

Graduation Standards and Information Literacy: A Natural Fit

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This past summer I had the rewarding opportunity to work with several Winona Middle School teachers writing student performance packages in conjunction with the Managing Resources component of the Minnesota Graduation Standards. Each of the Minnesota Standards has a Profile of Learning component which students complete by completing a comprehensive package, perhaps more commonly known as a teaching unit. The Managing Resources standard asks students to:

Use appropriate technology to access, evaluate, and organize information and to produce products by:

- (1) gathering and evaluating information from electronic sources
- (2) applying appropriate technology processes to an identified need or problem
- (3) producing products and selecting language, format, and graphics appropriate for purpose and audience by using word processing, graphics, multimedia, spreadsheets and databases; and
- (4) maintaining, using, or creating a technological system

Certainly the standard is noting new to media specialists; for teachers accustomed to resource based teaching and integrating information technology it is also noth new. But, as a graduation standard, the activities will ensure equity and success for all. The assessments tied to each task will help provide valuable feedback and accountability. \It's important to note that this standard will not replace any existing projects and the standard is not an excuse for other teachers to not teach these skills that they are already teaching.

Our 1000 students will complete each portion of the standard in an integrated and cross curricular manner. We divided the standard into these tasks:

- * Students will produce and save an annotated bibliography on a geographic area. (Sixth grade Social Studies)
- * Students will produce and save a word processing document. (Sixth grade Language Arts)
- * Students will produce and save a digitized self image. (Eighth grade Communications Technology)
- * Students will produce and save a multimedia project. (Eighth grade Communications Technology)
- * Students will produce and save a database (Seventh grade Social Studies)

* Students will practice appropriate keyboarding techniques (Sixth grade Communications Technology)

The curriculum writing process was a time to fine-tune technology use guidelines and develop teaching materials which will be useful for all teachers. As students complete tasks in grades 6 and 7 they will store their products in their personal folder on our school's NT server. In 8th grade they will create a Hyperstudio Capstone project highlighting their work. Teachers will store student assessment scores in a File Maker Pro database.

Staff development is a major component of our media program and is one reason that our staff are more prepared than many to understand and implement this standard. At the request of several 6th grade teachers we had a full day of in service for all 20 teachers who will be involved in implementing this package in grades six through eight. Topics for the day include implementation logistics and staff skills.

The curriculum writing process was the ideal time to introduce teachers to the new Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning (Information Power II) and show how they complement the state graduation standards and how they belong to all content areas. The national standards' literacy indicators were ideally suited to become student task descriptors. We also had some insightful conversations about the complete information process. For example, we talked about how accessing information is actually quite far along in the information process, that there are several things needed to be done before students get to that point. We will embed the national guidelines as we have all other aspects of information literacy with a "just do it" approach, helping the teachers reach the kids through formal and informal curriculum writing and a proactive staff development program.

This package was only one of several I have been involved in co-planning or implementing during the past year. I've also had the opportunity to be part of training for hundreds of Minnesota teachers implementing an inquiry standard, another obvious link to information literacy. During these training sessions it was apparent that teachers are eager for help and recognize the need for extensive resources.

The graduation standards are having a huge impact on our school's media/technology program. As we are preparing to start the school year the media center and labs are already scheduled through May, 1999. Our print circulation has been steadily increasing even though we are very rich in technology resources. Other district Media specialists are more involved in curriculum planning than in the past and everyone sees a greater need for technology for instruction and for managing instruction. Most rewarding is that teachers are recognizing the need collaborating with a media specialist and continuing staff development. I've always believed strongly in our curriculum and staff development roles and this is giving it all more credibility.

It is critical for media specialists working in states with standards based education to welcome the new opportunities for involvement and proactively seek them out. It really is "our time to shine," providing leadership and expertise that Information Power II addresses.

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