

Preventing Plagiarism with an Outcomes Approach

Plagiarism refers to the taking and using of someone else's words or ideas and passing them off as your own. It is dishonest, unethical and can be illegal. Plagiarism is not new but the new 'industry' selling term papers, book reports and essays to students through the Internet is causing alarm in the academic world. There are now numerous sites 'selling' or offering free, some thousands of these items to students in high school and beyond. A search on Yahoo for "term papers" will lead to a number of sites containing thousands of academic papers for sale.

Although the problem of buying term papers seems to be largely tertiary based, plagiarism can occur in other forms from an early age. Not only do teachers need to ensure that students learn the skills of researching but they must now also address the area of computer ethics.

An excellent resource, the *Teaching Information Skills* CD-ROM was produced by ASLA (Australian School Library Association) as part of the NPDP program in 1997. This CD-ROM contains an information skills continuum and looks at information literacy from the viewpoint of key competencies. These can be readily translated into the Overarching Learning Outcomes of the *Curriculum Framework*, in particular:

1. Students use language to understand, develop and communicate ideas and information, and interact with others.

3. Students recognise when and what information is needed, locate and obtain it from a range of sources and evaluate, use and share it with others.

4. Students select, use and adapt technologies.

12. Students are self-motivated and confident in their approach to learning and are able to work individually and collaboratively.

By focusing on the skills students need to acquire in order to meet these outcomes the opportunities for plagiarism become non-existent, especially when teachers:

- set well-designed assignments that are about learning
- focus on the process not the content
- place value on original thought
- allow time for writing in class
- work with students on their planning, ideas outline, note-taking etc
- ensure all references are cited
- ask for a range of resources as references e.g. two books, a journal article, an Internet site
- seek an oral report on the work done
- assess the planning, the notes and the process followed, as well as the result.

As the Internet becomes another content resource a number of issues need to be addressed. Not only is there a greater need to teach students about critical literacy, but there is also a need to address computer ethics.

Teachers should model correct behaviour when:

- downloading, printing or using information from the Net
- using graphics or music in multimedia presentations
- photocopying material that is copyright
- using student work.

Students need to develop a respect for intellectual property, and understand that using other people's ideas and words is acceptable if credit is given. All sources of information, including the Internet, should be cited and students and teachers should discuss issues of copyright and ethical behaviour, including software piracy and copying music tapes or videos.

For further information about the CD-ROM *Teaching Information Skills*, and other teacher resources in this area see the CMIS publication *Resource Focus: Cross Curriculum Professional Resources* that was distributed to schools in 1998.

Find links to useful Internet sites about Intellectual Property rights and the related issues of copyright and plagiarism at:

www.eddept.wa.edu.au/cmisis/eval/curriculum/copyright

For information about Online Research Modules and links to Jamie McKenzie's *From Now On* website go to:

www.eddept.wa.edu.au/cmisis/eval/curriculum/onlineacts/resmodules

**SUE SCOTT, COORDINATOR EVALUATION
CURRICULUM MATERIALS INFORMATION SERVICES**

First published in *Technology Focus Vol. 1, No. 2, 1999* Updated January 2003