

Why Don't Students Know?

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Over the years, teachers have had many questions about how to teach, what to teach, and the best way to teach something, but they always found an answer. In the article by Steve Kolowich entitled "What Students Don't know" the reader should be astounded by what students do not know about libraries and librarians. Why don't students know?

Kolowich writes about a study that was done at the main library at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a number of other libraries in the area. Librarians at these institutions did this study. Their findings were that students did not ask a librarian for assistance, but instead asked for directions to the restroom or other directorial questions. They did not ask a librarian to assist them with their research but went on to do their own "Google" searches for their projects.

The librarians were dumbfounded. They were experts at researching and they were not being utilized. The article explained how students would receive a project from a professor who was also not utilizing the research experts. Was this a vicious cycle?

This could definitely be considered a cycle. The professors maybe were not taught proper research procedures in high school and then skated by in college and then became the teacher who did not have the research skills to pass on to his/her students. It is possible that somewhere along the line, the "ball was dropped." How do we pick up that ball and get the game going in the right direction again?

We need to start at the beginning and utilize our librarians at the high school level and college level and any level possible. Public librarians also have these researching skills. But we need to teach these skills from the beginning before sending our students off to college without the necessary tools.

Kolowich goes on to explain that the librarians did become the tools to help their students. They began offering beginning level classes that incoming freshman and transfer students had to take to graduate. They were passing on the necessary tools to the students and even the professors. They offered to help the professors write their syllabi and plan their projects. This is an amazing step in the right direction.

These librarians could have done the blame game, but they took it upon themselves to try to rectify the situation by offering classes and making sure that students visited the library during their student orientation. They made the students aware of the resources that they had access to right on their own campus. That is something we all need to do. We need to teach what needs teaching and prepare our students for the 21st Century. If we don't do it, who will?

This article was posted online and people were allowed to make comments about the article. This was very interesting to read. Professors were sharing their thoughts and professing shame if the librarians were not instructing students. One person made a very good point when he said that they would get the same question thirty times at the reference desk, so why not go into a classroom and answer all questions at one time. Great idea!

Librarians and teachers should team teach when research is involved. It would help the teacher by having another person for students to turn to for help. Why did we not think of this before? Some teachers may not know that the librarian is a resource that should and could be utilized for projects. That is a message that should be announced on the first day of school and every day in school. Teachers should be made aware of the resources they have in their building too.

My school has great librarian resources. If students do not know this, then it is the teacher's fault. That puts the blame on me, the teacher. I do not want to drop the ball. I will do like the librarians at the Chicago universities to pass on the proper tools so that the cycle will end.

References

Kolowich, Steve. (August 22, 2011). What Students Don't Know. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved November 20, 2011, from http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/08/22/erial_study_of_student_research_habits_at_illinois_university_libraries_reveals_alarmingly_poor_information_literacy_and_skills