

## Plagiarism Prevention

Available online at:

[http://ericir.syr.edu/Virtual/Listserv\\_Archives/LM\\_NET/2002/Feb\\_2002/msg00600.html](http://ericir.syr.edu/Virtual/Listserv_Archives/LM_NET/2002/Feb_2002/msg00600.html)

- **To: LM\_NET@LISTSERV.SYR.EDU**
- **Subject: Plagiarism prevention**
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- **Date: Mon, 11 Feb 2002 09:58:17 -0600**
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Hi Folks,

I am so glad that Colleen MacDonell has framed the plagiarism problem in terms of punish or prevent. This has been a long-standing issue with me.

I have always lost heart when one of my kids was given an "about" research assignment that never asked for more than what Bloom would have called Knowledge or Comprehension level questions. When I read my son's assignment "Write a paper about bats," my first impulse was to send him to the encyclopedia, tell him to photocopy it and turn it into his teacher saying the assignment had already been done better by someone else.

I honestly believe that one big reason that kids plagiarize is that they are NEVER asked to personalize their research or come up with original, creative solutions to problems though it. Our concern about plagiarism should only be partially based on intellectual property concerns - it should also be based on whether we are using the research project to make critical, original thinkers out of students.

Our district has used the rubric below to improve the level of research assignments for the past few years to good effect. You are welcome to use it with your staff as well. We want NO level one questions and hope that kids get at least a few level 4 questions during their stay with us in the district:

A Research Question Rubric: Not all research questions are created equal.

Level One: My research is about a broad topic. I can complete the assignment by using a general reference source such as an encyclopedia.

I have no personal questions about the topic.

Primary example: My research is about an animal.

Secondary example: My research is about the economy of Minnesota.



CURRICULUM MATERIALS  
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## *Teach Them to Copy and Paste*

Level Two: My research answers a question that helps me narrow the focus of my search. This question may mean that I need to go to various sources to gather enough information to get a reliable answer. The conclusion of the research will ask me to give a supported answer to the question.

Primary example: What methods has my animal developed to help it survive?

Secondary example: What role has manufacturing played in Minnesota's economic development?

Level Three: My research answers a question of personal relevance. To answer this question I may need to consult not just secondary sources such as magazines, newspapers, books or the Internet, but use primary sources of information such as original surveys, interviews, or source documents.

Primary example: What animal would be best for my family to adopt as a pet?

Secondary example: How can one best prepare for a career in manufacturing in the Twin Cities area?

Level Four: My research answers a personal question about the topic, and contains information that may be of use to decision-makers as they make policy or distribute funds. The result of my research is a well-supported conclusion that contains a call for action on the part of an organization or government body. There will be a plan to distribute this information.

Primary example: How can our school help stop the growth in unwanted and abandoned animals in our community?

Secondary example: How might high schools change their curricula to meet the needs of students wanting a career in manufacturing in Minnesota?

If you are interested in reading other ideas about research and motivation, a piece I wrote from MultiMedia Schools in 99 is still available on the web at

<http://www.infotoday.com/MMSchools/nov99/johnson.htm>

I do believe we need to look at our own assignments and roles as teachers when combating plagiarism. This is a charge that is well worth library media specialists leading!

All the best,

Doug

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