lou Gehrig’s library assignment for winter quarter. Based on those results we made some small changes, such as agreeing to use the same terminology and reinforce the “quality” concepts in the classroom. In the spring, the Class 2 instructor and the librarian evaluated the Lou Gehrig’s library assignment, and also the annotated bibliographies students turned in as part of their final research projects. We hoped that changes implemented between winter and spring quarters, would result in higher scores on the Lou Gehrig’s assignment for Class 2. Students scored from 0 (low) to 3 (high) on each assignment. The number of students who scored a 3 went from 12 percent in Class 1 to 22 percent for Class 2 – higher, but still not too impressive. A goal for next year is to have at least 50 percent of students consider more than two aspects of quality when evaluating sources (a score of 3).

Scores on the annotated bibliography were higher, but only about half the class turned this assignment in, skewing the results. The classroom teacher also gave specific instructions that students should address the *five aspects of quality* in their annotations; so comparison to scores on the Lou Gehrig’s assignment may not be meaningful.

see Reading 96 rubric	0	1	2	3
Class 1 (Winter)	12%	31%	43%	12%
Class 2 (Spring)	11%	33%	33%	22%
Class 2 (annotated bibliography)	0	0	20%	80%

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

The collaboration between a librarian and a classroom instructor allowed us to explicitly discuss “information literacy” as a goal for Dev Ed students for the first time. After identifying a common goal, we were able to work together to create and assess assignments. In the past, the librarian simply taught a one-hour session tailored to the instructor’s assignment with

little understanding of what went on in the classroom, or the instructor's long-term objectives.

More than one library session was useful because it allowed the librarian to go slower and offered several chances to reinforce the "quality" concept. Also, students got to know the librarian, and several sought her out for help with their Reading assignments.

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

By adopting the same terms for describing quality sources (*Accuracy, Authority, Relevance, Currency and Bias*), the Class 2 instructor was able to reinforce concepts from library class and build on them. In the past, the Class 2 instructor had not asked Reading 96 students to do annotated bibliographies, but she saw how the *five aspects of quality* might serve as a framework. Here is an example of the kind of feedback she gave students on their annotated bibliographies: "You need to evaluate sources by more than relevance to your topic. Consider also bias (How objective is the view?) authority (who wrote it? What are the author's credentials?)."

While only about half the class completed an annotated bibliography, 80 percent of those who did considered more than two aspects of quality. Some of these annotated bibliographies showed college-level competence. (Instructions for the assignment specifically asked students to consider the terms: *Accuracy, Authority, Relevance, Currency and Bias*, while the Lou Gehrig's assignment did not mention these words, but simply asked students to explain their selection.)

In our planning meetings, both instructors offered valuable feedback that the librarian rarely gets after a one-shot library session. In the past, the librarian limited library instruction to just three of the most relevant library resources and gave students time for hands-on practice, but one of the instructors told reported that her students were still overwhelmed by all the information. Based on her suggestion, the librarian will clarify her objective for the first hour of library instruction in Reading 96: *Students will be able to annotate an article, considering aspects of quality.*

With a clearer objective, the librarian will focus instruction, and spend more time on class activities. Perhaps students will read an article and highlight information related to the various aspects of quality using colored markers. The annotation exercise will serve as a more general introductory library session that would prepare them for annotating their own sources later on in the research process.

This would also give students more time to settle on a topic, before the librarian asks them to dive into the databases for the first time. Several students mentioned that they felt unprepared to learn about library resources before they had a clear topic in mind. They spent much of the first session talking to group members or searching Google for possible topics.

The classroom instructors and the librarian were pleased with the results of integrating library instruction into Reading 96 coursework throughout winter and spring quarters. They plan to continue their collaboration.