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ERIC Development Team

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Myths and Realities about ERIC. ERIC Digest.

THIS DIGEST WAS CREATED BY ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

INFORMATION CENTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC

MYTH: ERIC IS JUST A DATABASE.

REALITY: ERIC is a national information system that provides ready access to an extensive body of education-related literature. Through its 16 subject-specific clearinghouses and four support components-- including ACCESS ERIC--ERIC provides a variety of services and products. In 1991, ERIC acquired and indexed 30,000 new documents and journal articles, produced over 200 publications (over a million copies of which were disseminated at no cost to users), responded to over 100,000 requests for information, distributed over 17 million microfiche, and increased its formal network of ERIC Partners to over 500 education organizations.

MYTH: THE ERIC DATABASE IS HARD TO FIND AND TO USE.

REALITY: The ERIC database, which has grown to contain over 775,000 citations to documents and journal articles, is the world's most widely-used education database and a critical resource for educators everywhere. Over 3,000 locations around the world receive ERIC print or database products. About 900 of these locations maintain complete microfiche collections and provide search services for clients. Though searching ERIC online does require some training, ERIC on CD-ROM is "user-friendly" even for beginners.

MYTH: NOT THAT MANY PEOPLE REALLY USE ERIC.

REALITY: Of the 5,600 commercial databases now available, ERIC is the most popular online database used in public libraries (both the U.S. and Canada), the second-most popular in research and university libraries, and the third-most popular overall. On CD-ROM, ERIC is the most popular database in public libraries and information centers throughout the world. In 1991, nearly a half-million online searches of the ERIC database were conducted by a total of 100,000 users in 90 different countries.

MYTH: SUBMITTING A DOCUMENT TO ERIC IS COMPLEX AND PREVENTS THE

AUTHOR FROM PUBLISHING IT ELSEWHERE.

REALITY: It is easy to submit your work to ERIC--just send a copy to any of the ERIC components. Several brochures, including "All About ERIC," "A Pocket Guide to ERIC," and "Submitting Documents to ERIC" provide complete directions and addresses. They are all available, at no cost, from ACCESS ERIC (1-800-LET-ERIC). The only paperwork required is a reproduction release form. This is available in "Submitting Documents to ERIC" and every issue of RESOURCES IN EDUCATION (RIE); it can also be requested from any ERIC component. While the release gives ERIC permission to abstract, index, and reproduce your work, no copyright is involved--you remain free to submit your work to any journal or publisher.

MYTH: ERIC ACCEPTS EVERYTHING, REGARDLESS OF QUALITY.

REALITY: ERIC has strict quality-control procedures that govern the selection of documents. These procedures are articulated in the ERIC Processing Manual and must be followed by each Clearinghouse. Eleven content criteria guide the selection of materials: contribution to knowledge, relevance, innovation, effectiveness of presentation, responsiveness to current priorities, timeliness, authority, audience, balance, stance on minority-ethnic-gender concerns, and treatment of material with sexual content. In addition, other criteria pertain to legibility, reproducibility, and availability. As a result of applying the criteria, last year ERIC rejected approximately 32 percent of the documents submitted.

MYTH: NO ONE WILL BUY DOCUMENTS FROM A PUBLISHER IF THEY ARE

AVAILABLE THROUGH ERIC.

REALITY: Usually the opposite is true--announcing a document in ERIC can be an effective marketing tool to make ERIC users throughout the world aware of your work. For several reasons, including cost and readability, people are more likely to want an original from the publisher than a photocopy or microfiche from ERIC, especially for longer documents.

MYTH: ERIC PRODUCES ONLY ONE DATABASE.

REALITY: While the bibliographic "ERIC database" remains ERIC's best-known product, ERIC also produces four reference and referral databases. Each is available online or in print copy. (Call ACCESS ERIC, 1-800-LET-ERIC, for further information.)

The reference and referral databases include:

--ERIC DIGESTS ONLINE: A full text collection of about 850 short syntheses of current research, educational trends, and other "hot topics";

--ERIC INFORMATION SERVICE PROVIDERS: A directory of nearly 1,000 institutions around the world that provide ERIC services, including database searching and access to microfiche collections;

--EDUCATION-RELATED INFORMATION CENTERS: Descriptions of about 350 institutions, associations and clearinghouses--arranged by topic area--that provide educational materials or services to the public; and,

--CALENDAR OF EDUCATION-RELATED CONFERENCES: A listing of nearly 600 international, national, state, regional and local events.

MYTH: THE ERIC DATABASE CONTAINS MATERIALS OF INTEREST ONLY TO

RESEARCHERS.

REALITY: ERIC has committed itself to reaching audiences that include practitioners, policymakers and parents. In the last 12 years, ERIC has acquired and indexed over 28,000 documents classified as Project/Program Descriptions, over 17,500 Teaching Guides and 15,500 Guides--Non-Classroom (for support staff), and over 7,000 Instructional Materials. Analyses of the literature added to the database each year confirm that approximately 30 percent is practitioner-oriented. In addition, ERIC will soon enter information about each nationally-validated National Diffusion Network program into the ERIC database.

MYTH: ERIC CLEARINGHOUSES DO NOT RECEIVE OR ANSWER REQUESTS FROM

TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS OR PARENTS.

REALITY: Last year, the ERIC Clearinghouses and support components (viz., the ERIC Facility, ACCESS ERIC, and the ERIC Document Reproduction Service) responded to more than 42,000 information requests from teachers and administrators. This number--which represents 47 percent of all requests handled by the ERIC system--has increased by at least 10 percent annually since 1988, when ERIC began keeping such records.

In responding to practitioner requests, ERIC components typically:

--Send requested printed materials or answer questions (e.g., providing materials on exemplary programs or practices, instructional methods or curricular materials, and assessment and testing issues; explaining education terms or "hot topics");

--Search the ERIC database or the reference and referral databases; and,

--Refer the inquirer to other federal, national or local resource centers.

MYTH: ERIC IS NOT WELL-KNOWN TO TEACHERS OR ADMINISTRATORS, NOR

ARE ERIC PRODUCTS PARTICULARLY USEFUL TO THEM.

REALITY: Several recent studies show not only that ERIC is recognized by teachers and administrators, but also that its products and services are used and appreciated. For instance:

--ERIC was the most widely-recognized program of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). Eighty-two percent of the school districts were familiar with ERIC and 67 percent received ERIC services or products.

--Ninety-eight percent of the librarians and school administrators responding to the surveys were familiar with ERIC, as were just under two-thirds of the policymakers and half of the teachers. Of the respondents who were familiar with ERIC, over 85 percent had used the system.

--Over 85 percent of the administrators believed that ERIC was available when they needed information, and the vast majority of those who conducted ERIC searches rated them as "very helpful." Of the respondents who were familiar with ERIC products, nearly 80 percent favorably rated ERIC Digests, and only 5 percent stated that they had received but not used them.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACCESS ERIC is a toll-free service to keep clients informed of the wealth of education information offered by ERIC and other sources. ACCESS ERIC staff answer questions, refer callers to education sources, provide information about the ERIC network, and produce the free publications "A Pocket Guide to ERIC" and "All About ERIC." The toll-free telephone number for ACCESS ERIC is 1-800-LET-ERIC.

REFERENCES

Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1991). ERIC ANNUAL REPORT--1991. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
Stonehill, R., and Brandhorst, T. (1992). The three phases of ERIC. EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER, 21(3), 18-22.

This digest was written by Robert M. Stonehill, ERIC Director, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. June 1992.

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