

Teaching Methods for the SLMS
Position Paper
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The School Library Media Specialist is a leader in the landscape of today's learning. It is critical for students, parents and staff to feel confident in the guidance of the SLMS. As technology increases so does the need for guidance and instruction with regard to that technology. Parents, students and teachers alike need to be taught how to navigate in this information rich world and how to think critically when assessing information. Media Specialists are uniquely qualified to instruct students in the art of research and to develop critical thinking skills. A Media Specialist teaches how to navigate the internet and how to assess and evaluate the information provided. The library of old, supplied limited information, whereas the library of today is a global library. The Media Specialist assists students in building research and analysis skills that will be used throughout a student's entire life. The SLMS assists parents in building the needed skills to support safe and ethical use of information in their children. The SLMS provides teachers with curriculum support and technology instruction that allows them to speak the language of today's student.

The 21st Century has put technology front and center. There is very little in our life that is not immersed in technology. Our children have access to a global library at the touch of a button. "The most recent Pew Internet Project survey finds that 87% of all youth between the ages of 12 and 17 use the internet." Typically, we allow them the freedom to access the world wide web without any guidance. There are very real dangers waiting for the child who is not prepared. How can we allow our children access to this information without any instruction or guidance? The SLMS provides instruction to students on how to gather and evaluate information. The SLMS is the person responsible for your child's internet safety. The SLMS will help students to develop the critical thinking skills that are essential and unique to our digital age. Students are taught how to assess sources for validity and reliability. They are taught to assess information for bias, prejudice and motive. They are taught how to be good consumers of information. Students who are not taught to be critical thinkers in this regard, run the risk of falling prey to dangerous people and misinformation. In the past, the information that our children had access to was limited, therefore, we had more control over the reliability of the information. Today we must teach children quickly how to protect themselves from overexposure. The vast quantity of information that the internet provides and the speed with which this information can be accessed makes these skills necessary. In this digital age children must be intentionally taught critical thinking skills for safety sake. Our students need the SLMS in order to develop the skills that will become the backbone of their continuing education. Without solid instruction they will not be prepared.

Parents often feel overwhelmed as they try to support their children's learning. This is even truer with regard to technology. We refer to our generation as "Digital Immigrants". We are doing our best to learn something that is new to us, as our children, "Digital Natives", are immersed in technology from the beginning and make it look so easy. Their brains are developing in such a way as to understand technology on a level that Digital Immigrants never will. What can we do? The SLMS can equip parents to aide in the education of their children. We ask parents to read to children because it benefits their reading ability. Why would we not equip parents to continue reinforcing a student's internet safety training at home? The SLMS can assist parents by building the skills

necessary to support, guide and reinforce their children's safety on the internet. Children are capable of understanding modern technology long before they are capable of understanding the implication of its use. Parents need to be aware of and supervise their children's time on the computer. By educating parents, a SLMS can encourage parents to develop in their child, the ethical responsibilities of internet access. With the help of the SLMS, parents can remain involved in all aspects of their child's lives. Computer use extends beyond the classroom and wise parents see the benefit of keeping in step with their children.

The SLMS can equip classroom teachers to 'speak' the right language. According to Marc Prensky, *Digital Natives Digital Immigrants*, "Today's students – K through college – represent the first generations to grow up with...technology. They have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age. " This increases the chasm between the teacher and the student. Prensky states, "[The chasm] is very serious, because the single biggest problem facing education today is that our Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language. Through the use of technology and professional development, teachers can begin to incorporate technology into their lessons. The classroom teacher is never alone; the SLMS is the unseen partner offering support through a difficult transition. The SLMS can offer suggestions and applications that fit the personality of the instructor as well as the subject matter. With a SLMS on site, there is always a safe place to go to ask questions, work on skills and gain confidence. Without the SLMS on site many teachers will never risk failure, which guarantees little success in this day and age. Students love technology. What better way to encourage participation in the classroom and excite students about learning than to incorporate technology into their learning. Teachers who don't utilize technology are losing their students.

If you would like more information please go to my website at <http://www.project-central.org/page-1.html>. Students, parents and staff will all find what they are looking for. I am committed to providing support for the entire Elementary School Community.

Bibliography

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