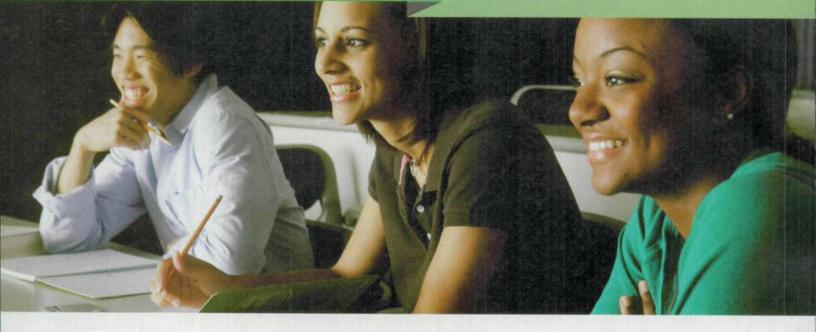# COLLABORATION AND CONNECTION:

A UNIVERSITY OUTREACH SCHOOL LIBRARIANS AND

In today's knowledge economy, both high school and university educators must ensure that students are equipped with the proficiencies needed to transition from high school to college and, ultimately, from college to the workplace. As librarians at Arizona State University, we sought to develop a local program that would support this goal. The Collaboration and Connection project teams Arizona State University (ASU) Libraries, ASU's Writing Programs, and ASU's Academic Success programs with area high school English teachers and librarians. Our goal was simple: Provide a forum that allows high school and university educators to engage in a dialog about how best to prepare students for university-level research and writing. In our area, few opportunities exist for high school and university faculty and librarians to get together and talk about student success across the "grade 12-13 gap." The Collaboration and Connection project creates that opportunity.

WHY HIGH SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION?

As librarians, we know that information, communication, and technology (ICT) proficiencies are essential to student success in higher education. We use the term ICT as opposed to "information literacy" because it recognizes the essential skill sets of "communication" and "technology" in locating, accessing, and communicating information. To be successful in higher education, students must be able to not only master information literacy proficiencies (identifying an information need, locating and evaluating information, and synthesizing it into new knowledge) but also communicate this new knowledge—in a paper, presentation, web page, or podcast—and use technology tools throughout the entire process.

A survey of California professors who regularly teach freshman-level courses confirmed that faculty expect their students to enter the university with ICT proficiencies established (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges). Despite this expectation, most incoming university freshmen are not ICT proficient. A study of 48,000 college freshmen found that only forty-eight percent were confident in their abilities of locating information (Dunn 26-35). The Educational Testing Service found that that only thirteen percent of students who took their ICT exam qualified as proficient (Foster A36).

PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE COLLEGE READINESS

College readiness is not a new topic. Many universities have "transition to college" programs. For example, ASU hosts Summer Bridge and Summer Academy programs (http://studentsuccess.asu.edu/ubridge). Each program allows students to earn up to seven academic credits during a five-week summer session. Smaller class sizes, tutoring, and structured study sessions help contribute to their success. Students also benefit from their interactions with faculty, librarians, tutors, and peer mentors, among others. Other notable programs focus more heavily on library and research proficiency. For example, Kent State University's "Transitioning to College" website, funded by IMLS and the U.S. Department of Education, was developed by academic and

PROGRAM FOR HIGH ENGLISH TEACHERS

By Ann Dutton Ewbank, Melissa Guy, Julie Tharp, and Ellen Welty

high school librarians and features unmediated learning modules, intended for outreach, delivered via the website.

Librarians at Belmont University, a small, private liberal arts university in Nashville, Tennessee, created Library Conversations @ Belmont. The program focused on building relationships between the university's librarians and area school librarians. Belmont librarians shared their experiences with the ICT skill level of Belmont freshmen as well as faculty expectations and assignments for freshman research. One goal of this program was to provide a forum for academic and school librarians to share and learn from each other (Fuson and Rushing 566-569).

HOW DID ASU'S PROJECT WORK?

We modeled the Collaboration and Connection project upon Library Conversations @ Belmont. We wanted to create a space for dialog across the 12-13 gap and reach out to our local colleagues, because sixty-five percent of our freshmen are Arizonans, and fifty-seven percent come from the Phoenix metropolitan area, according to the ASU Office of Institutional Analysis.

Based on this information, we decided to hold two Saturday workshops at the university for our local high school librarians and teachers. We were awarded a small grant through our state's Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) program to hire a keynote speaker, provide flash drives loaded with lesson plans and other materials, and underwrite the administrative costs associated with the workshops. We were also able to pay each workshop participant a small stipend for attending.

In creating the workshop content, we collaborated with other units at Arizona State University. Our primary collaborators were ASU's Writing Programs (http://english.clas.asu.edu/wp-mission) and Academic Success Programs (http://studentsuccess.asu.edu/uni-success). Writing Programs administers the freshman-level composition classes, and Academic Success Programs provides courses in critical thinking that target incoming students who are considered academically underprepared.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE-SCHOOL COLLABORATION ↘

1. Identify your local college or university library. Does the library have an outreach or undergraduate services librarian? If not, is there a librarian who supports education? These academic librarians may have an interest in collaborating.

2. Approach the librarian about writing a grant to support a workshop for local teachers and librarians. Often, colleges and universities have special infrastructures to support grant writing and administration. If you choose not to write a grant to underwrite activities, you can still collaborate, but a little bit of money always makes things easier.

3. Think about your local context. Do you have a large number of underprepared students? Does the college or university struggle with retention? This can help you to focus a workshop on your area's unique needs.

4. Tap existing networks and think about non-library collaborators. Do you have a library consortium or association that can assist in planning or promotion? Your local English teachers' association or reading association can be a valuable partner in planning and executing a workshop.

5. Share what you learned. Consider presenting at a local or national conference or writing for a newsletter or journal. And make sure that you garner some publicity for your efforts. Colleges and universities have news bureaus that you can alert, and make sure your school board and local news outlets know about your efforts to help students become prepared for college.

Our next step was to collaborate with local school districts. We contacted district library and English department coordinators, and asked them to assist us in recruiting participants for the Saturday workshops. Our first workshop reached sixty-five teachers and librarians, and our second workshop reached one hundred twenty-five.

WORKSHOP BASICS

The workshop consisted of a keynote address and two breakout sessions. Our keynote speaker discussed the importance of preparing students for university-level research and writing, and connected theory to practice. In the first breakout session, called "Deconstruct an Assignment," high school teachers and librarians discussed a university-freshman level research paper assignment with a Writing Programs faculty member and a librarian. The intent was to help university faculty understand curriculum and expectations existing in the high school English classroom, and vice versa, to help high school English teachers understand the demands on students in the university English classroom. Teachers and librarians from the high schools and the universities noted that the opportunity to engage in a dialog about curriculum and expectations was extremely beneficial.

In the second breakout session, high school teachers and librarians attended training on accessing and using Arizona's statewide databases. Many of the high school teachers were unaware of the statewide databases and were surprised about the number of resources available to them and their students at no charge. The intent of this training was twofold: first, to promote the statewide database program, and second, to encourage high school teachers and librarians to incorporate their use in student assignments. Upon entering the university, students will be expected to use these resources, and the best way to prepare them for university-level research is to expose students to databases in high school.

We finished the day with a panel discussion and open dialog. Teachers received both continuing education units and a small stipend for attending the workshop. For a full description of the workshop, see https://sites.google.com/a/asu.edu/collaboration-and-connection.

THE PARTNERSHIP MISSION

Our partnership was mutually beneficial. As the major research library in the Phoenix metro area, we wanted to partner with our local high school colleagues. High school teachers and librarians benefited from our resources, knowledge, and expertise, and our university benefits from admitting students who are prepared and proficient in ICT. Arizona State University has a strong mission to seek sustainable partnerships and programs that advance the goals and effectiveness of both community partners and the university. We saw this as an opportunity to help students become prepared for the university and beyond.

CONCLUSION

We chose to pursue this outreach program because we believe that the opportunity for dialog is crucial—the more opportunities for communication between high school and university teachers and librarians, the more aligned our two systems become. As a result, students benefit. Consider contacting your local university or college to see if there is interest in creating a local outreach program modeled on Collaboration and Connection.

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