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Chocolate Layer Cake: Layering the Assessment of Library Student Worker Skills

Patricia J. Mileham
Valparaiso University

Kimberly J. Whalen
Valparaiso University

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Assessment Layer Cake

This recipe assesses library student worker skills using layers of assessment tools. Information literacy self-efficacy levels and information literacy skills were assessed and student worker training adjusted accordingly.

Patricia J. Mileham, Valparaiso University, trisha.mileham@valpo.edu; Kimberly J. Whalen, Valparaiso University, kimberly.whelen@valpo.edu

NUTRITION INFORMATION

As one of the largest student worker employers on campus, library staff and faculty wanted to insure that student employee research skills were positively impacted from their role in the library. Though position-specific training had been offered to student workers within various departments, information literacy skills were not as strong as library staff and faculty desired. Library faculty chefs evaluated, chose, and right-sized a recipe for assessing student worker training, information literacy self-efficacy levels, and information literacy skills. Library chefs then used the assessment evidence to add non-position specific information literacy, communication, patron interaction, and team-building sessions to the student worker training calendar.

DIETARY STANDARDS

ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* Authority is Constructed and Contextual; Information Creation as a Process; Information Has Value; Research as Inquiry; Scholarship as Conversation; and Searching as Strategic Exploration

- Any or all depending on session content being assessed

COOKING TIME

One-minute assessment (cake), 1 minute

Freely available assessment (frosting), 30 minutes

For-purchase assessment (ganache filling), 45 minutes

Serves 30–40 student workers

COOKING TECHNIQUE

Individual reflection and feedback; proctored online group assessment sessions.

INGREDIENTS

- Student worker information literacy sessions, two-hours long, one each at the start of fall and spring semesters
- One-minute assessment questions
- Freely available assessment, such as the Information Literacy Self-Efficacy Scale (ILSES)
- For-purchase assessment tool, such as Project SAILS (Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills) or National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- Access to online survey tool: Google Forms, Springshare LibGuides CMS, SurveyMonkey, Polldaddy, or others
- Computer access for all students

PREPARATION

- Develop one-minute assessment questions
- Search literature to identify freely available assessment tools recommended by other library testing kitchens
- Transition selected assessment questions, scales, or tools from print to electronic format
- Request funds or write grant proposals to obtain funds to access for-purchase assessment tools
- Coordinate timing of training with other library department student worker supervisors
- Schedule assessment activities to coincide with training sessions

ASSESSMENT STEPS

The Cake Layers:

Student Training Feedback

One-minute assessments require no expertise or extensive budgets for ingredients; a private-label cake mix will suffice.

Ask at least two questions per instruction session, such as “What was the most important thing you learned today?” or “What do you still have questions about?” or “If you could change one thing about this training session, what would it be?”

Vary layers of questions each semester.

Have all students complete the one-minute assessment using the online survey tool.

No need to keep a close watch on students as they complete the assessment; it is their immediate feedback of the training session, not an assessment of their knowledge or skill levels.

View results within the automatically created online survey tool spreadsheet. Look for a concentration of flavors or for lumps in the batter.

**The Frosting:
Information Literacy Self-Efficacy Levels**

A more complex frosting recipe can call for stronger measurement tools; chefs need not look far for ingredients that will add another layer of flavor.

Prior to the end of the fall semester, have students complete the freely available assessment using the online survey tool.

This assessment is of their self-reported information literacy self-efficacy levels, not skills. Bakers need be aware that self-reported levels are often overly sweet and thickly spread.

Assessing self-efficacy levels can help library staff and faculty better understand barriers to student learning and potential areas of overconfidence.

View results within the automatically created online survey tool spreadsheet. Student responses can be correlated within the

ILSES categories of basic, intermediate, or advanced information literacy skills. Within results, look for frosting to be smoothly spread or for cake showing through.

**The Ganache Filling:
Information Literacy Skills**

To present an elegant finish, add ganache between the cake layers. More expensive than box cake batter or simple frosting, the ganache's delicate information literacy skills ingredients require further professional culinary assessment.

At the end of the year, invite a segment of the student worker population to indulge in this flavorful assessment.

Consider targeting freshmen or sophomore students so future training sessions can target weak skill areas.

This assessment blends student learning and skills assessment. Bakers need be aware that this layer is not just a finishing touch; evaluation of skills deepens the complexity of this recipe.

View results within the calorie-laden reports often provided by the vendor. Look for areas where the ganache was evenly applied or spread too thin.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

- Each of these assessment elements can stand alone or be layered for a more comprehensive outcome
- Organize results by themes and share with library colleagues and student worker supervisors

- Use responses to shape a plan for subsequent training sessions
- Use responses as evidence within student worker evaluations

ALLERGY WARNINGS

- Searching for freely available assessment tools is time-consuming. Many tools are written about but not freely available. Look for tools that are valid, reliable, and feasible.
- Transitioning freely available tools from print to electronic format is time-consuming. Pay special attention to format and wording.
- Students are often overconfident in their skills and knowledge. When budget allows, incorporating a skills-focused assessment provides richer and more reliable results.

CHEFS' NOTE

Valparaiso University chefs layered all elements of this recipe within our information literacy program. One-minute assessments designed using Google Forms were made available via Springshare LibGuides. Librarians identified the ILSES tool, transformed it into an online tool, and used it as a pre-and post-assessment. Librarians wrote and received an internal grant to fund Project SAILS use.

REFERENCES

Kurbanoglu, S. Serap, Buket Akkoyunlu, and Aysun Umay. "Developing the Information Literacy Self-efficacy Scale." *Journal of Documentation*, 62(6) (2006): 730–743. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00220410610714949.