

Connecting Public and School Libraries through Information Literacy
Brainstorming Meeting
May 30, 2003
recorder: Susan Barnes

Attended: Rhona Klein, director of project, John Backes, Susan Barnes, Steve DelVecchio, Ellen Duffy, Karen Farley, Karen Goettling, Nancy Graf, John Holmes, Gail Kouame, Lori Mon, Martha Shinnors, Rand Simmons, Elaine Twogood, JoAnne VanderKooi, Cindy Wigen.

Purpose of meeting: Brainstorming: LSTA funding is available finally so we can now begin this project. The proposal as written is not written in stone—we can consider other options. Goal today is to develop a 3-year plan for the project, including scope, goals, and activities to reach those goals. Rhona would also like to have a list of actions to be taken. The purpose of today's meeting is *not* to define "information literacy." For the purposes of this project we'll use a basic definition, that IL is the ability to access, evaluate, synthesize, and use information.

Background on this project: this is more focused than the previous Information Literacy project. This focuses on IL skills of the K12 population and their parents/caregivers/etc. The state's EALRS core objectives in core subjects, which students are expected to reach by the 10th grade, provide statewide standards for academic knowledge and skills which must be met in order to graduate. These can be a driving force for the project, with public libraries a good point of collaboration with schools. "Working with schools" means collaboration with all stakeholders, including principals, in addition to school library media centers. This project will fund collaborative projects.

Review of previous Information Literacy Project: Y1 was needs assessment by UW iSchool via written surveys, email, phone, focus groups. Learned about state of IL awareness in WA. Y2 was marketing by a professional firm, training and education. Y3 included assessment of curriculum and training by UW iSchool and more training—aimed at those who had attended the first round of training, which was theoretical. This was more practical, and built on the theory presented in the first session. Issue arose: conducting outcomes-based assessment was extremely difficult because needed data were not collected at the outset. Lesson for this project: consider what data we need to collect. Obtaining good data going in is a prerequisite for useful data as a result of the project.

Review of new proposal: Original goals were reviewed, and other WA State Lib projects with tie-in potential were mentioned, including the Virtual Reference project and Statewide Database Licensing. This proposal wants to foster partnerships between public libraries and schools, and perhaps beyond (community college libraries, for example). Y1 funding is fixed, \$74K, and based on planning and needs assessment we can request a revision of budget for Y2. Y1 funding is probably just enough for Rhona's salary and for steering committee meetings. Y2 begins January or February 2004, so Y1 is half over already because the arrival of LSTA funds was delayed. Continued funding for Y2 and Y3 must be requested from Council, and Rhona and Rand will be working on this request

this summer. Funding levels for Y2 and Y3 will be determined by Council, in the context of other projects and priorities.

We want to learn from the IL project and gather measurable data about skills and knowledge at the beginning of this project, going beyond a needs assessment. We will need budgetary support in Y2 for rigorous data gathering. Rhona will provide a recommended publication to us all: “Public Libraries as Partners in Youth Development”

Defining general expectations for the project was the next agenda item. The group began with members expressing their own expectations:

- Bottom line results: collaborative models built
- Partnerships extending beyond a grant cycle
- Recognition of need for IL among students and parents (and teachers and principals)
- Public/academic/school libraries plan together to meet needs of students
- Public libraries are 100% related to students’ work in school; public libraries should be able to recognize themselves as a solid partner, with others also recognizing this public library role
- Public libraries better understanding of schools, schools better understanding of public libraries, so both can meet students’ needs better
- Learn what structural changes need to be in place to support communication and collaboration between public/academic/school libraries so that this becomes part of normal behavior
- Create opportunities for libraries to get together continually, not just once but to continue to work together to sustain activities
- Address needs of underserved/underrepresented populations, such as refugees and non-English speaking
- Address connection in K12 to lifelong learning and explore the public library’s roles
- Take advantage of expertise and develop shared expertise
- Repetition for sustainability, since a one-year project doesn’t effect change
- Pair school and public libraries to understand that they’re in a joint effort to create lifelong learners; develop easy-to-use tools; create credibility; include parents in creating educated population; concrete, specific projects
- Build collaboration around EALRS, use specific examples, make sure various WA State Library initiatives work together and state government hears results
- Focus of project should be narrowed since the budget will not support it as written; narrow by collecting good data to find out most effective way to allocate money; develop good models useful to teachers, parents, librarians; models that are practical, address specific needs, and are useful to citizens of state; good data gathering will allow us to pass results on, to provide a block to build on; need something measurable at end so that, if some projects are not successful we will know why
- Need buy-in from administrators, must work with principals, district level, classroom teachers, public library upper administration

- Emphasize planning for evaluation so data provided are useful
- Get school administration and parents talking about IL
- Keep private schools and home schoolers in the loop
- Go beyond the mainstream and reach those not connected with traditional resources
- Grant emphasizes training so steering committee must decide how much resources to allocate to models and how much for training of cohorts
- Keep curriculum and training focused—who we want to train, where, what—provide something practical that they can take back with a feeling of “I can do this”
- Perhaps project should be renamed
- EALRS are not narrow. Need focus, maybe not just on a group but on a structure for collaboration
- Most academic learning is content-focused except reading and IL which are both process-oriented
- Foster curiosity and interest in children, don’t get hung up on passing tests, raise awareness of how to deal with info glut
- Don’t be “schooley”—public libraries are tied to lifelong learning, not to a curriculum
- Public libraries’ strengths include that they are at the point of need and point of interest
- What are students’ motivations?
- The AASL Information Power document provided school libs with a focus of what school libraries do, and the K12 Project will be training large numbers of school library staff
- Goals of education reform act include linking EALRS to world of work; IL only happens at the point of need and must be integrated into the learning process
- Importance of relevance for connection with audience; library board uninterested in databases until linked with real life
- Get schools on public library Web sites as well as public libraries on schools’ Web sites

Next task for the day: determine project’s goals.

Consensus was that the project has one overreaching goal, to initiate and share cooperative public library and school information literacy projects to increase students’ ability to locate, evaluate, and use information.

Strategies or objectives include:

- Build libraries’ capacity to collaborate and partner, focus on school and public libraries, conducting training and building models, increasing awareness in public library staff and K12 school staff, including iSchool students in strategy, working with parents, including private and home schools.
- Increase awareness in public library staff and school library staff of students’ information seeking needs

- Provide funding for collaborative projects between public libraries and schools, focused on students' ability to find, evaluate, and use information
- Improve public library knowledge of instructional models and the WA state EALRS as they relate to information literacy
- Develop, ferret out, and disseminate best practices (models, case studies, pathways)
- Improve schools' knowledge of public library programs and services as they relate to information literacy (such as after-school and summer programs)

The day concluded with small-group discussions of activities that could be conducted to meet the above goals.