

QUESTION #12:

HOW DO I CHOOSE AND USE APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS?

A conversation with Frank Christ

Let me answer this question in two parts: how to choose appropriate instructional resources and then how to use them.

First, let's talk about choosing instructional resources for students. The key word here is "students." Remember that students have different learning styles and abilities and you need to consider having available different types of instructional and self-help material for them. Think print material as well as audiocassettes, videos, and computer software. And think different reading levels of materials.

You can start choosing material by identifying your program needs. Then you can look

for materials through Internet searches, the listserv LRNASST, CRLA and NADE national and regional conferences, reading of periodicals like *T.H.E. Journal*, *Journal of Developmental Education*, CRLA and NADE newsletters. You also can meet with faculty in key courses like Reading, English Comp, Ed Psych, Freshmen Orientation, Math, Study Skills, and ESL to get their recommendations for material that they think might benefit their students. By the way, consider keeping a "wish list" of materials that you want. You might even consider writing and filing for future use purchase orders for the materials that you would like to have available in the LAC.

I have a question. Since instructional resources today, especially multimedia materials, can be expensive, how can I know that what I am getting is useful?

Good question. It is one that many LAC directors don't get answers to before they actually purchase the material. Then they find out that it was not really useful for their students nor acceptable to faculty. Here is one solution. Before you purchase, send for a pre-

view copy. Have one of your staff or an appropriate faculty member review it. Have one or more students sample it. On the basis of their feedback, make your decision to purchase or return it.

That makes sense to me. Now, what about using these materials that I have so carefully selected for use in the LAC?

Before I answer that question, let me make a few suggestions on how the LAC can amass an enormous collection of materials and increase its reputation on campus as a resource for instructional and self-help materials without paying for many items.

You know that students will come or be referred to your LAC for assistance in study skills, writing and reading improvement, prob-

lem solving in math, physics, and chemistry, and, if your campus has many foreign students, English as a Second Language. Remember that on your campus many instructional and self-help materials already exist in the library, learning resource center, faculty offices, and campus bookstore. Your LAC could become the campus information resource for these materials by compiling a catalog of all available material.

What you are recommending makes sense, but I am not clear as to how I can do this.

Okay. Let me step you through this. First, list all of the programs on campus that might have a collection of materials that would be useful for students. I have already suggested the campus library, learning resource center, faculty offices, and the campus bookstore. Visit these places and elicit their acceptance. Now comes the time-consuming part. Using database software like dBase, Access, or Fox Pro, start compiling this LAC master list. You may want to consider these fields for your database: physical location, instructional area, title,

author, year of publication, type of media, and course applicability. When you have this list compiled, publicize to the campus that your LAC has it available. Keep a copy of this master list accessible to LAC staff, tutors, visiting faculty, and, of course, for students who will be asking for help. Oh, and by the way, you might consider asking faculty to donate materials for use in the center. If they do, design a bookplate that gives them credit for the donation and publicize their generosity in the campus newspaper or faculty newsletter.

You mentioned the campus bookstore. Why include it in the LAC master list of materials?

The campus bookstore can be a great partner with the LAC if you work with it to have available for purchase a collection of study

skills and self-help tutorial materials that you request. Some campus bookstores have a special section that displays material recom-

mended by the LAC for student use. In addition, the bookstore can help publicize LAC programs and services by inserting your book-

marks in selected course texts or putting one or two of them in with purchases at the sales counter.

Please go back to my question that you have not yet answered. What about using these materials that I have so carefully selected?

When students come to the center for help and you feel that they can be helped with some program material, you might consider the following suggestions:

1. Give students a choice of available materials: text, audiovisual, computer-assisted.
2. Overview and model the material with students, especially if the material is software.
3. Let students know that a staff member is available if they have any problems with content or procedure as they use the material.
4. Get students to return when they have finished using the material. This is especially important when the student is going through material that has many chapters, modules, or sections. You may want to schedule appointments after each chapter or program module.
5. One last recommendation, have students evaluate the materials that they use. A simple form in which they grade the material from A to F and which has a place for their comments will tell you how successful you have been in supplying useful instructional and self-help material to students who come to your LAC.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Flippo, R. F., & Caverly, D. C. (2000). *Handbook of college reading and study strategy research*. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.

Frank L. Christ has been with CRLA all of its existence, beginning as a founding member in 1966 when he was at Loyola University, Los Angeles. Frank is a Past President (1968-69), editor of two WCRLA Proceedings (Combined Proceedings of the First, Second, and Third Annual Conferences and Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Conference, Newsletter Editorial Advisory Committee (1968-71), author of six articles, six of which were published in the association proceedings, recipient of Distinguished Leadership Award (1970), Distinguished Service Award (1972), and the Long and Outstanding Service Award (1986). Frank coined the phrases; "Learning Assistance Support System," "Learning Assistance Center," and "Learning Assistance" in a 1971 CRLA article. Frank was the director of the Learning Assistance Support System at CSU-Long Beach from 1972-1989 and is presently a Visiting Scholar with the University Learning Center-University of Arizona, where he co-directs the annual Winter Institute for Learning Assistance Directors and Practitioners. His email address is flchris@primenet.com.