

Teaching Information Literacy Using the Big6™ and Super3™

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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In the heart of inquiry learning are critical thinking and problem solving skills. Teaching our students to be lifelong learners means teaching them the ability to use the information around them critically and creatively. Today's students no longer need to simply know the information when they graduate, our world changes too quickly. They now need to have the skills and ability to find, process, and apply the information they need. They need to be able to adapt to new situations and solve problems that aren't even available yet, which makes teaching these critical thinking and problem solving skills even more imperative than basic knowledge or fact recall.

I discovered the Big6™ and Super3™ approach while I was reading about inquiry-based learning. Several sources mentioned using this approach, and once I looked into it I quickly realized why. The approach is clearly laid out, easy to follow, and has a multitude of resources available making it simple for time-strapped teachers to use. Created by Michael Eisenberg and Robert Berkowitz, the Big6 breaks down the process of finding, processing, and applying information into six skills: Task Definition, Info Seeking Strategies, Location & Access, User of Information, Synthesis, and Evaluation. The Super3 breaks it down even further into 3 skills for lower elementary students: Plan, Do, and Review. They are essentially the same approach just geared towards different audiences.

I have applied the Big6 approach to the Social Studies 6 curriculum. The curriculum focuses on comparing aspects of our identity to those of other countries around the world. As we learn about other countries, I needed a way to cover the basic facts about those countries without direct instruction. To have the students simply do a Google Search wasn't a good way to teach the skills they needed. I created small projects and fact - finding missions through the Big6 approach. I introduced the language of the program defining each of the skills and how they applied to their project. We then went through the process skill by skill making sure to discuss and reflect after each one. When it came time to go through the process again with a new part of the world, they understood it well enough to go through it as a group (with a prepared package helping them with the steps).

This approach could essentially be applied to every curriculum however, not simply for research. Any project, task, or assignment could benefit from this skills approach as it is about

problem solving. Starting in Grade 1, teaching the students to use the steps Plan, Do, Review for their assignments creates the base to expand into the six step approach using the same skills. The book [The Super3: Information Skills for Young Learners](#) by Michael B. Eisenberg and Laura Eisenberg Robinson, gives teachers all the information and resources they need to teach this process to their students. There are examples and worksheets that can be copied from the book. It is easy to follow and set up using language that your students will understand always reminding them of the steps: Plan, Do, Review. There are even colouring pages with the steps that can be posted in the classroom making it easy for the teacher and students to refer to.

What I like about this approach is not only is it practical and simple to use, but that it is applicable to all grades (including High School) in any subject. If started in the lower elementary grades it can be continued where the steps and language mature with the students. Eventually they should have a deep understanding as to how to apply these skills and processes to solve problems. There are a lot of resources available on their website [big6.com](#) including tons of “Free Stuff”, lessons and books. As a Teacher-Librarian, I like that this program gives me an easy “in” to classrooms because the approach is so practical to follow, the materials are ready to go, and it can be applied to any subject.