Credibility Analysis

Improving Students' Ability to Assess the Credibility of a Source

Subject: English Language Arts, History/Social Studies
Grade: 6 – 12
Timeframe: 45 minutes

Introduction:

The best research papers are written using credible sources. It is important that students are able to assess the reliability of sources when they are researching. Moreover, it is essential that students understand the importance of using different types of sources. They should learn the best types of sources to use to support different claims.

Additionally, it is important that students are comfortable using technology tools integrated into their research. EasyBib's citation tools make it easy for students to cite their sources correctly. It also has a Website Evaluation Tool that rates websites based on the criteria of top librarians to determine whether or not they are credible. The Website Evaluation Tool makes students think about the types of websites they are using to support their research papers.

Objective:

1. Assess the credibility of sources based on a checklist of criteria
2. Think critically about the best types of sources to use to support certain claims
3. Engage in group discussion

Materials:

- 6-10 different sources, including a physical encyclopedia, a book, a magazine, a video recorded interview (from a non-credible source), an academic journal, a credible website (like CNN), and a non-credible website (like Wikipedia)
- Computers (with EasyBib subscription to access the Website Evaluation tool)
- Create a Credibility Checklist based off of EasyBib's Criteria for Evaluating a Website available at here

Procedure:

1. At the beginning of the lesson, students discuss what makes a source credible. By which criteria should the source be judged? Have the students make a checklist.
2. Divide the students into groups so that you have the same number of groups as you have sources.
3. Assign each group to a source.
4. Have the students discuss the credibility of the source. Does it meet each component of the checklist the students came up with at the beginning of the lesson?? Why or why not? Could this source be used in a research paper? What kind of information would this source best support?
   a. for each source, the students should create a bibliographic citation.

5. After a period of five minutes, have the groups of students rotate to a different source. Repeat until all students have seen every source. At the end of the lesson, the students should have complete Works Cited documents containing the sources that students deem credible.

6. Convene as a class to discuss: What was difficult about assessing the credibility of the source? Could you find everything you needed in order to cite the sources (author, title, date published, etc.)? Which sources were the most credible? Why? Which ones weren't? Why?

7. Reveal EasyBib's Credibility Checklist to the students, and have them compare it with the one they created on their own. What elements did they include, and which are they missing? Which checklist is stricter? By which checklist would they like to judge sources in future research projects?

Assessment:

The students' Works Cited documents should be the same. They should have correctly identified the credible sources and the ones that weren't credible. They should be more comfortable using technological tools (including EasyBib) to help them research.

Self-Evaluation:

At the end of this assignment, students should have met the objectives outlined at the beginning of this lesson. Furthermore, they should have furthered the skills outlined in the introduction.

After the lesson, the students should have developed a better understanding of the different types of sources available to them. They should have furthered their ability to cite different sources using technological tools (EasyBib). Students' will have developed a better understanding of how to critically assess sources for credibility.

Extension:

Students may use these skills (ability to determine credibility of different sources, knowledge of how to cite different types of sources, etc.) when writing research projects in the future. Students should be encouraged to have a diverse group of sources in their future research papers. They should be encouraged to be resourceful in their research approach, and they should feel comfortable using technology to find and cite sources.