

Denton Inquiry 4 Lifelong Learning (DI4LL): A Research Project and Replicable Model

Project and Significance

Denton Inquiry 4 Lifelong Learning (DI4LL) is a groundbreaking project in Denton, Texas. Considered part of the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex with just over 113,000 residents (according to the 2010 Census), Denton is the home of two ALA-accredited universities, the University of North Texas (UNT) and Texas Woman's University (TWU). For the last two years as a pilot project (with one year of funding from TSLAC), UNT and TWU's LIS departments and libraries have been collaborating with the Denton Independent School District (ISD) and Denton Public Library to develop a K-20 curriculum based on Guided Inquiry (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, & Caspari, 2007). The effort was initiated based on a mutual concern that our high school graduates were lacking in fundamental research skills by the time they reached college and that we were duplicating efforts when students transitioned from one instructional level to another. With one in three students at risk of dropping out of school in Denton, we also came to realize that the motivation, skills, and strategies needed for inquiry and critical thinking must be instilled much earlier and extend beyond the classroom. Funds from this IMLS grant will allow us to: 1) continue the ongoing K-20 collaborative effort by offering additional materials and trainings to school and university librarians and educators, 2) expand DI4LL to include early childhood and adult education, 3) hire a public library outreach coordinator to create connected learning (Ito et al., 2013) pathways throughout Denton; and 4) establish DI4LL as a large-scale, longitudinal research project that will result in a replicable, scalable model for community-wide connected lifelong learning based on inquiry. The project wiki is <http://dentoninquiry4lifelonglearning.wikispaces.com>.

Goals, Objectives, and Relevance to Learning Spaces Priority

As shown in the table below, issues identified in the IMLS Learning Spaces priority serve as DI4LL's goals:

Goal	Objectives
Build bridges to national learning standards or other formal curricula with regard to research/inquiry literacy.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand the pilot by training additional Denton ISD librarians and teachers to use already-developed materials that align Guided Inquiry with K-12 TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) standards. 2. Modify the K-12 materials to align with the Common Core curriculum. 3. Develop 13-20 materials to align with ACRL inquiry standards and train university librarians and faculty. 4. Develop early childhood and adult inquiry materials and trainings by working with Denton Public Library, child care providers, and social service agencies.
Define strategies to elevate role of libraries by increasing collaborations with education partners	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage participation in DI4LL by representatives, including administrators and teaching staff, of every school, public, and university library in Denton. 2. Fund a public library outreach position that will focus on establishing, organizing and monitoring connected learning activities at libraries that extend and complement the efforts of education partners in Denton. 3. Document activities, challenges, and lessons learned from the DI4LL project.
Improve methods for measuring model impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Express clear and meaningful research questions at different units of analysis. 2. Design for longitudinal data collection across the pre-K thru adult spectrum. 3. Identify all potential impact factors and indicators, including unusual ones.

Project Director and Partners

Dr. Barbara Schultz-Jones of UNT will serve as Principal Investigator of the overall project and its three teams:

- Implementation Team (I), led by Co-PI Donna Kearley of Denton ISD;
- Research Team (R), led by Co-PI Ling Hwey Jeng of TWU; and
- Executive Team (E), which consists of the PI, the two Co-PIs, the Public Library Specialist, and the two Project Managers.

Principal members of each team, their roles on the project, and their institutional affiliations and official job titles, are shown in the table on the next page. Each team will include representatives from UNT, TWU, Denton ISD, and Denton Public Library. Teams will meet in-person at least monthly.

University of North Texas, Department of Library & Information Sciences plus Partners

Name	Project Role	Institution	Job Title	E	I	R
Barbara Schultz-Jones, Ph.D.	Principal Investigator (PI)	UNT LIS	Associate Professor & Director, School Library Program	X	X	X
Donna Kearley	Implementation Co-PI	Denton ISD	Library Media Coordinator	X	X	
Ling Hwey Jeng, Ph.D.	Research Co-PI	TWU LIS	Professor and Director, School of Library & Information Studies	X		X
Jennifer Bekker	Public Library Specialist	Denton Public Library	Public Librarian	X	X	
Kathryn Masten, Ph.D.	Research Project Mgr	UNT	Associate Director, Texas Center for Digital Knowledge	X		X
Cherry Fuller	Implementation Project Mgr	Independent	Consultant	X	X	
Gayla Byerly	Academic Library Specialist	UNT Libraries	Instruction Coordinator		X	
Greg Hardin	Academic Library Specialist	TWU Libraries	Reference Librarian		X	
Lilly Ramin	Social Media Specialist	UNT Libraries	Instructional Tech Librarian		X	
Ross Todd, Ph.D.	External Evaluator	CISSL	Consultant			X
Leslie Maniotes, Ph.D.	Educational Trainer	Independent	Consultant		X	

Proposed Workplan

The workplan, based on deliverables, is shown in the table below. This will be refined in the full proposal.

Deliverable	Description	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Stakeholder Engagement	Hold meetings with stakeholders at all levels	X	X	X
Baseline DI4LL Model	Review pilot data to develop preliminary picture	X		
Research Plan	Identify questions, data to collect, methods, etc.	X		
Community Inventory	Identify additional community education partners	X		
Electronic Tools	Create public website and internal communication	X		
K-12 Trainings	Develop materials and conduct workshops	X	X	X
13-20 Trainings	Develop materials and conduct workshops		X	X
Child & Adult Trainings	Develop materials and conduct workshops		X	X
Educator Surveys	Develop and administer surveys of trainees	X	X	X
TRAILS Assessments	Administer TRAILS assessments to K-12 students	X	X	X
Other Assessment Tools	Develop/review materials to assess non-K-12 inquiry		X	X
Longitudinal Measures	Identify indicators for tracking long-term impacts		X	X
Research Analysis	Analyze materials collected during research		X	X
Dissemination	Share information via website, publications, conferences	X	X	X

Impact and Expected Outcomes

DI4LL will serve as a replicable community-wide Inquiry for Lifelong Learning Model with these outcomes:

- A strong coalition of community partners dedicated to working together to develop an accessible, consistent, high quality climate of inquiry throughout Denton.
- Inquiry training of librarians and educators at all community learning spaces will result in improved learning and career trajectories for Denton citizens.
- The resulting set of curricular and training materials will align with national standards related to inquiry and will be available for broad sharing with K-20 librarians and educators.
- Public libraries will be viewed as a vital part of Denton’s connected learning framework from early childhood, during school and university years, through adult job-seeking and lifelong learning.
- The research design, data, and analysis will lead to development of a scalable, longitudinal model and associated tools and methods that can be replicated in other communities.
- Results from the analysis will provide additional theoretical and practical insights into how inquiry skills are acquired, developed, and maintained across different demographic groups and schools.

Estimated Budget

The estimated budget requested from IMLS for the three-year project is \$1,000,000.