

TURN ACCESS INTO ACTION AT YOUR SCHOOL

10 best practices to effectively use educational databases to promote equity and continuity for students at school or at home

After reading the report *Keep Students on Track with Database Access*, education leaders may ask, “How can I realize these same benefits in my school or district?” While results can definitely vary by school or community, a key goal of the study is to provide educators with best practices based on implementations and to help K–12 education leaders translate the study findings and insights into sustainable procedures in their schools. As noted, a good starting point for realizing the benefits of using Gale educational databases is to rethink where those learning experiences should happen and position appropriate resources as class tools. This key takeaway came directly from students who said they want greater access to digital and online tools in their class and are more likely to use educational databases like the *Gale In Context* products when teachers incorporate them into everyday instruction and assignments. In response to this request, we’ve compiled the following 10 suggestions from over 23 hours of focus groups, interviews, and discussions with students, teachers, librarians, and administrators about the most effective ways to leverage Gale databases to support students and promote “future-ready” skill development.

1 ENHANCE OLD LESSON PLANS WITH DIGITAL RESOURCES

In most schools, curriculum standards in English or social studies include having students conduct research projects and develop a research-based deliverable such as a report, presentation, or slideshow. Teachers in our study recommend that you dust off those old lesson plans and units of study for student research projects and replace or supplement requirements for book usage with a requirement for using a digital resource within that research project.

2 IDENTIFY RESEARCH TOPICS

Getting started with a research project, especially if your school has never incorporated these types of learning activities in your curriculum, can be intimidating. For students, selecting a research topic is often the most challenging starting point. Many of the librarians in our study found educational databases, and in particular the Topic Finder function, effective for helping students and teachers identify research topics. The search process is welcoming for students and reduces the stress of both the learner and the teacher. By using educational databases to identify research topics, both students and teachers are introduced to databases in a comfortable and nurturing way that can lead to continued use in the subsequent research content collection and analysis phases.

3 USE YOUR SCHOOL LIBRARIAN AS A DIGITAL RESOURCE COACH

To help teachers better understand how to incorporate online databases into instruction, librarians provide a range of coaching support, including identifying the right databases to use for a curricular unit or student assignment, which teaches students about databases and provides direct instruction to the teachers. Several librarians noted the effectiveness of “back-to-summer” workshops that provide teachers with hands-on learning experiences with Gale products.

4 MEET STUDENT NEEDS WITH READING-LEVEL APPROPRIATE CONTENT

A common concern for teachers and librarians is finding suitable research materials that are age- and reading-level appropriate for their students. For example, reading levels of 8th-grade students may range from 4th-grade to college-level proficiency. Identifying authoritative and high-quality academic content for every student in an 8th-grade class may be challenging. In their database tutorials, librarians should show teachers and students how to use Lexile measure and content level to find suitable articles. The ability to position database content that meets specific students’ reading-level needs is an effective way to differentiate instruction while at the same ensuring that the quality of the resulting output will be consistent throughout the class.

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5 SUPPORT ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

In many communities and schools with large populations of students for whom English is not their first language, access to educational databases provides an efficient way to help develop stronger literacy skills in addition to research skills. Many librarians have been successful in gaining teacher interest in using the databases by sharing with them the multiple language capabilities within these resources. Articles can be translated into over 40 languages, making it easier for English language learners to stay on track in their core curricular classes while still developing greater proficiency in English.

6 DEVELOP RESEARCH SKILLS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

While most of the focus on database usage is with middle and high school students, the elementary teachers in our study group had a unique implementation strategy that achieved multiple goals for them. The *Gale In Context: Elementary* (formerly *Kids InfoBits*) database was incorporated into a personal reading center. Students could choose different topics that interested them and report back to the teacher on what they had learned. The reading center strategy helped teachers incorporate more literacy development time in the school day while also getting their students familiar with the navigation and features of *Elementary*. Later in the school year, they leveraged those experiences to have their students complete grade-level-appropriate research projects.

7 INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO GALE THROUGH HOMEGROWN VIDEO TUTORIALS

Students have strong interest in using videos to support their learning, especially for skill development. To help students understand how to use educational databases, several librarians recommended that schools create videos for students and post those instructional videos on school portals, class websites, or library/media center websites. Rather than a corporate video, a customized video that references the media center and the librarian as sources of additional assistance was considered preferable. Some librarians even suggested using students as the video narrators to model peer-to-peer learning.

8 USE DATABASES FOR COLLEGE SKILLS COURSES

Many schools incorporate college-preparation courses into their class schedules or as after-school electives to help students develop the skills they'll need to be successful in college. Given that strong research skills and comfort with using databases are considered essential for a successful transition to college, the inclusion of educational databases in these college-preparation courses can provide multiple benefits. While helping the students develop familiarity with using databases, these experiences also help students understand how to use the databases to support learning in their current middle or high school classes.

9 BE AS TEACHER FRIENDLY AS THESE DATABASES

As noted in the report, many teachers and librarians work side by side to develop lesson plans or units of study that require library resources. But how can teachers learn how to use educational databases when there is not a full-time or professionally certified librarian on staff? Gale databases are designed with teachers and students in mind. Teachers and principals should not be concerned that without a strong librarian on the team, they will not be able to take advantage of educational databases in the same ways described in the report. The newest addition to *Gale In Context*, *Gale In Context: For Educators*, helps educators tap into their school's student databases to support class instruction and enhance collaborative lesson planning.

10 EDUCATE YOUR PARENT COMMUNITY

Be sure to inform parents about library resources, like educational databases, that are available to them to use with their children at home. Several schools in our study incorporated parent workshops and PTA presentations about Gale databases into their school calendars to familiarize parents with the value and convenience of educational databases. Others leveraged social media posts created by database providers.

WHAT'S NEXT?



EXPLORE RESULTS

from the year-long study conducted by Project Tomorrow in partnership with Gale at [gale.com/results](https://www.gale.com/results).



OPTIMIZE RESOURCES

with help from your Gale customer success partners at support.gale.com.