

1975

Methods Used by Iowa Elementary Librarians in Teaching Library Skills

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Methods Used by Iowa Elementary Librarians in Teaching Library Skills

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METHODS USED BY IOWA ELEMENTARY LIBRARIANS
IN TEACHING LIBRARY SKILLS

A Research Paper
Presented to the
Faculty of the Library Science Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Florence W. Thordsen
April 9, 1975

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Date April 17, 1975

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The Problem:

In all areas of teaching the word "relevancy" is being used. College instructors in the fields of education, articles written by educators, leaders of education workshops are saying that the student learns faster and retains more when materials and approaches are relevant. In recent years, only since about 1966, those in the school library field have been advancing this theory. Ericson and Carmody state in a 1971 article, "Individualization has always been the librarian's stock and trade. Add the new keynote 'relevancy.' There can, then, be no predetermined sequence taught as isolated media skills lessons. To be effective, any teaching must be closely related to classroom activities."¹

The purpose of this study is to learn whether or not practicing elementary school librarians in Iowa are in reality teaching library skills by integrating them with a relevant classroom assignment and whether or not they have any method or methods of evaluating their objectives. Such a study should enable those in the school library field to assess where Iowa elementary school librarians are in the acceptance and implementation of this concept of integrating the teaching of these library skills with classroom activities. It should also be of interest to those entering the working force to know the status quo.

How then does the percentage of Iowa elementary librarians teaching under the separate unit program of library instruction compare with the percentage of Iowa elementary librarians teaching a program of library

¹LaVaughn S. Ericson and Jean Carmody, "Integrating Library Skills with Instruction," Wisconsin Library Bulletin, LXVII (January, 1971), p. 23.

instruction integrated with and related to the classroom activities? Does a larger percentage of the librarians entering the elementary library field since 1966 teach library skills by the integrated method than those entering the elementary library field before 1966? Do these librarians have methods of evaluating their objectives and do they judge their teaching methods to be effective?

Although integration of library skills with classroom activities has been encouraged for nearly a decade, 75% of Iowa's elementary school librarians will be found still teaching library skills under the unit program of instruction. This figure is based on observation of practicing librarians and on the fact that some textbooks published since 1966 still advocate unit programs of instruction. A larger percentage of librarians entering the elementary library field since 1966 will be found using the integrated method of teaching library skills as compared to those entering the elementary library field prior to 1966. ^{74%} 50% of the elementary school librarians surveyed will have no method for evaluating their objectives; any evaluation done by librarians will indicate they judge integrated programs of instruction to be more effective than the unit study.

Time and money will limit this study to the questionnaire form of data gathering and to the sample of elementary librarians in Iowa who answer the initial mailing. The questionnaire method is in itself a limitation since it does not permit indepth probing of answers given by respondents, particularly in the area of evaluating objectives and judging effectiveness of teaching methods. Another limitation is the fact that the study is only of Iowa elementary schools where a media specialist or librarian is employed; since Iowa law does not require

elementary libraries many elementary buildings do not have them and those that do meet varying degrees of library standards. This researcher realizes that in some elementary schools that do employ librarians or media specialists, this person may not be the one actually teaching the library skills. And also that many elementary buildings share the media specialist with one or more other buildings in the school district, forcing the media specialist to set priorities which might influence the way library skills are taught and objectives evaluated.

Time did not permit waiting for the 1974-75 printout of school librarians from the Department of Public Instruction. The 1973-74 list was used, which therefore excluded from the total population any media personnel added for the current school year. While this printout from the DPI is the most accurate list available it is known to contain some inaccuracies and the number of these used unknowingly is impossible to calculate.

In undertaking this study several assumptions are made by this researcher:

1. Learning of library skills is necessary.
2. Library skills are being taught to elementary school children.
3. In school districts hiring media specialists, the person teaching these library skills is the media specialist since this person is the most logical and the most competent in this area.
4. The list of eighteen library skills used for this study is an inclusive list of those skills usually taught.

"To get maximum pleasure and profit from available libraries, it is necessary to learn how to use the highly organized collections" of media. Therefore, library skills are taught in our schools.² A list of eighteen skills was compiled by examining textbooks and handbooks. The unit program of library instruction is that plan used by librarians to teach library skills as a separate unit of study unrelated to any course work in various classes. With the integrated program, the librarian teaches the library skills as they are needed for class assignments, thereby making the study of the skill relevant to classroom activities. To be a relevant library skill, there must be a logical relationship to the subject with which it is being taught. Effectiveness of the teaching of these skills will be judged by the librarians themselves.

Review of related literature:

In the 1966 report by Tauber and Stephens, Conference on the Use of Printed and Audiovisual Materials for Instructional Purposes a paper presented by Frances Henne, "Instruction in the Use of the Library by Students," indicated that research needed to be done on the various methods librarians were using to teach library skills. She further stated that the effectiveness of these various methods of instruction should be researched.³ In searching for literature in these areas no

²Roberta Bishop Freund, Open the Book, New York: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1966, p. 119.

³Frances Henne, "Instruction in the Use of the Library and Library Use by Students," Conference On the Use of Printed and Audiovisual Materials for Instructional Purposes, Maurice F. Tauber and Irlene Roemer Stephens, 1966, New York: Columbia University School of Library Service, pp. 177-8.

reports of such research could be found. Using the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Library Literature, and the card catalog, textbooks, journal articles, and school district department of education handbooks were identified and those available in the U.N.I. library were then consulted.

It wasn't until 1966 when Freund's Open the Book was published that anything could be found mentioning the integrated approach. Freund states that library lessons should be "planned around a subject which is being studied in the classroom..... No lesson should be decided upon by the librarian alone and taught in a void. Pre-planning and co-operation with teachers will make a lesson meaningful to the pupils and rewarding to the teacher and librarian."⁴

In 1961, A Curriculum Guide for the School Librarian in the Elementary School, a handbook by the Detroit Public Schools, suggests that librarians teach on a unit plan, using the classroom studies as a guide.⁵ However, in examining the units, no mention was made as to how or with what classroom study the skills lessons could be integrated.

From examination of textbooks, periodical articles, handbooks and manuals, it appears that before 1966 library skills were taught by the unit plan. Since 1966 there have been advocates of both the unit plan (Palovic and Goodman, 1968,⁶ and California Association of School

⁴Roberta Bishop Freund, Open the Book, New York: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1966, p. 121.

⁵Detroit Public Schools, Department of School Libraries, A Curriculum Guide For the School Librarian in the Elementary School, 1961, p. 66.

⁶Lora Palovic and Elizabeth Goodman, The Elementary School Library in Action, West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Co., Inc. 1968.

Librarians, 1973⁷) and the newer concept of integrating the skills lessons with classroom activities.

While no studies were found at the high school level, in the July 1971, issue of Drexel Library Quarterly Patricia A. Henning reports that in 1959 Dr. Patricia Knapp was assigned to develop a plan at Monteith College, Wayne State University, for library-related assignments in a curriculum of general education which emphasized the goal of helping students acquire the capacity for independent study. However, six years later only part one of the plan had been put into effect and there was no evidence of any follow-up study. And as of 1971 there had been no research activity reported by anyone in this area. Therefore, no conclusions could be drawn.⁸

James R. Kennedy, reference librarian at Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana, reported in a 1970 article that when library instruction was integrated with a specific course and the course instructor expected an assignment to include more than just work done by using the card catalog and Readers' Guide, the students benefited more from the instruction and used a wider range of sources with relatively little help from the reference librarian.⁹

Other than objective unit quizzes or practice activities, most of

⁷California Association of School Librarians, Library Skills: A Handbook for Teachers and Librarians, 1958, reprint 1973.

⁸Patricia Henning, "Research on Integrated Library Instruction," Drexel Library Quarterly, VII (July, 1971), pp. 339-341.

⁹James R. Kennedy, "Integrated Library Instruction," Library Journal, XCV (April 15, 1970), pp. 1450-3.

the books ignore the subject of evaluation. Two sources suggested that librarians ask themselves such questions as: "Did the correlation between class unit and library lesson stimulate interest?"¹⁰ "Do pupils apply learned skills to work in other classes? and, Following lessons on a particular skill lesson, do the students show increased initiative and resourcefulness in using library materials?"¹¹ Detroit Public Schools, A Curriculum Guide For the Librarian in the Elementary School¹² devotes an entire chapter to evaluation. It suggests the librarians ask themselves, "Are pupils increasing their skill and interest in reading?" and "Do they like the library and make good use of its resources?"¹³ It continues by suggesting evaluation by several methods:

1. Standard tests.
2. Observation of student performance.
3. Pupil achievement in academic work.
4. Available workbook tests.¹⁴

At the college level "a number of studies have shown that a relationship between scholastic grade point averages and the use of the library exists"¹⁵ but this researcher found no studies showing methods

¹⁰Roberta Bishop Freund, Open the Book, New York: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1966, p. 147.

¹¹Ibid., p. 159.

¹²Detroit Public Schools, Department of School Librarians, A Curriculum Guide For the School Librarian in the Elementary School, 1961, pp. 81-92.

¹³Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 84-5.

¹⁵John Lubans, "Evaluating Library User Education Programs," Drexel Library Quarterly, VIII (July, 1972), pp. 325-343.

of instruction in library skills had any relationship with this. And none of the journal articles examining elementary libraries made mention of any methods of evaluating the effectiveness of skill teaching programs. Therefore, literature on this phase of the study was very limited.

Methodology:

Using the list of eighteen skill categories compiled from examination of handbooks and textbooks a questionnaire was developed and sent to a sample group of Iowa elementary school librarians (see Appendix B) with a cover letter (see Appendix A). The total population is all public elementary school librarians in the state of Iowa. Using the 1973-74 printout of school librarians from the Department of Public Instruction, a list was made of all public elementary librarians, their school and school district number. The district name and total enrollment was obtained from the current Iowa Educational Directory. These school districts were stratified by total enrollment and a random sample of librarians was selected proportionally from each strata. (See Table 1, p.9)

A total of 96 questionnaires were mailed; 63 were returned with one being unuseable since the librarian served a 7-12 building only although listed in the printout as an elementary librarian. All data will be analyzed on the 65.3% of useable returns which represents 26.6% of the total population.

Analysis and Interpretation:

It was found that 62.9% of the librarians serve only one building. (See Table 2, p. 10) However, 4.8% serve five or more buildings and these were found in school districts of 1500 and more enrollment. In fact, the

Table 1

Number and Percentages of Elementary School Librarians in Iowa,
 Number and Percentages of Questionnaires Sent and
 Returned by District Enrollment Strata

School District Enrollment Strata	Number of Elementary Librarians	Percentages of Elementary Librarians in Each Strata	Number of Questionnaires Sent		Percentages of Questionnaires Returned	
			Sent	Returned	Total	Sample
180-499	18	7.7%	7	2	0.9%	3.2%
500-749	12	5.2	5	3	1.3	4.8
750-999	25	10.7	10	3	1.3	4.8
1000-1499	13	5.6	5	4	1.7	6.5
1500-1999	24	10.3	10	7	3.0	11.3
2000-2999	16	6.9	6	4	1.7	6.5
3000-Up	125	53.6	53	39	16.7	65.0
Totals	233	100.0	96*	62	26.6	65.3

*Since only 95 are useable, percentages will be computed on those 95.

Table 2

Number of Buildings Served, Highest Degree Earned, and Year Highest Degree Earned by Iowa Elementary Librarians

Elementary Librarians	School District Enrollment Strata							Totals	Percentages of all Respondents
	180-499	500-749	750-999	1000-1499	1500-1999	2000-2999	3000-Up		
Number of buildings you serve:									
1	2	1	1	2	4	1	29	⁴⁰ 39	62.9%
2		2	1	2	1	1	5	12	19.4
3			1			1		2	3.2
4					1	1	3	5	8.0
5					1			1	1.6
6									
7							1	1	1.6
8							1	1	1.6
Highest degree earned:									
M.A.	1	1			2	2	15	21	33.9
B.A.	1	2	3	4	5	2	23	40	64.5
Neither							1	1	1.6
Year highest degree earned:									
Before 1966				3	1		8	12	19.4
1966 or later	2	3	3	1	6	4	24	43	69.4

3.2% serving seven and eight buildings were in the strata with the highest enrollment. It was expected that the districts with the smaller enrollments would have librarians serving the greater number of buildings.

Only 33.9% of the elementary libraries are staffed by personnel with a M.A. degree; 64.5% of the schools employ library personnel with a B.A. degree. The alarming statistic was that one school district in the strata with the highest enrollment had a person with less than a B.A. degree in charge of libraries in two buildings. The sample shows that 69.4% of the elementary librarians earned their highest degree in 1966 or since that date.

A study of Table 3 shows that 68.9% of Iowa's elementary school librarians hold fulltime position library endorsements. Those with 15-29 library science hours (19.7%) can hold teacher-librarian endorsements. However, 7 librarians (11.5%) do not even qualify for basic teacher-librarian endorsements and one of these stated she had no credits in library science courses.

Table 3

Number and Percentages of Semester Hours in Library Science Earned by Elementary Librarians

Semester Hours of Library Science	Number of Librarians	Percentages of Total
0-14	7	11.5%
15-29	12	19.7
30+	42	68.9
Total	61	

Table 4

Type of Programs Taught by Elementary Librarians, Whether or Not
They Have Written Objectives and Methods of Evaluation,
Whether or Not They Think Methods
of Instruction Effective

Program Information*	School District Enrollment Strata							Totals	Percentages of all Respondents
	180-499	500-749	750-999	1000-1499	1500-1999	2000-2999	3000-Up		
Type of program taught:									
No Program			1		2	1	2	6	9.7%
Unit Program					2	2	11	15	24.2
Integrated Program		1					3	4	6.5
Combination Program	2	2	2	4	3	1	23	37	59.7
Do you have written objectives:									
Yes	2		2	3	4	1	27	39	62.9
No		3	1	1	4	3	11	23	37.1
Do you have a method of evaluating whether these objectives were accomplished:									
Yes	2		1	3	3	1	20	30	48.4
No			1				1	2	51.6**
Do you think your methods of instruction are effective:									
Yes	2		3	3	4	3	31	46	74.2
No		3		1	2	1	4	11	17.7

* All Respondents did not answer every question.

** This percentage figure is based on the 2 answering No, plus all those with no written objectives.

Table 4, p. 12, shows that totally integrated library skills programs are taught by 4 respondents (6.5%); the unit program is used by 15 respondents (24.2%); while 6 respondents (9.7%) teach no library skills. Library skills are taught in a combination program by 59.7% of all respondents. These librarians teach some skills using the unit program while using the integrated program for other skills. This ranges from the integration of 2 skill categories by 2 librarians to the integration of 15 skill categories by 1 librarian. Under this combined program the median of integrated skill categories is 9.1 (See Table 5).

Table 5

Number of Skill Categories Integrated by Any One Librarian Using Combination Program

No. Skill Categories	No. Librarians	No. Skill Categories	No. Librarians
1	0	9	6
2	2	10	4
3	4	11	6
4	2	12	1
5	1	13	3
6	1	14	1
7	4	15	1
8	1		

Also shown by Table 4, p. 12, is the fact that 62.9% of the respondents have written objectives for the teaching of a library skills program. However, only 48.4% have methods of evaluating objectives.

Those methods of evaluation listed by three or more respondents are:

<u>Method</u>	<u>Number listing</u>
1. Observation of actual use	12
2. Tests	8
3. Check lists	5
4. Situational problem solving	4
5. Discussions	3
6. Individual oral exams	3

Unit programs are judged effective by 80% of those using that program; while only 50% of those using the totally integrated plan felt they were effective. With the combination program 81% judged their program as effective. Of all respondents 74.2% feel the skills teaching program they are using is effective. The reason most often stated as evidence of effectiveness was that students use the library often and are able to find things for themselves. Other reasons given by more than one respondent include: junior high teachers and librarians have commented that they are well trained, students like coming to the library, skills are introduced as need of the curriculum mandates, and "I feel I am effective."

Of the respondents 17.7% feel the skill teaching program they are using is not effective. The reason given most often for this ineffectiveness was too many schools with not enough time for instruction and follow-up. Two also mentioned that library skills not taught in an integrated program are quickly forgotten.

Statistics were also recorded to compare librarians entering the field before 1966 with those entering in 1966 or later. Table 6, p. 15, compares the time the librarian entered the library field with the type

of library skills program taught. While none of those entering the field before 1966 taught a totally integrated program, a larger percentage use a combination program than those entering the field at a later date. Keeping in mind that the median of skill categories integrated is 9.1, computations were made for librarians entering the field before 1966, and it was learned that 55.6% integrate the teaching of nine or more skill categories. The same computations were made for those entering the field in 1966 or later, and only 39.6% were found to be integrating nine or more skill categories.

Table 6

Number of Elementary Librarians Entering Library Field Before 1966 and 1966 or Later by Type of Program

Type of Program	Before 1966		1966 or later	
	No.	Percentages	No.	Percentages
No Program	1	11.1%	3	5.7%
Unit Program	2	22.2	13	24.5
Integrated Program	0	00.0	4	7.5
Combination Program	6	66.7	30	56.6
Totals	9	100.0	53	100.0

Table 7, pp. 16-17, shows a breakdown of the skill categories and the subject areas with which they are integrated; the subject area listed by librarians under "others" was speech. It can be seen that the learning of library skills is most often integrated with language arts. Some school districts include reading, spelling and speech as part of the

Table 7

Skill Categories, Subject Areas Integrated With, Number
of Librarians Integrating a Particular Skill
Category in Elementary Libraries

Skill Categories	Subject Areas										No. Teachers Integrating This Particular Skill Category
	Science	Language Arts	Social Studies	Math	Reading	Spelling	Music	Art	Physical Education	Others	
1. Alphabetizing	3	22	6	1	14	7					25
2. Shelving arrangement of books and other materials	4	7	5	1	4	1	1	2			8
3. Care and handling of media and equipment	9	6	9	5	7	1	3	3	1		10
4. Making book reports	4	23	7	1	22		3	2			31
5. Use of card catalog	8	15	15		11		3	2	2		19
6. Using Dewey decimal system to locate materials	7	9	8	1	6	1	3	2	3		12
7. Use of dictionary	4	25	7		17	4	1	1			29
8. Use of encyclopedias	16	24	25	1	14	2	2	1	1	2	34
9. Use of special reference materials	12	14	17	1	9						23

Table 7 (continued)

Skill Categories	Subject Areas										No. Teachers Integrating This Particular Skill Category
	Science	Language Arts	Social Studies	Math	Reading	Spelling	Music	Art	Physical Education	Others	
10 Location of materials, equipment and activity areas		1	3	1							3
11. Appreciation of literature and other media		18	3		21		3	4			25
12. How to check out books and other media	1	4	2	1	1		1				4
13. Using magazines and <u>Reader's Guide</u>	7	7	10		2						14
14. Making bibliographies	10	15	17		3		1				27
15. Use of maps and atlases	2	4	30		4					1	31
16. Note-taking and outlining	9	19	18		4		1	1			25
17. Learning parts of a book	1	14	3		9						19
18. Preparing oral and written reports	13	21	20	1	7		3	1		1	25
Total times integrated with this subject	111	250	203	13	155	16	25	19	7	4	

language arts program making this subject area by far the one most often used for integration of library skill activities. As expected social studies ranks second with science third. All other subject areas fall far behind.

Earlier it was noted that only four respondents taught completely integrated programs. A study of the first column headed "No. teachers integrating this particular skill category" shows that several skill categories are not integrated by many teachers. For example, those integrated by ten or fewer teachers include: shelving arrangement of books and other materials; care and handling of media and equipment; location of materials, equipment and activity areas; and how to check out books and other media. These are all activities that are unique to the mechanical functioning of the media center. So perhaps even though integration of skills is advocated there are areas that can be taught better by a unit program. Perhaps that would further explain why 50% of those attempting totally integrated programs feel their programs are not effective.

Conclusions:

It was hypothesized that 75% of Iowa's elementary school librarians would be found teaching skills under the unit program of instruction. The figure from the research proved to be only 22.5%. However, when you consider those teaching no skills, those teaching the unit program and those integrating fewer than nine skill categories, a total of 53% are integrating fewer than nine skill categories. It would seem that before more skill categories will be taught through an integrated program, more librarians need to be convinced that the student retains more when

library skills are taught as an integrated part of the curriculum. Then they must be strong enough in their convictions that they will enter the field and work with administrators and teachers to integrate library skills thereby making the librarian part of the teaching team. And as an end product helping the student learn and retain more.

Another hypothesis stated that 50% of the elementary school librarians surveyed would have no method for evaluating their objectives. Actually the figure was slightly higher; 51.6% had no method of evaluating objectives. In fact, 37.1% had no written objectives for their program of teaching library skills. It is impossible to judge a program as effective if you have no objectives in the first place; yet 74.2% judged their program to be effective. Elementary school librarians need to take a good look at exactly what their objectives for the media center are and where these objectives fit into the total education program. If the media center goals are an integral part of the total education scheme, then students need to be guided by some planned program for learning use of this center. More of Iowa's librarians need guidance in setting up objectives and teaching library skills programs to meet these objectives.

School media personnel along with all other educators are being asked by the public to relate their job performance directly to the successful development of the final product--the student. In other words, librarians too must be accountable for the education of the student. To be accountable there must be specific objectives that can be evaluated. Even though 62.9% had written objectives, 51.6% had no method of evaluating objectives. By what standards does a librarian measure the statement, "I feel I am effective." when there are no objectives and no methods of evaluation? Accountability requires specific measurement of

previously stated objectives. What good are the objectives if the librarian has no intention of measuring to what extent the objectives are met? How can librarians be accountable without tools of accountability--evaluation methods? The two--objectives and evaluation methods--must go together.

This researcher used as a total population the public elementary school librarians in the state of Iowa. This population represents the 117 Iowa school districts with elementary librarians, which is 26% of all Iowa school districts. It makes one wonder about the elementary libraries in the other 74% of the school districts. Especially when one respondent commented, "Our school is so backward it is horrifying. This is the first year the school has even had a librarian; I'm only here half time. The books are not cataloged; the selection is poor. There is no effort made to teach library skills formally." Doesn't it appear more research needs to be done to find out the condition of library collections and methods of teaching use of those collections in that 74% of the school districts not represented in the population for this project?

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APPENDIX A

403 E Street
Hillside Cts., U.N.I.
Cedar Falls, Iowa
February 12, 1975

Dear Media Specialist,

This questionnaire seeks information about methods used for teaching library skills in Iowa elementary schools employing media personnel. The study is being undertaken as part of the research requirement for my masters degree at U.N.I. In the analysis of questionnaire results, answers will be summarized in statistical form so that individuals or individual schools cannot be identified. To maintain this complete confidentiality, please do not write your name anywhere on the questionnaire.

I would sincerely appreciate your cooperation in answering the questionnaire and returning it to me in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope no later than February 21.

Yours truly,

Florence Pals

Library Skills Teaching Methods In Iowa Elementary Schools

Section A: School and Media Personnel Information:

- 1. Grades included in each building you serve: Building 1 _____
 Building 2 _____
 Building 3 _____
 Building 4 _____
 Building 5 _____
- 2. Year you first held position as librarian or media specialist in a school: _____
- 3. Highest degree earned: M.A. _____ B.A. _____ Neither _____
- 4. Year highest degree earned: _____
- 5. Number of credit hours you have in library science courses:
 Semester hours _____ or, Quarter hours _____

Section B: Objectives and Evaluation Information:

Please answer the following questions only as they pertain to your program K through 6.

- 6. Do you have a written list of objectives for your library skills program?
 Yes _____ No _____

If NO, skip to question number 7.

- a. If YES, do you have a method or methods of evaluating whether these objectives were accomplished? Yes _____ No _____
- b. If YES, please explain briefly your method or methods of evaluation: _____

- 7. Do you think your methods of instruction are effective in teaching library skills to elementary students? Yes _____ No _____
 - a. Briefly explain why you answered as you did: _____

Unit Program	Integrated Program		Science	Language Arts	Social Studies	Math	Reading	Spelling	Music	Art	Physical Education	Others (Please Name)
		8. Use of encyclopedias										
		9. Use of special reference materials										
		10. Location of materials, equipment and activity areas										
		11. Appreciation of literature and other media										
		12. How to check out books and other media										
		13. Using magazines and <u>Reader's Guide</u>										
		14. Making bibliographies										
		15. Use of maps and atlases										
		16. Note-taking and outlining										
		17. Learning parts of a book										
		18. Preparing oral and written reports										

THANK YOU!