

**Achieving Leadership in Information Literacy:
A Plan for University Libraries at
Bowling Green State University**

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Foreword

Dr. Lorraine Haricombe, Dean of University Libraries, charged the Information Literacy Task Force with writing an information literacy plan for UL. This internal document, *Achieving Leadership in Information Literacy: A Plan for University Libraries at Bowling Green State University*, is the result of that charge. It begins with an overview of current trends and conditions in higher education, academic libraries, Bowling Green State University, and University Libraries. The plan then details key goals, objectives, and action steps for achieving competence in information literacy and concludes with a synthesis statement outlining factors for successful implementation.

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Mission of Library Instruction

Contributing to an educational environment that develops culturally literate, self-assured, technologically sophisticated, and productive citizens, University Libraries (UL) promote students' participation in inquiry through the development of information literacy skills. To reach this goal, UL instruction staff work with students in the classroom, at the reference desk, via virtual chat reference, and during one-on-one consultations. UL instruction staff create print resources and web-based learning objects. They also actively collaborate with faculty in all departments to ensure the successful integration of information literacy into the curriculum.

Definition of Information Literacy

Information literacy is a person's ability to respond to an intellectual challenge or information need by adapting his or her skills to locate information efficiently, analyze it critically, and use it responsibly in order to construct meaning.

Environmental Scan

Higher Education

Over the past fifteen years, higher education has experienced many changes. Emphasis is no longer solely on the delivery of instruction in a teacher-centered environment; institutions of higher education are now encouraged to emphasize learning in a student-centered environment where students are active participants in inquiry, problem solving and critical thinking. The Boyer Commission Report, *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities*, describes historical reasons for teacher-centered classrooms that are no longer relevant today:

The inquiry-based learning urged in [the Boyer] report requires a profound change in the way undergraduate teaching is structured. The traditional lecturing and note-taking certified by periodic examinations, was created for a time when books were scarce and costly; lecturing to large audiences of students was an efficient means of creating several compendia of learning where only one existed before.¹

In today's world, however, people learn and work with Internet access at their fingertips and in an environment where information and knowledge grow at alarming rates. Memorization has become less important; learning how to learn is now considered an essential skill. Along with this shift in emphasis from teacher-centered to learner-centered experiences, assessment of student learning is expected. Departments, programs, and institutions are required to illustrate, through a variety of measures, their contributions to student learning.

Academic Libraries

In January 2000, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) published *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*. This document includes ACRL's definition of information literacy; confirms the significance of information literacy to higher education; and outlines standards, performance indicators, and learning outcomes. Soon after its publication, ACRL's document received endorsement from the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE). AAHE has endorsed only one other policy like this in its history. David Breneman, an AAHE board member and dean of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, commented: "With societal well-being so dependent on how its citizens find, review, and use information, institutions must help students become information literate, in the fullest sense of the term, as set forth so well in the ACRL standards."²

The five ACRL standards follow:

1. The information literate student defines and articulates the need for information.
2. The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.
3. The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.
4. The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
5. The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.³

Information literacy is not simply a renaming of the term “bibliographic instruction” or “BI.” Information literacy is also not computer literacy, nor is it mechanical “button” pushing. It goes beyond instruction of information finding tools and resources. In short, information literacy is the set of skills and abilities that allows people to realize when they need information and to understand how to locate, evaluate and use information ethically and effectively. As the information literacy movement has gained momentum, other education- or library-related organizations have approved their own disciplinary definitions and/or standards for information literacy. A list of organizations and related URLs are included in Appendix A.

Paralleling trends in higher education, ACRL emphasizes the importance of student-centered experiences and assessment of student learning and contends that information literacy must be integrated into the curriculum: “Achieving competency in information literacy requires an understanding that this cluster of abilities is not extraneous to the curriculum but is woven into the curriculum’s content, structure and sequence.”⁴

Libraries play a critical role in developing students’ information literacy skills and, now more than ever, fulfill a teaching mission connecting the students’ classroom experience with students’ search for and use of information. While libraries are typically campus leaders in information literacy initiatives, students do not acquire information literacy skills only through library instruction. They also acquire information literacy skills in the classroom or laboratory as they conduct research or participate in inquiry.

Collaboration with teaching faculty and other librarians is essential in this environment where the libraries have a clear teaching mission, information literacy is integrated into the curriculum, and librarians are seen as contributors to student learning.

BGSU

The BGSU *Academic Plan* (2002) creates a strategic framework for realizing BGSU’s aspirations of becoming a premier university over the next twenty to fifty years. The plan, which provides strategies to enhance the University’s distinctiveness among institutions of higher education, recognizes that BGSU must become a much more learner-centered institution than it currently is. It identifies *inquiry*, *engagement*, and *achievement* as the dimensions defining the University’s character and advocates the creation of an educational environment of inquiry for all students along with opportunities for undergraduate research. Five promising themes emerged in the *Academic Plan*:

Leadership in Learning
Critical Thinking about Values
Embracing the Arts
Understanding Cultures and Nations
New Media and Technologies

The Academic Plan calls for “supporting and strengthening BGSU programs that: 1) bear the hallmarks of premier universities, 2) give substance to ‘learning,’ and 3) situate ‘learning’ in communities. . . .”⁵ It requires explicitly planning, deploying university resources, and then evaluating the returns on those investments.

BGSU Libraries

In spring 2003, UL published its three-year strategic plan, the writing of which involved staff from across the Libraries. The plan outlined ten strategic directions and prioritizes three directions in particular: Building a Flexible Organization, Achieving Leadership in Information Literacy, and Making the User-Centered Library a Reality.

Following is the UL goal associated with the strategic direction Achieving Leadership in Information Literacy:

Goal:

Maintain current course-integrated instructional program and work toward increasing UL's involvement in teaching for-credit courses or modules of such courses in order to enhance the UL's contributions to student learning outcomes, student retention and self-reliant learning.⁶

Based on the ideas proposed in the strategic plan, UL reorganized to create a more flexible organization. Now a “collegiate” model, UL has centralized functions as well as four departments reporting directly to the Dean. Functional clusters—staff members across departments who form communities of practice—share best practices, participate in reflective practice, and develop library programming opportunities. Library Teaching & Learning (LTL), one of the new departments created in the reorganization, is responsible for providing oversight of information literacy initiatives in UL through the coordination of library instruction and the Instruction Functional Cluster.

Instruction at BGSU Libraries

ACRL, in its *Guidelines for Instruction Programs for Academic Libraries*, suggests multiple modes of instruction for academic libraries:

- advice to individuals during the reference interview process;
- in-depth research consultations and appointments;
- individualized instruction;
- electronic or print instruction aids;
- group instruction in traditional or electronic classrooms;
- web tutorials and web-based instruction;
- asynchronous modes of instruction (e-mail);
- synchronous modes of instruction (chat);
- course management software; and
- hybrid or distributed learning or distance learning, employing combinations of the previous methods.⁷

As suggested by ACRL, library instruction in UL comprises multiple approaches. Many units throughout UL contribute to library instruction at varying levels and in a variety of ways depending on their scope and mission.

Reference desk interactions in all UL areas are considered instructional. That is, the goal of a reference interaction is to teach users to find, evaluate, and use information; the goal is not simply to provide answers in isolation. UL's approach reflects current practices in academic libraries where "reference and library instruction are intrinsically linked, complementary, and intertwined" (p. 182).⁸ Results from the Wisconsin Ohio Reference Evaluation Program (WOREP) conducted in fall 2003 show that users do in fact learn at the Jerome Library Reference Desk. Nearly 84% of respondents indicated that they learned about one or more new sources while 97% reported learning something new about the libraries.⁹

In recent years, UL have been providing approximately 300 course-integrated instruction sessions reaching 6,000 students. Course-integrated instruction in LTL and the Science Library tends to focus on the catalog and research databases while course-integrated instruction in the Music Library (ML), the Curriculum Resource Center (CRC), the Browne Popular Culture Library (BPCL), Sound Recordings Archives (SRA), and the Center for Archival Collections (CAC) tends to focus on the catalog, research databases, and primary source material. Individualized instruction for undergraduates and graduate students is widely available.

UL librarians regularly teach two credit-bearing information literacy/research methods graduate courses in other BGSU colleges: MUCT 602 for the College of Musical Arts and EDTL 680 for the College of Education and Human Development (EDHD). The Head of the Music Library and Sound Recording Archives has taught MUCT 602: Research Techniques every fall and every other summer since fall 1992. Enrollment in MUCT 602 has ranged from 37 to 54, although usually it is in the mid- to upper-40s. Recently, the instructor created a web-centric version of the course (at least 50% of the course delivered online). Because print sources continue to be an integral component of music research, the course cannot be taught completely online. In 2003, one librarian from LTL and another from the CRC developed a three-credit hour course, EDTL 680: Information Literacy for Teaching and Learning. The students who typically enroll in this course are practicing teachers in preschool through grade 12. They take this class as an elective in the Curriculum and Teaching Cohort program. Two sections of the course were offered in summer 2003 with approximately 20 students enrolled in each section. In summer 2004, three sections of the course were offered. EDHD now intends to offer four sections of the course every summer. A modified version of this course is also offered online for one credit hour. Although UL do not own MUCT 602 and EDTL 680, UL librarians currently create and deliver their content.

Four faculty librarians, as part of a collaborative BGSU/Kent State University Ohio Board of Regents (OBOR) grant, received small fellowship grants in spring 2003 to collaborate with teaching faculty to integrate information literacy skills into their curriculum. All four grant projects are discipline specific and concentrate on an upper-division required course in the major: TECH 302: Technology Systems in Societies, AMPD 451: Global Issues in Apparel and Textiles, EDTL 347: Literacy for Middle Childhood Educators, and EDIS 444: Adapting Curriculum and Instruction for Students with Special Needs. Web-based, discipline-specific information literacy instructional modules for these courses are currently in development.

With UL's current approach to library instruction, some students receive library instruction multiple times, occasionally with repetitive content, while other students receive no formal instruction. To remedy this situation, instruction librarians began a curriculum-mapping project in fall 2003. Curriculum mapping is the process through which UL librarians intend to establish a proactive instruction program with deliberate and measurable student learning outcomes in designated courses. Through this process, librarians expect to create a culture of information literacy within UL, provide UL with an increased understanding of the curriculum as students experience it, align course-integrated library instruction with the curriculum, and identify possible opportunities for collaboration. So that UL are able to balance staff workloads, implementation of this project will be incremental and at a pace that UL staff are able to sustain.

UL are committed to providing web-based, scalable, point-of-need instruction in a variety of ways. The ML/SRA and the CAC make available web-based research aids for users. Another example is LTL's database-driven pathfinder, QuickQuest (Q2), a resource that primarily includes article indexes/databases, reference sources, and web sites. Both the web-based research aids and Q2 can be accessed by individual users from the Libraries' web pages, or they can be used by librarians in classes or at the reference desk.

LTL and the Department of Archival Collections and Branches provide email reference assistance. Additionally, LTL has participated in a statewide chat reference service for the past three years. The goal of chat reference, like our in-person service, is primarily instructional.

A recent development in library instruction is the creation of the Instruction Functional Cluster, the purpose of which is to bring together staff from all UL areas responsible for providing library instruction. The group at this point is a community of practice who come together to discuss best practices and to participate in professional development opportunities. Individual units remain autonomous in their approaches to instruction.

Strengths and Opportunities

Achieving leadership in information literacy was named as one of the three strategic priorities for UL for 2003-2004. Consequently, library instruction and information literacy initiatives receive support from UL's administration. This plan, for instance, is a result of that support.

Instruction librarians tend to be experienced, innovative teachers who are willing to adapt to change, pilot new projects, and improve on existing projects. They also participate in assessment activities and are poised to learn more about assessment practices and implement them.

Collaboration within LTL, among instruction librarians in other units and departments in UL, with BGSU faculty, and with librarians from around the state is the norm. LTL's longstanding collaboration with the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology is one example of a successful campus-wide collaboration. At the state level, UL's involvement with OhioLINK, the Academic Library Association of Ohio (ALAO), INFOhio, and Kent State University's Institute for Library and Information Literacy Education (ILILE) enhances instruction and provides a rich collaborative environment.

The BGSU *Academic Plan* and the recently endorsed General Education *White Paper* provide clear frameworks through which to explore the integration of information literacy into the curriculum.

Weaknesses and Threats

Central oversight of information literacy initiatives does not exist. At the same time, commitment to information literacy initiatives, including assessment of student learning, varies throughout UL. The success of the Information Literacy Plan can be guaranteed only as far as units across UL who provide instruction contribute to its implementation and invest themselves in careful planning and meaningful collaboration. Central oversight would encourage more commitment.

Although promoting information literacy requires broad participation of UL staff, many existing staff members were not hired to provide instruction and may be reluctant to make that shift, either because their jobs are already too demanding or they have no teaching experience or desire to teach.

In the curriculum, UL work formally with undergraduates at only one common place in the curriculum—in the General Studies Writing courses. This situation complicates the integration of

information literacy into the curriculum. Integration into the curriculum is also constrained because a limited number of instruction personnel are available and because many existing collaborations are based on personal relationships, not formal structures. Perhaps the greatest obstacle, however, is that UL do not own the curriculum into which they are attempting to infuse information literacy.

UL, like other colleges at BGSU, were hard hit by recent budget cuts and hiring freezes. At a time of increased demand for resources and services, some vacant positions have been permanently lost. Areas involved in instruction have not been spared this situation.

In addition to these budgetary problems, UL face competition from an increasing number of campus-wide initiatives: BGX (i.e., the values initiative), the scholarship of engagement, writing across the curriculum, and more. Faculty and staff are concerned that they are expected to participate in too many unfunded initiatives, the consequences of which are unrealistic workloads.

Beyond BGSU, the current information explosion, web search engines, and an increasingly complex technology environment present additional challenges for users and librarians.

Goals

1. Integration into the Curriculum

Goal:

Reinvigorate current course-integrated instruction in order to enhance UL's contributions to student learning outcomes, student retention, and self-reliant learning. Explore the viability of increasing UL's involvement in developing and/or teaching for-credit workshops or courses.

Objective:

Gain more control over course-integrated library instruction by examining the University curriculum at the program level, creating a tiered experience for students, and infusing opportunities to develop information literacy skills across the curriculum from the first-year experience through advanced degree programs.

Action Steps:

- Appoint a small task force to map the curriculum for the College of Education and to explore ways to act on the findings. Share the strategies and results with the rest of the teaching librarians and staff.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum-mapping process on a continuous basis. Revise as necessary.
- Allocate time during regularly scheduled library instruction meetings for UL teaching staff to map the curriculum in programs for which they are the instruction liaisons.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of a tiered approach to library instruction.

Objective:

Assess opportunities to strengthen the UL's role in providing instruction support to faculty and learner-initiated instruction.

Action Steps:

- Continue to maintain, promote and assess online instruction tools such as LTL's QuickQuest database and Falcon tutorial, CRC's WebQuests, and MLSRA's and CAC's research aids and other tutorials for use by students or faculty.
- Continue to offer opportunities for students to schedule one-on-one instruction appointments with UL instruction staff.
- Explore faculty development workshop opportunities through the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology. In addition to offering general information literacy workshops at the Center, explore the possibility of offering content-specific workshops to faculty in the various disciplines.

Objective:

Evaluate for-credit courses or course-integrated modules provided by UL instruction staff.

Action Steps:

- Create a policy statement regarding the depth and breadth of for-credit courses and workshops offered through UL and taught by UL staff.
- Determine if additional course-integrated web-based modules are needed.
- Determine if additional credit-bearing information literacy courses or workshops are needed and feasible.
- Assess effectiveness of for-credit and course-integrated modules and their impact on student learning.

Objective:

Raise awareness in UL and on campus of the teaching and learning that takes place at the reference desk as well as of the connection between library instruction and reference interactions.

Action Steps:

- Create a UL-wide policy or mission statement that emphasizes the teaching and learning mission of reference services.
- Reinforce a broad spectrum of information literacy skills with students during reference desk interactions in all units.
- Provide professional development opportunities for reference staff so they learn to be “learning facilitators” not “answer machines” (p. 84).¹⁰

2. Collaboration

Goal:

Investigate and initiate collaborative information literacy initiatives within UL, with the University community and with off-campus organizations and individuals.

Objective:

Expand the scope of the instruction and reference functional clusters

Action Steps:

- Identify common issues and concerns related to instruction and reference at UL reference desks.
- Provide meeting times to gather UL instruction areas together to share teaching philosophies, strategies and collaborative activities.
- Explore and implement collaborative opportunities within UL to provide course-integrated instruction.

Objective:

Pursue collaborations among UL instruction staff and BGSU faculty in information literacy activities.

Action Steps:

- Complete the development of online information literacy modules as part of BGSU/KSU Information Literacy Fellowship grants
- Explore possible partnerships with the honors program and the undergraduate research office to embed information literacy into their goals and objectives
- Examine current relationships with faculty to determine potential information literacy contacts.
- Provide initiatives for participation among UL instruction staff and faculty.

Objective:

Continue to partner with statewide organizations or associations to develop and implement information literacy initiatives.

Action Steps:

- Maintain involvement with the KSU/BGSU Information Literacy Fellowship Grants (part of the OBOR grant).
- Attend statewide professional development activities/conferences related to instruction and share information with UL colleagues.
- Participate in Kent State University's Institute for Library and Information Literacy Education (ILILE).
- Assess effectiveness of partnerships and collaborations.

3. Assessment

Goal:

Regularly assess UL instruction activities to assure on-going alignment with users' expectations, the University's mission and professional benchmarks.

Objective:

Develop an assessment plan for programmatic evaluation of UL instruction activities.

Action Steps:

- Appoint a committee with broad representation from UL to develop an assessment plan.
- Ensure that assessment designed to measure UL's contributions to student learning and experience is monitored and reported at the appropriate administrative level.

Objective:

Develop means for regular programmatic assessment of UL instruction activities.

Action Steps:

- Explore the development of a dynamic web-based database of questions as an internal assessment mechanism.
- Work closely with the College of Education to develop and administer a "model" stratified assessment of UL's differentiated learning outcomes.
- Identify and evaluate additional assessment methods, instruments and activities.
- Create mechanisms to foster awareness among instruction staff of trends in assessment of student learning.
- Create mechanisms to share authentic assessment activities within UL.
- Involve UL areas in revising and updating the differentiated learning outcomes.

Objective:

Continue to administer Kent State University & Association of Research Libraries' Project SAILS (The Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Survey) to measure students' information literacy skills and abilities.

Action Steps:

- Analyze the spring 2004 Project SAILS results and recommend implementation of desired changes.
- Assess effectiveness of SAILS and UL's continued participation in the survey.

4. Professional Development

Goal:

Maintain the integrity of library instruction in UL by developing the teaching skills of UL staff involved with instruction. Provide opportunities for teaching staff to improve teaching skills and knowledge.

Objective:

Gauge professional development needs of teaching staff during the standing library instruction meetings and the recently created Instruction Functional Cluster meetings.

Action Steps:

- Ensure that at least one representative who is involved in teaching from UL attend the key state and national instruction conferences and report back to the group. These include but are not limited to ALAO (annually), LOEX (annually), and ACRL (bi-annually).
- Provide via the Instruction Functional Cluster opportunities for all UL staff who teach to share best practices, allowing for an exchange of ideas and teaching philosophies in a broad reaching forum at least twice during the academic year.
- Pursue funding sources if it becomes necessary to bring outside experts to BGSU for continuing education purposes.
- Encourage UL staff who want to improve their teaching to consult with the Instruction Coordinator for professional development advice and opportunities.
- Develop a systematic way to explore professional literature related to instruction and then share findings among UL teaching staff.
- Formatively evaluate library instruction staff.

5. Learning Environments

GOAL:

Secure appropriate physical space and technological resources for library instruction.

Objective:

Create learning spaces, which will allow the continued growth of the library instruction.

Action Steps:

- Identify, list and prioritize space possibilities for library instruction in UL.
- Pursue viable, non-compromised teaching spaces for library instruction.
- Adopt a strategy for documenting space needs, constraints and limitations.
- Work with UL's Development Committee to pursue potential funding opportunities.

Objective:

Secure the technology requisite for library instruction to be as effective and as close to state-of-the-art as possible.

Action Steps:

- Identify, list and prioritize acquisition of teaching equipment and computers that are either essential or optimal for library instruction.
- Establish mechanisms to test and evaluate state-of-the-art technology before adopting it.
- Explore possible funding sources to upgrade library instruction laptops acquired through grants.
- Provide appropriate training for staff on use of instruction-related technology.
- Work with UL's Development Committee to pursue potential funding opportunities.

6. Human Resources

GOAL:

Establish a strong, flexible, capable and diverse library instruction staff to advance information literacy at BGSU.

Objective:

Include as many units in UL as possible to contribute to information literacy activities.

Action Steps:

- Open instruction opportunities to UL's faculty and staff who may be interested in and qualified to teach but whose primary responsibilities are not instructional in nature.
- Explore departmental situations within UL and on campus to identify where collaborative instruction opportunities exist.
- Persuade UL units and governing bodies that a unified UL approach to library instruction is necessary for UL's success.
- Create a realistic staffing plan to promote UL's information literacy agenda.
- Discuss the possibility of staffing, where appropriate, some functions with non-permanent staff and curtailing or discontinuing functions that no longer correspond to UL's strategic priorities.

Objective:

Continue promoting an inclusive, multicultural environment that supports BGSU's emphasis on diversity.

Action Steps:

- Promote hiring whenever possible of qualified under-represented groups for open UL positions.

Objective:

Increase the number of UL faculty and staff willing and available to take part in library instruction and capable of adding value through their instruction efforts.

Action Steps:

- Integrate into job responsibilities for future faculty hires and select staff hires the expectation of contributing to and participating in instruction at UL.
- Strive to advance the primacy of interest, ability and enthusiasm for instruction as a key characteristic for new UL faculty and staff hires.
- Investigate alternative joint positions with other UL departments or units whenever possible.
- Use task forces, teams or subcommittees to distribute workloads and help large groups complete their work more efficiently.
- Pursue professional development opportunities to help UL staff improve their teaching skills.

Synthesis:
University Libraries' Support Needed to Ensure Success of the Plan

This plan identifies goals, objectives and action steps to help build on successful practice and to aid UL in realizing an increased role in the teaching and learning mission of the University. The importance of taking a unified/comprehensive approach to instruction is critical.

Instruction staff will continue to innovate, experiment, learn and assess in order to remain at the forefront of information literacy learning theory and to promote active student learning, student retention and self-reliant learning. Tiered information literacy learning outcomes will be refined. Opportunities for collaborative partnerships will be explored to promote information literacy both on campus and off. Outcomes of information literacy activities will receive methodical evaluation and assessment.

Professional development will focus on developing the teaching skills of UL staff involved with instruction. UL instruction staff will attend major conferences to learn the most recent developments in their field. Instruction staff will have opportunities to share ideas and learn from each other at functional cluster meetings.

Technology resources are essential for maintaining an acceptable library instruction program in the existing information environment. Appropriate instructional technologies will be identified in order that BGSU students have the technology base for successful information literacy instruction. Strategies for securing adequate and non-compromised space for information literacy instruction will be pursued.

In order for this plan to be put into action and to be successful, UL's administration will need to provide the following support:

- Establish an Information Literacy Advisory Committee with broad UL representation and oversight from the Dean's Office.
- Create and implement a UL assessment plan that includes an instruction component focusing on student learning outcomes assessment.
- Evaluate and promote future human resources positions with instruction responsibilities.
- Promote the connection between reference and library instruction, emphasizing that both approaches help students develop information literacy skills.
- Assign implementation aspects of this plan to specific individuals and/or UL departments, *although no single department should have sole responsibility*. (Appropriate authority must be granted to individual or department charged with oversight.)
- Expect and monitor participation in the plan by all UL instruction areas.
- Expect and monitor participation in the curriculum mapping process by all UL instruction areas.
- Provide opportunities for UL library areas to collaborate and formally plan instruction activities.
- Provide external professional development support through funding and/or release time to attend library instruction workshops and conferences.
- Support internal professional development activities through funding and/or release time.
- Provide additional space and technology resources dedicated as first priority for instruction activities.

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Appendix A

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