

STORIES FOR ADVOCACY

Students Improve Research Skills

As told by Vonna Pitel, Cedarburg School District, Cedarburg, WI to Suzie Boss

Information literacy requires new skills of today's students. In the Cedarburg School District in suburban Wisconsin, high school students are becoming more discerning readers and more analytical thinkers by using technology for research through the collaborative planning of the library media specialist with classroom teachers.

When students turn in assignments, they include bibliographies that show they have not only found information, but evaluated it.

The catalyst for change has been the district's purchase of a variety of online subscription databases. The library media specialist collaborates with teachers in key content areas. Together, they plan learning activities that integrate these new resources and help students meet state standards.

In English, science, and social studies, for example, students use online resources such as a database of articles that take pro and con positions on issues. Students not only conduct research, but evaluate sources for point of view, authority, reliability, author bias, and other factors. Because the databases are linked to the district Web site, students can access the information from school, home, or library computers. What's more, students gain new understanding of research methods, such as using different syntax for conducting online searches for professional articles, periodicals, and other types of information.

Lifelong learning requires students to be able to use a variety of resources to gather and evaluate information. With increasing amounts of information available online, students need new skills to sift through data and find reliable information to answer their questions. In this district, teachers are seeing evidence that new learning is taking hold. When students turn in assignments, they include bibliographies that show they have not only found information, but evaluated it. They are becoming more literate and better prepared for academic research challenges of the future.

Follow up: The New Jersey Network filmed the B2B project in the spring and will air it in September or October 2005 under a Character Education program.

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