

IMLS National Leadership Grant

Information Literacy for the 21st-Century Learner: Preparing Students to Learn for Life

At-Risk Students and Information Literacy: Assessing and Teaching the Skills Needed for College Success

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 61% of freshmen entering community colleges are enrolled in remedial or developmental courses. These students often receive little in the way of information literacy instruction, and thus do not have the research and critical thinking skills necessary for college success. There has been little published in the way of instructional materials for at-risk students. In 2003, NILRC, the Network of Illinois Learning Resources in Community Colleges, received a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to address the information literacy skills of at-risk students as they transition from high school into college.

In five community college districts in Illinois, collaborative teams of high school and college faculty and librarians are creating and implementing information literacy programs specifically designed to help their at-risk students succeed. Project activities include development of an assessment instrument, the assessment of information literacy skills, the development of learning resources, and the integration of the learning resources into the curriculum. Throughout the project, special consideration has been given to the unique learning styles and needs of at-risk students.

Project teams have designed an information literacy assessment instrument specifically for at-risk students. The instrument assesses 13 objectives identified by the teams as the most critical to college success, and surveys students about their attitudes and self-confidence in seeking, finding and using information. Because at-risk students are often poor test-takers, focus groups are held as an additional method of assessment.

Using the results of the needs assessment, the five teams are creating information literacy learning resources for their at-risk students. The resources are designed for a variety of courses at the high school and college freshman levels, and will be integrated into the classroom curriculum. The resources include lesson plans with objectives, activities for several learning styles, and ideas on how to teach concepts using simplified language.

The tangible products of the project, along with other information literacy resources for at-risk students, will be made freely available to teachers and librarians through a web-based repository. A campaign to promote awareness of the project, its findings and its resources is already underway. The project manager and several team members have made presentations at several regional and national conferences. A national teleconference will be held in early 2006 to reach an even wider audience.

The collaborative relationships that have been formed among the participating high school and college teachers and librarians are likely to last long after the formal project has ended. Several participants have expressed that because of increased communication with their colleagues, they have a much better understanding of the needs of at-risk students and how to help them achieve their goals.

Possessing the most necessary information literacy skills, more at-risk students will achieve college success and become lifelong learners.

Needs Assessment Summary of Scores of Project Participants, Grouped by NILRC Indicators

Note: NILRC Indicators are based on the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education, as established by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). These indicators were selected by project teachers and librarians as being the most critical to the college success of at-risk students.

The test was administered solely as a needs assessment, to be used by project teams to create appropriate learning resources for their own students. The scores below are averages of all 500 at-risk students in the five community colleges and five high schools in Illinois involved in the project. Many of the college students were at-risk because of placement test scores. Most participating high school students were at-risk because of parental level of education or poverty guidelines. Because of the wide range of at-risk criteria represented in the students tested, comparison of community college and high school scores should not be made.

<u>NILRC Indicators</u>	Average student scores	
	All community colleges in project	All high schools in project
A Explores general information sources to increase familiarity with the topic.	46 %	49 %
B Defines or modifies the information need to achieve a manageable focus.	53 %	51 %
C Identifies key concepts and terms that describe the information need.	64 %	73 %
D Identifies the value and differences of potential resources in a variety of formats.	61 %	54 %
E Identifies the purpose and audience of potential resources.	22 %	22 %
F Identifies keywords, synonyms and related terms for the information needed	32 %	36 %
G Uses various search systems to retrieve information in a variety of formats.	35 %	38 %
H Uses various classification schemes and other systems (e.g. call number systems or indexes) to locate information resources within the library or to identify specific sites for physical exploration.	60 %	68 %
I Assesses the quantity, quality, and relevance of the search results to determine whether alternative information retrieval systems or investigative methods should be utilized.	64 %	70 %
J Differentiates between the types of sources cited and understands the elements and correct syntax of a citation for a wide range of resources.	65 %	69 %
K Records all pertinent citation information for future reference.	52 %	58 %
L Examines and compares information from various sources in order to evaluate reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias.	31 %	31 %
M Demonstrates an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and does not represent work attributable to others as his/her own.	16 %	15 %

NILRC Indicators Mapped to ACRL Information Literacy Standards, Performance Indicators and Outcomes

NILRC Indicator	ACRL Standard
A Explores general information sources to increase familiarity with the topic.	Standard 1: The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed. 1. The information literate student defines and articulates the need for information. c. Explores general information sources to increase familiarity with the topic.
B Defines or modifies the information need to achieve a manageable focus.	d. Defines or modifies the information need to achieve a manageable focus
C Identifies key concepts and terms that describe the information need.	e. Identifies key concepts and terms that describe the information need.
D Identifies the value and differences of potential resources in a variety of formats.	2. The information literate student identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information. c. Identifies the value and differences of potential resources in a variety of formats (e.g., multimedia, database, website, data set, audio/visual, book)
E Identifies the purpose and audience of potential resources.	d. Identifies the purpose and audience of potential resources (e.g., popular vs. scholarly, current vs. historical)
F Identifies keywords, synonyms and related terms for the information needed	Standard 2: The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently. 2. The information literate student constructs and implements effectively-designed search strategies. b. Identifies keywords, synonyms and related terms for the information needed.
G Uses various search systems to retrieve information in a variety of formats.	3. The information literate student retrieves information online or in person using a variety of methods. a. Uses various search systems to retrieve information in a variety of formats.
H Uses various classification schemes and other systems (e.g. call number systems or indexes) to locate information resources within the library or to identify specific sites for physical exploration.	b. Uses various classification schemes and other systems (e.g., call number systems or indexes) to locate information resources within the library or to identify specific sites for physical exploration.
I Assesses the quantity, quality, and relevance of the search results to determine whether alternative information retrieval systems or investigative methods should be utilized.	Standard 2: The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently. 4. The information literate student refines the search strategy if necessary. a. Assesses the quantity, quality, and relevance of the search results to determine whether alternative information retrieval systems or investigative methods should be utilized.
J Differentiates between the types of sources cited and understands the elements and correct syntax of a citation for a wide range of resources.	5. The information literate student extracts, records, and manages the information and its sources. c. Differentiates between the types of sources cited and understands the elements and correct syntax of a citation for a wide range of resources.
K Records all pertinent citation information for future reference.	d. Records all pertinent citation information for future reference.
L Examines and compares information from various sources in order to evaluate reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias.	Standard 3: The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system. 2. The information literate student articulates and applies initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources. a. Examines and compares information from various sources in order to evaluate reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias.
M Demonstrates an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and does not represent work attributable to others as his/her own.	Standard 5: The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally. 2. The information literate student follows laws, regulations, institutional policies, and etiquette related to the access and use of information resources. f. Demonstrates an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and does not represent work attributable to others as his/her own.

Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education ACRL 2000

Standard 1: The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.

Performance Indicator 1.1. The information literate student defines and articulates the need for information.

Performance Indicator 1.2. The information literate student identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information.

Performance Indicator 1.3. The information literate student considers the costs and benefits of acquiring the needed information.

Performance Indicator 1.4. The information literate student reevaluates the nature and extent of the information need.

Standard 2: The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.

Performance Indicator 2.1. The information literate student selects the most appropriate investigative methods or information retrieval systems for accessing the needed information.

Performance Indicator 2.2. The information literate student constructs and implements effectively-designed search strategies.

Performance Indicator 2.3. The information literate student retrieves information online or in person using a variety of methods.

Performance Indicator 2.4. The information literate student refines the search strategy if necessary.

Performance Indicator 2.5. The information literate student extracts, records, and manages the information and its sources.

Standard 3: The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

Performance Indicator 3.1. The information literate student summarizes the main ideas to be extracted from the information gathered.

Performance Indicator 3.2. The information literate student articulates and applies initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources.

Performance Indicator 3.3. The information literate student synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts.

Performance Indicator 3.4. The information literate student compares new knowledge with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, or other unique characteristics of the information.

Performance Indicator 3.5. The information literate student determines whether the new knowledge has an impact on the individual's value system and takes steps to reconcile differences.

Performance Indicator 3.6. The information literate student validates understanding and interpretation of the information through discourse with other individuals, subject-area experts, and/or practitioners.

Performance Indicator 3.7. The information literate student determines whether the initial query should be revised.

Standard 4: The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.

Performance Indicator 4.1. The information literate student applies new and prior information to the planning and creation of a particular product or performance.

Performance Indicator 4.2. The information literate student revises the development process for the product or performance.

Performance Indicator 4.3. The information literate student communicates the product or performance effectively to others.

Standard 5: The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

Performance Indicator 5.1. The information literate student understands many of the ethical, legal and socio-economic issues surrounding information and information technology.

Performance Indicator 5.2. The information literate student follows laws, regulations, institutional policies, and etiquette related to the access and use of information resources.

Performance Indicator 5.3. The information literate student acknowledges the use of information sources in communicating the product or performance.