What is the Big6?

The Big6 is a process model of how people of all ages solve an information problem. The process is a systematic approach to information problem-solving that relies upon critical thinking skills. Mike Eisenberg (Dean Emeritus and Professor - University of Washington Information School) and Bob Berkowitz (School Library Media Specialist with the Wayne Central School District, Ontario Center, NY) developed this process which guides students through information problem-solving as well as provides a basic framework for teaching and promoting information literacy. The Big6 process encourages teaching partnerships of library media specialists and classroom teachers.

The Big6 ™ consists of six stages:

1. Task Definition - In this step, the student determines exactly what the information problem is and the specific information related to the problem. For example when assigning a project, a student needs to know which questions need to be answered, what kind of information is needed to answer questions, when it is due, etc.

2. Information Seeking Strategies - Once the problem is clearly expressed, attention turns to the range of possible information sources. Information Seeking Strategies involves making decisions and selecting sources appropriate to the defined task.

3. Location and Access - This is where the information seeking strategy really begins. Once students have decided on the appropriate strategy, the strategy is carried out.

4. Use of Information - Once students are able to locate and access a source, they must be able to read, view, listen or interact with the information and decide what is valuable for their particular situation. They must extract the information that they need using notes, copies, citations, etc.

5. Synthesis - The restructuring or repackaging of information into new or different formats to meet the requirements of the task is synthesis. Synthesis can be as simple as relaying a specific fact. Synthesis can be very complex involving several sources, a variety of media or presentation formats, and the effective communication of abstract ideas. This is where the real learning takes place as new information is brought in and links are made to pre-existing knowledge.

6. Evaluation - Evaluation determines how effectively and efficiently the information problem-solving process was conducted.

People go through the Big6 stages—consciously or not—when they seek or apply information to solve a problem or make a decision. It's not necessary to complete these stages in order, however it has been found that in almost all successful problem-solving situations, all stages are addressed.

For more information and ideas, visit the Big6 website http://www.big6.com