

VALLEY CITY STATE UNIVERSITY

# Academic and High School Collaborative Meeting Ideas

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After the High School –College Librarian Symposium, we met with Marlene Anderson of the Bismarck State College Library. Marlene shared feedback she received from several faculty members concerning the deficits their students exhibited both in and out of the classroom. Problems that concerned college instructors, for the most part, involved the steps in the first part of the research process developing a research topic, creating a thesis and finding and selecting credible resources. These concerns reinforced comments made by college librarians during the conference. Although database and resource searching need improvement, the impression I gained from the conference, the BSC faculty comments, and conversations I have had with our own high school English faculty, is that the most difficult and most error-ridden part of the research process concerns the first steps: defining the problem or topic, developing a thesis, and then being able to determine and use the resources. Students seem to be at a loss until they learn to manage these steps. Some of the lesson ideas I plan to use with teachers and classes address the difficulties students face in these areas and what we as teachers and librarians can do at the high school level to help our students become more proficient with research.

As a partial answer to research uncertainty on the high school level, an increasing number of faculty members have developed elaborate and increasingly popular pathfinders that provide step by step guides to usher students through the process. It is my theory that pathfinders are a rarity with college faculty as they assign research. Without the use of pathfinders when they leave high school, however, students may not know where to start if they have not also learned to internalize the pathfinder process. As they use teacher created pathfinders students are shown examples of research. At some point, students need to learn to create their own, a skill they can carry with them to the next academic level. I plan to use this with a willing teacher as a collaborative effort with the suggestion, “What if the students first take the a previously used pathfinder and adapt to their own current research pathfinder?” Both the teacher and the librarian can to help guide the process and offer suggestions when the students need help or have questions. With each assignment students will be able to do more and more on their own. Based on the written criteria (rubrics) set by the teacher (and

librarian), the completed assessment will easily lend itself to a formative evaluation (and suggestions) by either the teacher or the librarian or both. Pathfinders sometimes appear to be teacher ,ready-made Big 6 organizers that do not require advanced research skills if overused. If they can be models for students who then learn to create a complete information literacy organizer (or their own customized pathfinder) that will be a more beneficial learning and thinking process.

Another discussion area of our meeting during our meeting with the BSC librarians focused on our ongoing efforts. Century and Bismarck High School Libraries in the past few years have collaborated in a College Readiness project. We developed student skill surveys and based our 2011-teaching goals on the areas with which the students indicated they had the least skills. With the increased use of e-books on the college level, we are ordering and encouraging the use of more e-books. We are concentrating on making all departments familiar and skilled with databases in their fields. We shared some of our projects at the meeting with the BSC librarians, These were projects based on information we gathered from college and high school librarians throughout the country. We also discussed Bismarck State Library's acquisition of LibGuides since we were aware that Valley City and NDSU both use them. We have decided to incorporate LibGuides in our resources so we can assist students not only in the library, but in the classroom and at home. At the same time, we are beginning to use some the same tools they will use at college. Marlene took our high school to college skills pamphlet project (included in this packet). Based on our discussion with both Marlene and Johanna Bjork, it is my opinion, we can update it with information gained from both the symposium and information shared at the conference and based on additional research.

I hope our college-secondary librarian collaboration conferences continue on both the statewide and city /area level. At the same time as in the case of the LMC article to which I referred in our wiki, (Ewbank) adding our high school English teachers to the equation would be invaluable. Once teachers realize what such a tri-partnership would do to help their students, it will be a big step forward . Even more importantly, if

they suggest additional areas in which we can support students in their field that would be a benefit to us as well. When I have been invited to their meetings as well as the time I am able to visit with them, some of their biggest concerns are lack of time they have to teach all the concepts and areas they need to teach. With the addition of the Common Core and the attempt to streamline education, partnerships like that will strengthen the educational benefits for the students. .

Based on our meeting with the BSC Librarians, our Bismarck Public School directives, and our two year continuing project to promote college and career readiness with our high school students, I decided to develop another flexible lesson plan that I could adapt to teachers, classes, our district goals, and my goals. This lesson plan is also based on my goal to make certain that not only that as many of our students as know the hows and whys of the BPS and ODIN Databases before they graduate, but also that they competently use them for research. With these skills, I think one step of their college research battle has a beginning solution. Although the college database collection is far more extensive than the secondary collection, if students learn to skillfully use several advanced databases in high school and are taught searching techniques and tools common to many databases, they can transfer these skills to their use of other databases on the college and technical school level.

In our BPS district, we are asked to define our teaching/ learning objectives as "I can statements". At the end of a lesson, students should be able to know and state as a result of the lesson, they have progressed or mastered a certain skill that the instructor have set as the goal for my teaching and their learning. As the instructor, I should be able to have some way of ascertaining in the course of the lesson- whether it is a day or group of days that they have acquired that skill or understanding. In the course of my observations of our students, I notice students who have skills using "Google" and "Nettrekker" well. At Century, I work with the English, world language, social studies, science departments and now business and consumer science research. For the most part I am asked to help with this at least until their teachers have mastered the process. I am

developing a program of introducing students and classes and their instructors to the wide array of databases available to us through our district and state resources based on their grade and ability level. As students approach the college or technical school window, I am ready to introduce them to the more advanced databases based on their experience with other databases.

I am fortunate to collaborate with many teachers in varied departments. For that reason, however, I adapt my lesson plan to the teacher, his or her time constraints, and goals. Sometimes I may be asked to help anywhere from four to five days before the collaboration to a few hours. In that case, it is necessary for me to have a lesson plan on hand in which I can insert the appropriate databases with short instructions for students to access if they need a review of what was covered in class. In the short time I have to collaborate with the teacher, I can then ask, what his or her goal is, what specific topic area is covered, and what product is expected, as well as what are our time constraints.

Our teachers contact me to help with databases, and books to support a research lesson. I can help with part of the database lesson and teach the students how to select the most relevant and then how to search those databases to include, Boolean searching, abstracts, keywords, scholarly articles, terminology, print, cite and view tools. I ask the teacher if I can stay and help students when they look for sources. With the creation of this lesson plan, I create a formative assessment checklist based on the "I can" statement (s) I use for the particular database instruction. As I help students with finding sources, I am able to check to see if students are able to execute the skill established in the "I can" statement(s). If I introduced using the Boolean "AND" search or the advanced search- I will check to see if students are using the concepts specified in Boolean, and advanced searching. If they are not, I will suggest that as corrective action, note that on the check list. I will contact the teacher who can invite me to help the next research day or make the correction with the students later. I also note that as a change in my teacher or to emphasize with examples to students. Based on the new North Dakota Library Standards we plan to evaluate and work with as soon as they are available, I will work on the "I can"

statements so they are readily adaptable to my classes. In the meantime, there is a checklist created by Patricia Owens that I found as I worked on this paper that will adapt easily into exactly what I am already using with the work I do with teachers and classes: <http://www.infowen.info/checklist.pdf>. It was a surprise to see the wheel was already invented- so much better than I imagined . I plan to take this form and adapt it to the new North Dakota Information Literacy/ Technology Standards .

As stated before, I must work with a flexible lesson plan because I work with many teachers and my goal is to teach database skills to as many students as possible. Although as most librarians, we know we help each and every instructor in many ways, the librarian's reality is that teachers in departments are amenable to a wide range of collaboration levels . I think that I am reaching a good percentage of students. If I don't reach them through the English department one year, I may reach them through the science department that year, or in the English department the next. In many cases I see them several times a year in a classroom situation and often helping them in the library. In the research process, our English department works with the students on the selection and refining of a topic area and the creation of a thesis. There are times we can help suggest refinements to individual students and teachers based on resources and the broadness or narrowness of a topic. It is our job to make them feel as comfortable and successful as possible with resources. Remembering ,” my deer in the headlights” experience the first research assignment in college, I intend that lesson plan will adapt into any situation to help students have just that much more confidence and ability each time they work with their content teacher and librarian so they gain the ability, skills, and independence to execute the future academic research process .

The final lesson I am suggesting to our PLC, is to set up another conversation with Marlene Anderson either by e-mail , phone or actual visit. Because this requires asking something more of the BSC librarians and our overscheduled PLC, I wanted to wait just a few more weeks. Based on the outside reading about other academic /high school librarians, my last lesson plan is to ask the BSC librarians for any examples of college level

research assignments they can let us access. Our task as high school librarians will be two- fold. To list how we would guide our high school students if this research were assigned to our students. Second, to compile the skills our students need to complete this research independently and successfully. Then, if possible we would like to compare it with the approach of the librarians at BSC. Our next steps would involve evaluating which skills needed strengthening and then establishing a plan to achieve those goals as we work with our students whether in a classroom, library or a one on one situation.

I have chosen more than one lesson design idea. My lesson ideas, just as my work with the students is based on whatever opportunities can be created with our teachers. With two or three ideas that can be adapted to specific teachers or situations, I can be certain to put as many of the lessons to have the student impact for which I hope.

Ewbank, A., Guy, M., Tharp, J., & Welty, E. (2011). Collaboration and connection: A university outreach program for high school librarians and English teachers. *Library Media Connection*, 30(2), 28-30.