

Freshman Seminar PBL Exercise

Exploring Cool Tools: *ProQuest* and *WilsonSelect Plus* Databases

Lesson Plan

Goals

The databases exercise is an in-class PBL designed to introduce students to explore the search features of periodical databases. The exercise encourages collaboration and problem-solving. The activity also provides students with practice in generating a hypothesis and creating a topic sentence based on the information that was accessed and reviewed.

By the end of this PBL activity, students will be able to execute a basic search and retrieve one to two relevant articles on a topic. Students will also be able to define a research topic, identify search terms and synonyms and write a concise topic statement or hypothesis.

Specific Lesson Objectives

The students will demonstrate satisfactory attainment of the PBL activity objective by printing one or two relevant articles on the assigned topic and writing a topic statement or hypothesis.

Prerequisites

Students will complete a previous Posters and Keywords PBL.

Materials

This database exploration activity requires computer work stations, access to online databases, and 5 x 7 cards.

Lesson Description

This lesson promotes teamwork and introduces students to think critically about the functionality of online databases, and information retrieval.

This PBL activity incorporates the application level of Standards One and Two of the ACRL standards.

The exercise addresses:

1. ACRL Standard One: "The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed," Performance Indicator 1: The information literate student defines and articulates the need for information," and
2. Standard Two: "The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently," Performance Indicator 2: The information literate student constructs and implements effectively-designed search strategies."

Lesson Procedure

Students will get in their PBL groups. Each group will receive a research question. The groups will use either *ProQuest* or *WilsonSelect Plus* to research their question. The students are then instructed to explore their assigned database and learn as much as they can about how the database works. They are also encouraged to test different features.

Applying the lessons learned from the posters exercise involving keywords and synonyms students are encouraged to try to find articles (e.g. evidence in the form of published information) that will answer the research question. Next after students are satisfied with their findings, they are to formulate a hypothesis and write their hypothesis on the index card. Finally, two groups will be selected to show the rest of the class their research problem and how they went about solving it. They will also read their hypothesis to the class.

Instructional Strategies

Students should be encouraged to work in teams to explore the functionality of databases and in generating search queries. The tutor should visit with teams and facilitate by prompting students to explore database functions and provide clues to potential search terms.

Assessment

Assessment of learning can be accomplished during the PBL session as well as after the class meeting. After collecting the student work, learning can be ascertained by (1) the results demonstrated through the group reports (2) comparing the hypothesis generated with the articles retrieved and determining the precision (e.g. relevance to the topic or hypothesis) of the articles retrieved. Formative assessment can also include observations by the tutor of individual performance in the teams including participation, interaction and contributions. As the students work in their teams, the tutor can visit individual groups and observe the research approaches and ask questions pertaining to the problem being solved. Doing so will stimulate their thinking and problem-solving processes and help the tutor assess understanding. Another assessment approach is to solicit volunteers from each team to explain how they worked through the problem from beginning to end and to describe the strategies that worked best for each team.

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