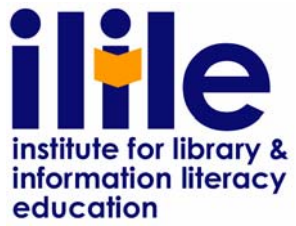
FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT

National Research Grant

Powerful Partnerships:
The Role of Library Media Specialists in Preservice Teachers' Acquisition of Information Literacy Skills

University of New Haven

February – December 2004



Institute for Library and Information Literacy Education (ILILE)

Kent State University

December 2004

Institute for Library and Information Literacy Education (ILILE)
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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT – FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT

February – December, 2004
Powerful Partnerships:
The Role of Library Media Specialists in Preservice Teachers' Acquisition of Information Literacy Skills

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BUDGET REPORT:

Date	Budget Item	Amount Expended	Purchase Orders in Process	Invoices submitted to ILILE	Date submitted to ILILE
	Submitted to ILILE				
Project Total: $5,000					

EVALUATION COMPOSITE

Provide the Total Number of Participants involved in the project:

__30___ Students – specify grade level or academic level:

Graduate students enrolled in Computer Applications course, a required course in the UNH Teacher Education Program: 14 elementary teacher candidates and 16 secondary teacher candidates

__3___ Teachers/Faculty – specify grade level, content area and/or academic discipline:

2 Instructors (Computer Applications – see above)
1 Assistant Professor (Principal Investigator)

__30_ School Library Media Specialists

_____ Administrators

_1__ Support Staff (Technology Specialist)

_____ Other (specify) _____

NARRATIVE REPORT (3-5 pages)

-DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM

This project investigated the role of library media specialists in assisting preservice teachers to acquire critical literacy skills and to apply those skills in the evaluation and instructional use of electronic information resources. Thirty preservice teachers (N = 14 elementary; N = 16 secondary) in one graduate teacher education program completed a field assignment as part of their coursework (Computer Applications for Teachers). The field assignment required each teacher candidate to interview a library media specialist about criteria for evaluating electronic information resources. Preservice teachers and their partnering library media specialists then collaboratively selected and evaluated an electronic resource, which they then incorporated into an instructional activity they planned together (see Appendix A: Field Assignment Protocol). In addition, students attended classes at the school demonstration sites, observed demonstrations of electronic resources by library media specialists, and presented their collaboratively-designed instructional activities using the technology available at demonstration sites.

-PURPOSE OF PROGRAM

The purpose of our project was to develop partnerships between preservice teachers and library media specialists. The project was designed to introduce preservice teachers to the "information power" that can result from teacher-library media specialist collaborations. Thus, one practical goal of our project was to jumpstart teacher-library media specialist collaborations and to encourage these teachers to routinely seek such collaborations as they begin their careers. Our research goal was to investigate the role of the library media specialist as instructional consultant in facilitating preservice teachers' acquisition of information literacy skills. The project was designed to enable the instructional role of the school library media specialist -- a role that is often called for in the literature(AASL & AECT, 1988; 1998)., but less often implemented because of institutional constraints (Putnam, 1996).

-GOALS & OBJECTIVES – identify the goals and objectives for the project and describe how they relate to ILILE goals and objectives

Our project goals include both research and practical outcomes:

a) facilitate teacher-library media specialist collaborations through a program that partners preservice teachers with school library media specialists.
b) enable the role of the library media specialist as instructional consultants
c) investigate the ways in which library media specialists contribute to preservice teachers' acquisition of electronic information literacy

Our goals are consistent with the priorities of Institute for Information Literacy Education (ILILE) in several areas. First, our project prepared preservice educators to use information resources to enhance instruction; at the same time, it afforded library media specialists an opportunity to serve as instructional consultants. Second, our project can serve as a replicable model for colleges of education interested in

integrating information literacy skills into coursework and field experiences. Third, the results of our research contribute to the field's understanding of the ways in which library media specialists increase teachers' knowledge and use of electronic information resources as teaching and learning tools. Finally, our project contributes to the outreach mission of ILILE as it served to promote collaboration between future teachers and media specialists.

-ACTIVITIES/METHODS – summarize the specific activities and methods undertaken to create and implement this project

Computer Applications course: This course was co-designed and team taught by the elementary school partnership principal (Donna Leake, Ph.D.) and a university staff member (Elaine Blosick, Education Department Computer Coordinator). Thirty preservice teachers (14 elementary and 16 secondary) participated in this course. Four of the thirteen class sessions were held at the partnership sites where library media specialists demonstrated equipment and software, provided information about the evaluation of electronic resources, and reviewed ethical guidelines for the educational use of electronic media (e.g., copyright restrictions). Both elementary and secondary candidates attended classes at the primary demonstration site; in addition, secondary candidates attended a demonstration at the high school media center in the participating district.

Field Assignment: The 30 preservice teachers participating in this course completed a field assignment in which they interviewed a library media specialist at their individual internship sites and collaboratively planned an instructional application using a selected electronic information resource (see Appendix B for an example of a completed field assignment). The preservice teachers then shared their "findings" and instructional activities with colleagues during a class session held at the primary demonstration site. Using the Smart Board, the presenters recorded and analyzed their data as they presented their findings. Data were categorized into three areas: electronic information resources, evaluative criteria, and instructional activities. Additionally, instructional activities were categorized according to the purpose (student independent research versus in-class instruction. Evaluative criteria were additionally categorized into three areas: (1) introduced/taught in whole-group instruction as part of LMS presentation; (2) used as a selection tool; and (3) activated only during collaborative planning of instructional activity (see Appendix C).

Evaluation Survey: Participating library media specialists were surveyed to determine how often they reported having opportunities to serve as instructional consultants and how their experience with our preservice teachers compared to their usual interactions with teachers at their schools. The response rate was 43%. See Appendix D for the results of the survey.

-RESEARCH OUTCOMES – identify the research methodology employed in this project and evaluate the results; include quantitative and qualitative information

The field assignments, including interviews and instructional activities, as well as class presentations, were analyzed to answer the research questions.

1. What advice do library media specialists provide preservice teachers about selecting and evaluating electronic information resources, both in whole group instructional settings and in individual partnership situations?

Group Instruction: The initial presentation delivered by the library media specialist (LMS) focused on the technology available to teachers at the demonstration site (laptop/desktop computers, mobile computer lab, Smart Board, Palm One (record keeping and science applications), digital microscopes and cameras, grade book programs, video editing and video conferencing). The second library media

specialist presentation focused on information resources: Online and CD resources available on the library computers (electronic access to local/state/national library catalogs; electronic encyclopedias, personal productivity software, art/design programs, Inspiration, teacher utilities, periodical indexes); Internet searching (search engines, search techniques, web site evaluation strategies); copyright and legal issues. In addition, the LMS discussed instructional collaboration and the role of the LMS in school/district curriculum support. In other class sessions, elementary and secondary preservice teachers reviewed level-specific resources at the elementary and high school partnership sites.

Individual Instruction: To accomplish the field assignment, preservice teachers sought out the library media specialists at their individual internship sites, where they were assigned as interns. In asking for advice about incorporating an electronic resource into an instructional activity, our teachers "activated" the LMS instructional consultant role. Preservice teachers' reflections were analyzed for evidence of insights gleaned about selecting and evaluating electronic information resources (see Appendix C).

2. What are the criteria library media specialists and teachers consider when they collaborate to evaluate electronic information resources?

The field assignment yielded data on evaluative criteria used for two different purposes: (1) acquisition criteria, and (2) instructional use. Acquisition criteria included appropriateness for children, reading/grade level, connection to the school curriculum, "user-friendliness," and favorable reviews in library journals. LMS in only 3 of the 14 participating school districts used formal evaluation instruments to select or recommend resources to teachers. Interesting, when library media specialists stepped out of their "librarian" role and into their "instructional consultant role, they shared a wide variety of criteria, some of which are not typically included on formal evaluation instruments. Those criteria mentioned more than once included: length of audio-visual media, relationship to curriculum content, accuracy, organization/clarity of content, appeal to student interest/motivational level, bias, access to content not otherwise available (e.g., simulations and interactive maps), ease of use and reading level (including independent use). Notably, when planning instructional activities, teachers and library media specialists evaluated the resource from a user's (student's) point of view (e.g., reading level) as well as from a teacher's standpoint (e.g., curriculum fit).

3. How do library media specialists contribute to preservice teachers' repertoire of instructional applications of electronic information resources?

Instructional activities designed by the collaborating partners were categorized by level (elementary or secondary) and by type of information resource. The majority of activities involved the use of the internet for searching or webquest assignments. Findings indicated that the use of electronic information resources, such as databases and websites, tended to place more responsibility on the student. For example, instructional activities were more often designed as independent or small group tasks for students to accomplish, rather than teacher-directed activities. Of the 16 secondary instructional activities, 10 involved students in independent or group research tasks, 5 involved the use of video to provide information during a lesson, and 1 involved the use of a computer tutorial to teach keyboarding. Of the 14 elementary instructional activities, 11 involved students in independent or group research tasks, and 3 used a video to introduce curriculum content during a lesson. This is consistent with other research findings that technology affords students opportunities for independent learning (Corno & Mandinach, 2004).

In summary, the major findings are:

1) *Library media specialists step "in and out" of their instructional consultant roles, at times, serving as traditional librarians focusing on selection, acquisitions, and access to materials.*

Opportunities to serve as instructional consultants bring out their tacit knowledge about evaluating electronic information resources.

2) *Evaluative criteria for selection and acquisition are typically different from criteria considered when designing instructional activities.*
3) *In their role as instructional consultants, library media specialists encouraged teachers to use electronic information resources in ways that promoted student independence. Although some electronic media were used in traditional teacher-directed, the majority of co-designed activities involved students in independent or group research projects.*

OTHER RESULTS

Library media specialists in CT have expressed interest in having a guidebook on the evaluation of electronic media. Future plans include the publication of the guide as well as the dissemination of the project results, both to participants and to a wider audience through publication in a peer reviewed journal.

-ANECDOTAL INFORMATION

Selections from preservice teachers' reflections on their field experience:

"I know that I will be using electronic media often when I am a teacher to help plan lessons and research information. I hope I will work at a school where the LMS is supportive and can help point me in the right direction" (Elementary candidate)

"The most important thing I learned was that the LMS wants to be involved with lessons in the classroom" (Elementary candidate)

"C's [LMS] knowledge of the electronic information resources, combined with her knowledge of what other teachers are doing for lessons, puts her in a unique position as the best person to see for getting information and deciding what to do with it. A skilled LMS is the best asset to support my teaching." (secondary candidate)

"I learned how rewarding it can be to ask other people for help" (secondary candidate)

LMS comments:
"I came from a classroom. So I am a teacher first."
"Collaboration occurs more when assignments are new."
"Flexible scheduling provides more time for collaboration."

APPENDICES – please include any appendices related to your project