MAKING AN IMPACT IN THE CLASSROOM: Teacher Experience with Reviewed NSDL Resources

Page Keeley, Joyce Tugel (jkteley, jntugel)@mmsa.org – Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance
Francis Molina, Ted Willard (fmolina, twillard)@aas.org – AAAS Project 2061

Project Overview
Our project examined phenomena and representations found in DLS for their alignment to national content standards and their instructional quality. “Phenomena” are real-world objects, systems, and events that provide evidence of key ideas. “Representations” are pictures, video clips, graphs, simulations, and analogies that can help clarify key ideas. The site contains reviews of and links to resources in six categories: 1) Astronomy; 2) Biological Structure and Function; 3) Earth; 4) Ecology; 5) Energy, Force, and Motion; and 6) Matter. The resources, which we have described and annotated to encourage their effective use by teachers, are now discoverable via nsdl.org and are also available at the PRISMS web site, prisms.mmsa.org.

Methodology
We invited middle school teachers in three states (FL, LA, & ME) to participate in a pilot study of the beta version of the PRISMS web site. Twelve teachers responded that they would like to participate in the pilot study. The evaluator contacted each by email and included the survey as an attached Word document. All twelve of the teachers selected written responses as their choice for providing their feedback on the PRISMS resources. Eleven teachers returned surveys for analysis.

Results
Teachers reported unanimously that their students responded very positively to the resources, that the resources provided strong support for their instruction, and that they would be very likely to use the PRISMS resources again in the future. They also either agreed or strongly agreed that the reviews—all accessible via nsdl.org or the PRISMS web site—were useful and that the resources were well aligned with their respective states’ science curriculum standards.

Usability Considerations
Our testing showed that some teachers wanted to read the complete review, while others wanted a summary review, with the option of then reading the detailed review. This significantly impacted how we organized the PRISMS web site, and affirms the importance of the teacher evaluation component of this project.

Follow-up Project
AAAS Project 2061 has obtained a new Integrated Services grant to work with NSDL Pathways and collections in building capacity for determining the content alignment and instructional quality of their K-12 resources (NSF DUE 0840791). If you are interested in participating or would like to know more, please contact the PI: Francis Molina, fmolina@aas.org.

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