



CCNews

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Introducing the “Promising Practices” Section of CCNews

By **Heidi J. Stevenson**, Editor, *CCNews*, University of the Pacific

In addition to the customary information you have grown to expect from *CCNews* about present and future CCTE conferences as well as updates regarding the organization’s activities, we have added a new section we think you are going to love. In this new “Promising Practices” section we will provide best practices, uplifting stories and win-wins in education.

Since not all members and delegates are able to attend the CCTE conferences, another objective of this section is to provide a means for poster presenters, among others, to publish their ideas and activities for all members to share in and enjoy. Unlike the organization’s two outstanding journals, *CCNews*’ “Promising Practices” will offer shorter, less stringently research-based pieces that are practical in nature.

In this inaugural issue of the “Promising Practices” section we revisit an edifying piece on developing informational literacy from Laurie Prothro and Erin Daniels (see pages 2 & 3). In addition, Christina Giguere and Jody Guarino share their successful experience of bringing University of California, Irvine mathematics methods students into a local elementary school. It is my hope that these stories and the “Promising Practices” section offer ideas and inspiration. I encourage you to submit a piece for publication; to do so just e-mail your text to me at hstevenson@pacific.edu

Promising Practices

School Sites as a Site for Student Learning and Preservice Teacher Learning

By **Christina Giguere & Jody Guarino**
University of California, Irvine

Responding to Linda Darling-Hammond’s (2010) contention, “learning to practice in practice, with expert guidance, is essential to becoming a great teacher...” (p. 40), the multiple subject credential program at University of California, Irvine (UCI) is now holding a few classes at partnering school sites. This fall, one section of the mathematics methods course is being taught at Chaparral Elementary, a K-5 partnership school. Five of the 10 course meetings are held on site at Chaparral, providing preservice teachers (PSTs) with opportunities to work directly with students, practicing instructional strategies under the supervision of lecturers Jody Guarino and Valerie Henry. PSTs have structured opportunities to practice what they were learning with elementary students.

Chaparral teacher and UCI mentor teacher Marie Sykes invited candidates to observe a mathematics lesson in her second grade classroom. PSTs observed as Marie and her students investigated the concept of 10 and effective strategies in conceptualizing subtraction of 10 when crossing over hundreds. Following the lesson observation and a debrief with Mrs. Sykes, PSTs classified and analyzed student work samples from the lesson, looking for evidence of student progress toward the learning goal.

In addition to observing classroom lessons, holding classes at school sites such as Chaparral has allowed PSTs to regularly work with students. PSTs have conducted individual diagnostic mathematics assessments and taught mathematics mini-lessons to students across multiple grade levels, immediately practicing what they are learning in their coursework, in a collaborative environment where feedback, analysis, and reflective practice are the norm.

Information Literacy Now:

Helping Students Become Information Savvy One Step at a Time

By **Laurie Prothro**

*District Librarian, Harmony Union School District,
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& **Erin Daniels**

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With the Internet at our fingertips, getting information today may at first seem simpler than it ever has been—just Google your question and, presto! the answer appears. Or does it? How many results, or hits, did your question produce? Did these hits give you the data you were seeking? What type of information is it: a blog, an encyclopedia entry, a commercial website? Who is the author, and is that author credible, that information current?

One of the biggest problems students encounter today is being overwhelmed by this vast, ever-changing world where a million types of information with a million different purposes exist. If we want our students to be successful, we need to provide them with the skills to navigate a wide range of sources (regardless of format), to evaluate the purpose and perspective of sources, to select efficiently the most useful and credible sources, and to be able both to use and to create information—in short, to become information literate.

The following four activities were created to encourage students to start thinking more about what information is, while demonstrating the collaboration possible between library and classroom to promote information literacy in our students. These activities were developed in partnership between a school librarian and a university librarian in Sonoma County for a teacher training in a local school district. The goal was to create some basic exercises that teachers at any level could take back to the classroom and integrate easily into their existing curricula. The activities presented are by no means exhaustive; rather, they serve as examples of the types of strategies that can be woven into the curriculum throughout a student's education to incrementally promote information literacy.

Low-Stakes Writing Prompts

Many teachers use the concept of a weekly “literature log” with their students to strengthen writing skills through low-stakes writing opportunities. These logs are the perfect place to introduce questions that get students thinking about the complexity of the information environment in which they live. Some sample prompts might be:

- In what ways are you adding information into the world (think MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)? How do other people judge this information?
- How is a song a piece of information?
- What makes information believable to you?

- Do you ever contribute false information to the world? What reasons do you have for doing this?
- What's your favorite visual information? What characteristics make you like it?
- What are the different ways you get information? Which source do you trust the most and why?

Getting students to think, write, and talk about information as a subject is an important first step in developing information savvy in students; low-stakes writing about the subject of information allows students the opportunity to think critically, and continuously, about it without pressure.

Understanding Different Types of Information

Helping students to distinguish between different types of information is essential, particularly in the digital world where all information, regardless of purpose and quality, is presented in the same format. While most students are used to searching the web, they may not be able to distinguish between a blog, a newspaper, an online store, and a personal website. These distinctions matter; a blog serves an entirely different purpose than a news story, while a personal website exists for different reasons than a government site. Any activity that allows students to learn to decode the format cues of digital information is a step towards helping them choose the most appropriate sources for their needs.

One simple way to strengthen this skill is to have your students do a Google search on a topic (with everyone using the same search terms) in a computer lab. The students then examine closely the first five results. Ask them to determine which “type” of information each site is (is it a store, a news outlet, an organizations website?). How are they describing the characteristics of certain sites? Are there some sites that are particularly difficult to figure out just what it really is? Discuss the students' findings in small groups and follow up with them on the purpose of each type of information and for what uses it might be most appropriate.

Evaluating Information Sources

One of the most important, yet most complex, information literacy skills is the ability to evaluate the credibility, relevance and usefulness of information. Developing this skill can start at a young age, becoming ever more sophisticated as students move up through the grades.

For this activity, select one piece of information for your students to examine (a web site, a printed article, etc.). Have them answer the following questions about that piece of information, then discuss the results as a class:

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Information Literacy Now: Helping Students Become Information Savvy One Step at a Time

(continued from previous page)

- Who created the information, and why?
- What type of information is it?
- Why do you trust or mistrust this information?
- How current is this piece of information?

Ultimately, through repetition of activities such as this one, these questions of trustworthiness, reliability, and currency will become automatic in students' minds each time they encounter a piece of information, and student responses will grow more complex as their analytical and evaluative skills emerge.

Choosing Research Topics

When writing a research paper, students often struggle with choosing topics that are both meaningful and manageable. Papers with topics that are too broad (which is often the case) are frustrating for students to write and instructors to read. A quick but effective exercise to focus your students is to have them write their potential research topic in the middle of a piece of paper with their name on it. The students then arrange themselves in a circle, and pass their topic paper one person to the right. The student receiving the paper writes a question about the topic on the piece of paper. For example, if Student A wrote "The Middle Ages" as their initial topic,

Student B might write "What location will you study?" or "Are you looking at social customs or warfare?" on Student A's paper.

Keep rotating papers until the students' own paper returns to them. By the time Student A gets his or her paper back, in a class of 25 students, he or she will have 25 different, more focused, ways to think about their topic. Allow students several minutes with their newly augmented topic sheet; have them circle two or three ideas about their topic they find interesting. In most cases, students will end up narrowing their topic significantly, thus creating a more manageable research process.

Conclusion

By incorporating information-based activities such as these into their regular curriculum, teachers provide students multiple opportunities across multiple years to strengthen their information literacy skills in a way that is meaningful and essential to the world in which we live. The basic information literacy goals addressed by each of these activities can apply to almost all grade levels, from kindergarten upward. For more on information literacy, see the American Association of School Librarians Information Literacy site at:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslissues/aaslinfolit/informationliteracy1.cfm>.

CCNews Call for Articles and News Items

Do you have a successful practice or partnership with another university, parents, teachers, a county office, a school district, or a K-12 school you would like to share with your CCTE colleagues? Have you discovered an effective assignment that your students enjoy, and that you think other teacher educators might like to know about and try? Are there books, curricula, or other resources you or your program uses with great success? Maybe you have opinions or information you would like to voice.

If you would like to share your passion and ideas with others, please draft a brief article to submit to the new *Promising Practices* section of *CCNews*. Just e-mail your submissions as a double-spaced Microsoft Word text and send as an e-mail attachment to hstevenson@pacific.edu

CCNews also welcomes reports, news items, updates, or announcements about any teacher education-related activities and events for the other sections of future issues.

—Heidi J. Stevenson, Editor, *CCNews*, University of the Pacific