curriculum corner

David V. Loertscher

**Research and Practice
in a Time of Change**

A good information professional tries to be a lighthouse in a sea of mediocre teaching and learning practices. It is one of the most frustrating things about the job. We hold up our beacon of resources: information technology, every imaginable variety of material, and collaborative strategies. We invite the world to use us to enhance learning. We want to make a difference. We love the trend toward more inquiry because information technology and inquiry are such natural partners. We say that research supports the notion that we make a difference.

But does the research really support the idea that library media programs make an impact on teaching and learning? The general answer has to be a qualified "yes." The qualified part means that the potential is there, but each professional must assess whether specific LMC programs really make a difference in a real school with real teachers and students.

The only way to find out is to turn the information literacy model we teach our students back onto ourselves. How can we find out if we are making a difference? Try the following examples. The data you gather could be extremely instructive to you, your colleagues, and the educators and parents in your community.

Research Finding

Young people who read a lot excel in reading comprehension, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and writing style.

Is It True?

The question, should you choose to solve it is: How do we create an environment where students read more and what is the result?

To study this question, design an intervention, carry it out, and evaluate the results. Krashen's essential interventions for raising the odds of success are:

- Plentiful and fresh reading materials
- Maximum access to those reading materials
- Time to read
- Daily reading aloud
- Long-term commitment.

After creating and doing your own study, did you replicate the research finding?

Theoretical Postulate

Young people who internalize their own information literacy model are better learners.

Is It True?

The question, should you choose to solve it is: How will the teacher and I know if students are becoming better at identifying problems; gathering information; reading, viewing, and listening critically; synthesizing; reporting; and evaluating?

Use the information literacy model to ascertain how many students use information literacy models and how sophisticated the students are in using the models.

After designing and carrying out your own study, did you replicate the theoretical postulate?

The only way to take advantage of the advice coming from both theorists and researchers is to test the advice ourselves with our own students and our own teachers. Some would say that each practicing information professional must constantly be engaged in action research. We can analyze our success using the tool that we teach.

When you feel like your lighthouse is burning out, remember: It wasn't a pharmaceutical researcher, but an Australian doctor in the field treating stomach ulcer patients who discovered that a bacterium caused the painful ulcers. Practitioners in the field doing applied research will be responsible for much of the advancement in information science and technology. We have too few researchers and the advances in information technology come too rapidly. Practitioners will have to help. ●

Bibliography

Krashen, Stephen. The Power of Reading. Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1993.

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