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Information Literacy Scaffolds in the 9-12 Classroom

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Information Literacy Scaffolds in the 9-12 Classroom

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Problem Statement

Although sophisticated in certain technological areas, like social media, high schoolers are unprepared to find and evaluate resources for research.

Classroom teachers often too busy to teach such topics, and they assumed the concepts had been mastered in middle school.

Information literacy prowess often boils down to a student lucky enough to get a teacher who regularly takes the class to the library and/or parents who reinforce concepts at home.
11th Grade American Literature: *Of Mice and Men*

Underlying the novel are the ideas of consumerism and the American Dream. The teacher wanted the students to relate those concepts to current world events.

The problem, however, is that students often have so little an idea of what goes on in world events that they have a problem formulating thesis statements or knowing meaningful keywords.
Collaboration Examples cont.

• Language Arts
  • *Of Mice and Men* (cont.)
  • Opposing Viewpoints (Gale) and Student Resources in Context (Gale)

Together we brainstormed useful keywords, such as student loans, celebrity culture, and executive compensation; and ideas for thesis statements, including: Do money and possessions make someone happy? Has Black Friday gotten out of hand? and Does spending create a robust national economy?
Collaboration Examples cont.

Language Arts

11th Grade American Literature: *Melville/Hawthorne*

Are humans inherently good or evil?

Performed Google search to evaluate usefulness

I found that modeling the research process while verbalizing what I would do when I hit dead-ends or discovered quality resources helped them to attempt searches individually later.

I found that with vague research concepts students were more willing to use physical books than they would if they were doing a straightforward topic such as “biomes.”
Collaboration Examples cont.

Language Arts

9th Grade Literature: To Kill a Mockingbird
Is justice always served?
Find examples of modern-day Tom Robinsons to compare with the book’s plot.

What comprises an annotated bibliography? What is the point of an annotated bibliography? Why should one start with a paid database instead of a search engine? How can students cite articles properly?

The Language Arts teachers had implemented a department-wide annotated bibliography format.
Social Studies

AP US History: Modern-day Bill of Rights

Walked the students through a model search. In Academic Search Complete (EBSCO), querying 7th amendment returned multiple articles, not only about the US, but also about China. After filtering by Geography, there were still a large number of results, so we talked about putting quotation marks around the search phrase, writing out seventh, and brainstorming keywords such as right to jury.

The students were also shown citation assistance tools such as EasyBib.com and CitationMachine.net.
Social Studies

AP US History: DBQs of Primary Sources
First defined the phrase. Next, discussed why databases were a good option. Although many primary sources are in the public domain, often they are not labeled as such, thus limiting search results to the students’ prior knowledge.

Many databases, such as MAS Ultra (EBSCO), Annals of American History (Britannica), and U.S. History in Context (Gale) tag primary documents in their collections, so students can browse or limit searches by document type.
Collaboration Examples cont.

Social Studies

AP Macroeconomics: What causes the U.S. labor force participation rate to decline?

We began by free-associating why people might leave the workforce (staying home with children, joining the military, retiring, disability).

Even as an experienced researcher, I find government sites to be difficult. For this exercise, I pre-screened potential sources such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. Census, and the Social Security Administration; and non-government sites like PEW Research and Gallup.
Social Studies

AP Human Geography: Ancestry project

Ancestry sites are often password-protected and extremely in-depth. By showing the students how to navigate these sites, it saved time and confusion.

We discussed which immigrant groups would have been processed through various points of entry to the U.S. This project helped to demonstrate to students the items unavailable through web searches, since much of ancestral heritage information comes from paid sources.
Differences between scaffolding and hand-holding?

High schoolers still require adult direction when learning information literacy skills. Educators often assume someone else has taught the basics or think that students should already know the skills.

With technology’s proliferation, many teachers may believe that information literacy skills are something students naturally acquire.
Implications cont.

Educators need to remember that information literacy skills are more than just standards to be “checked off”—they involve long-term, cross-curricular, higher-order thinking processes that students need help refining.

Teenagers probably will avoid practicing these skills unless required to do so. After all, it is easier to click on the first result from a search engine, but as concerned educators, we owe it to students to refuse to allow them to sell themselves short.
Study Ties College Success to Students’ Exposure to a High School Librarian

Questions?
Thoughts?
Ideas?
Suggestions?