

Building from the Past for the Future

I began a library makerspace back before most people had even heard of the concept and there was minimal, if any, literature available. I vividly remember being intrigued by the concept and contacting our chief technology officer, thinking he'd have some insight as well as support, but he'd never heard of a makerspace or the maker movement, and it was years before the school district caught up with my thinking. The concept was so new, I was on my own.

Shortly after establishing the makerspace, I realized I needed to dig deeper. How could I progress students beyond play and guided experiences into independent and autonomous experiences? My prior knowledge, recent experiences, and exploration of brain development and tactile learning led me to further develop opportunities for my students by aligning informal learning with academic standards, school goals, and the library mission.

Information inquiry is defined by Daniel Callison as "an application of the ancient Socratic Method of teaching through self-posed and mentor-posed questions in order to gain meaning in today's overwhelming Information Age."

In 2001, I received a grant from the Indiana Department of Education to conduct action research on information inquiry, and by 2003 I was writing and speaking about what we learned and how school librarians and library programs grew from that experience. Dr. Callison and I collaborated on a book, *The Blue Book on Information Age Inquiry, Instruction, and Literacy*, where we said, "When trying to make sense of the world around us, and helping students make sense of that world as well, inquiry is a powerful tool. Inquiry is a method allowing students, teachers, and [school librarians] to work together toward becoming independent thinkers, doers, creators" (2006). Exactly ten years later, in 2011, I made the leap to intentionally connect inquiry, library programming and resources, and students' learning with the maker movement. It was with this epiphany my current school library makerspace was born.

By 2015 my thinking had stalled, and I knew I needed help developing a path for students to learn how to systematically examine a question, problem, or desire and work through their thinking in order to learn, experiment, and create independently through the library makerspace. This was one of those times when life seems to happen for a reason. My principal sent out a staff training opportunity: "to come away with a planned unit of study that takes the approach of starting with a problem or project and building the learning around it. Students learn the expectations and parameters and then become in charge of their own learning." Could I really be this lucky? Yes! I spent a week that summer at Magnify Learning's PBL (project-based learning) workshop. The leadership, learning, and time afforded in the workshop combined with my years of experience with information inquiry, helped me develop a process for autonomous learning designed to meet my school's culture and needs.

My students now have access to a five-page, five-step process portfolio, "Makerspace Project Learning Proposal for the Future Artist, Craftsperson, Designer, Entrepreneur, Inventor." This document gave students the guidance, support, and structure necessary to work through the systematic thinking required in an autonomous learning plan, whether as a group or as an individual. It is through this guide students have successfully grown as individuals and developed skills, expertise, and experiences. Inquiry and making *are* a match made for my school library.

Work Cited

Callison, Daniel, and Leslie Preddy. *The Blue Book on Information Age Inquiry, Instruction and Literacy*. Libraries Unlimited, 2006.

About the Editor

Leslie B. Preddy, MS, has been the school librarian at Perry Meridian Middle School in Indianapolis, IN, since 1992 and has served as an adjunct professor for Indiana University, Indiana State University, and IUPUI. She has presented webinars and is a frequent speaker and consultant at local, state, national, and international education conferences and events. She has published many articles in professional journals, co-created online resources for educators, and is the author of *SSR with Intervention: A School Library Action Research Project*, *Social Readers: Promoting Reading in the 21st Century*, and *School Library Makerspaces*. Preddy is a recipient of many awards including AASL's Collaborative School Library Media Award and Perry Township Schools Teacher of the Year. She is Past President of the American Association of School Librarians and the Association of Indiana School Library Educators (AISLE). Preddy is a recent recipient of two grants for her school library makerspace from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services, administered by the Indiana State Library.

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MLA Citation

Preddy, Leslie B. "Building from the Past for the Future." *School Library Connection*, May 2019, schoollibraryconnection.com/Home/Display/2197754.

<https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Home/Display/2197754?topicCenterId=1945912>

Entry ID: 2197754