Incorporating Constructivist Strategies Into the Lesson Plans

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In her article, *Beyond the Bird Unit*, Jenifer Robins defines a BIRD UNIT as “the type of research activity where students search for information in order to fill in worksheets that they transform into essays and presentations.” (Robins, p. 8).

In the book, *Ban Those Bird Units*, Lance and Loertscher warn that “By itself, this type of exercise does not go far in promoting information literacy.”
The basis for Robins' article, *Beyond the Bird Unit*, is to promote using constructivist methods to enrich lesson planning.
Additionally, in the article, Robins “concentrates on the culminating high-think activities of a teacher/librarian collaboration” thereby, placing importance on the teacher and librarian “pooling knowledge” to promote constructivist strategies for learning. The teacher takes the lead by deciding which curriculum standards are to be met.
Traditional pedagogy values "replicability, reliability, communications, and control," while constructivist pedagogy values "collaboration, personal autonomy, generativity, reflectivity, active engagement, personal relevance, and pluralism"

(Lebow, 1992, p. 5).
Robins’ reinforces what Grassian and Kaplowitz champion, which is interactive, learner-centered instruction. “Active learning simply involves having learners do something, write something, say something, play games, get up, move around interact, and take part in learning, as well as in thinking about their own learning, rather than passively observing demonstration or listening to facts, theories and information about a topic or how to do something.”

(Grassian and Kaplowitz, 2009, p. 95).
Robins’ constructivist methods are designed to enhance lesson plans by integrating information literacy instruction with problem-based, inquiry-based, and project-based lessons.

When the learner becomes “participant, partner and collaborator in the development process, your instruction becomes more relevant to them.” (Grassian and Kaplowtiz, 2009, p. 125).
Three Constructivist Strategies

to promote a dynamic, interactive learning environment for the user & to promote collaboration between teacher and librarian.

- **Problem-based**—the components of problem-based strategy are problem formulating, abstracting, applying knowledge, self-directed learning, and reflecting. Students follow their hunches, seeking out information to support or invalidate the leads they generate. Teachers and teacher-librarians act as mentors, asking questions that lead students toward deeper reflection, or they provide hints that direct students toward new information sources.”

- **Inquiry-based**—Students are encouraged to ask questions, but they are also required to find answers to their questions. Teachers and librarians create an environment that sparks students' interests.

- **Project-based**—Students work together on a project where the result is the assembly of individual student contributions. Students, therefore, learn from each other.

  (Robins, 2005).
In Lorzen’s article, *Encouraging Community in Library Instruction: A Jigsaw Experiment in a University Library Skills Classroom*, he states: “Active learning is a method of educating students that allows them to participate in class. It takes them beyond the role of passive listener and note taker and allows the student to take some direction and initiative during the class. The role of the teacher is to lecture less and instead direct the students in directions that will allow the students to "discover" the material as they work with other students to understand the curriculum.” (Lorenzen, 2004).
Robins’ article does not state the following, but instead it reinforces the important questions to ask when planning information literacy instruction:

Who is your user?
What do they need and want?
What do you want the user to be able to do?
How will you know that they are able to do it?

Keep your user’s needs at the heart of your plan:

Are our learners learning?
What can they do with this knowledge?
Conclusion:

“The goal is to bring students into the process of their own education.” (Lorenzen, 2004).

“Problem-based, inquiry-based, and project-based strategies all emphasize that knowledge is constructed by the learner.” (Robins, 2005).

“If students have more control over their learning, they are more likely to be engaged.” (Robins, 2005).

“Students create a collective product that is recognizably greater than their individual contributions.” (Robins, 2005).
References


