

# **“Yonkers IB Day”**

*A Decades-Old, Cross-Institution  
Information Literacy Program*

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# What We'll Look at Today

- Program Overview
- Background
- Logistics:
  - Who? / What? / Where? / When? / How? / Why?
- Challenges
- New Collaborations
- Questions to Consider When Starting a Cross-Institution Information Literacy Program

# Yonkers IB Information Literacy Program: Brief Overview

- Collaboration between a high school, a public library, and an academic library
- Teaching research skills and information literacy to high school students
- Two day-long sessions per year
- Additional support offered with consultations and a research guide
- Community engagement initiative
- Started in 2004, still going strong!

# A Little About Yonkers



# A Little About Yonkers

- Borders New York City to the north
- Sits along the Hudson River
- 3rd largest city in the state of New York with a population of just over 210,000 at the 2020 census
- Very diverse by many measures: economically, racially, ethnically, and linguistically.

# A Little About YMHS

- Yonkers Middle High School is a 6-12 school (6-8 Middle; 9-12 High)
- 1 of 7 public high schools in the city
- International baccalaureate (IB) Program



**YONKERS  
MIDDLE HIGH SCHOOL**

# A Little About YMHS: What Is IB?

- International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) established in 1968
- Taught to students around the world ages 16-19
- Comprehensive curriculum; written research requirements; exams
- Primarily public schools in U.S. (1,100 of 1,200)
- Different from AP

# A Little About YHS

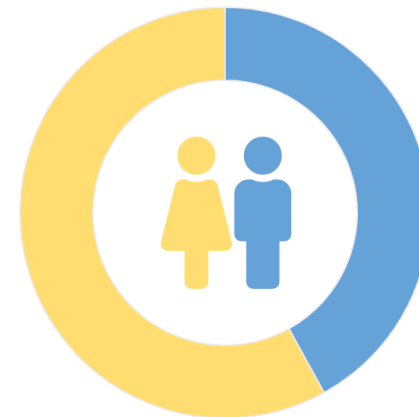
- 1,103 students enrolled in 9-12 in the 2023-2024 academic year
- 272 juniors currently enrolled at YHS; about 120 are IB students
- Named one of the best public high schools in New York State
- Higher Ed: “Of the 288 students in the Class of 2022, 264 matriculated at four-year colleges and universities and 20 enrolled in two-year colleges.” Source:  
<https://www.yonkerspublicschools.org/domain/5845>
- (Note: Yonkers has an overall 91% graduation rate; I don’t have data on higher ed matriculation.)



# A Little About YHS (2024 Data)

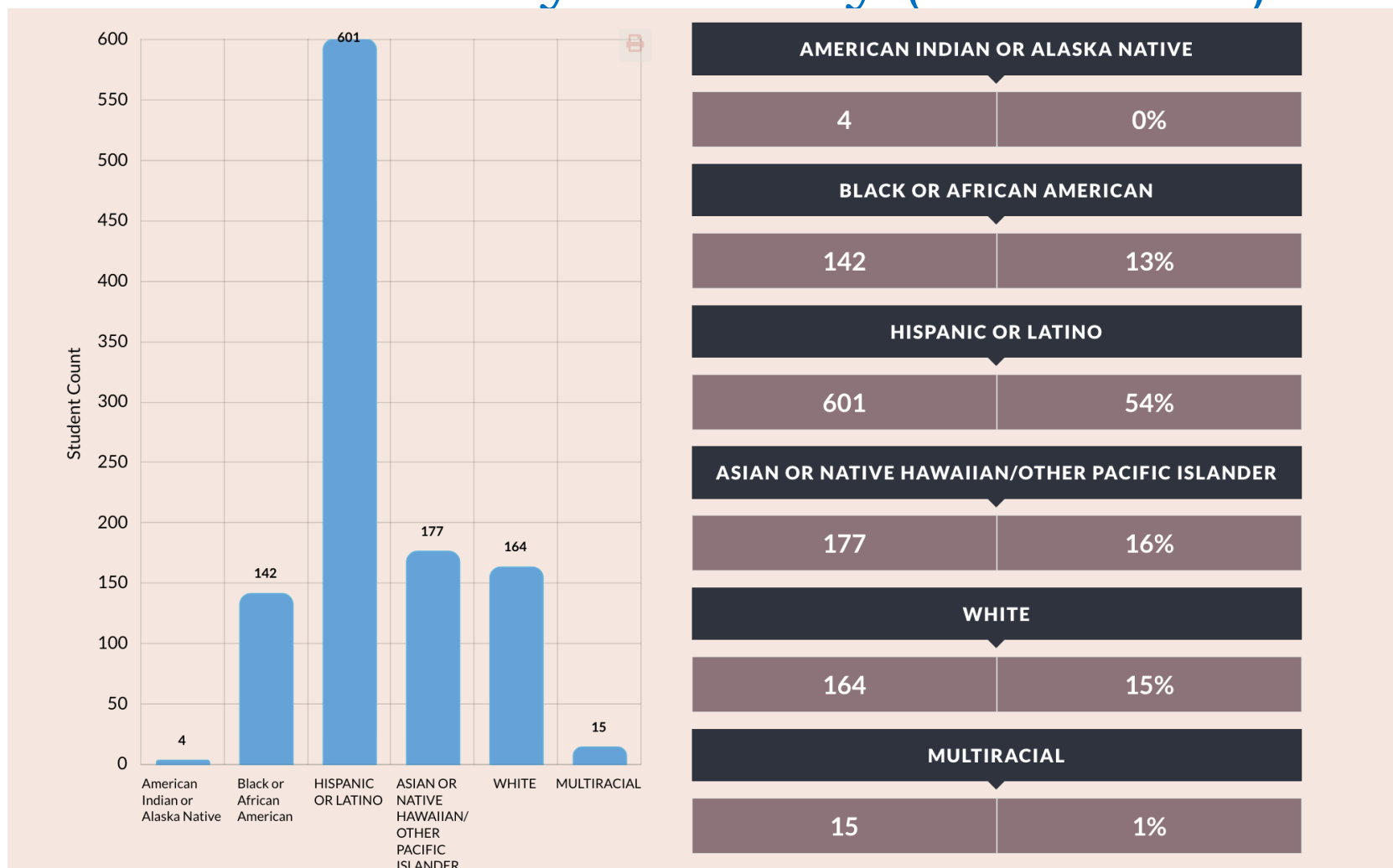
## ENROLLMENT BY GENDER

MALE	
463	42%
FEMALE	
640	58%
NON-BINARY	
0	0%



<https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2024&instid=800000034738>

# YHS Enrollment by Ethnicity (2024 Data)



# A Little About YHS (2024 Data)

OTHER GROUPS					
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS		STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES		ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	
126	11%	118	11%	832	75%
MIGRANT		HOMELESS		FOSTER CARE	
—	—	13	1%	5	0%
PARENT IN ARMED FORCES					
—	—				

<https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2024&instid=800000034738>

# A Little About Yonkers Public Library

- Three branches
- Part of the Westchester Library System
- Amazing librarians
- Amazing community programming
- Committed partners to the Yonkers Public Schools
- Extensive partnership with Sarah Lawrence College



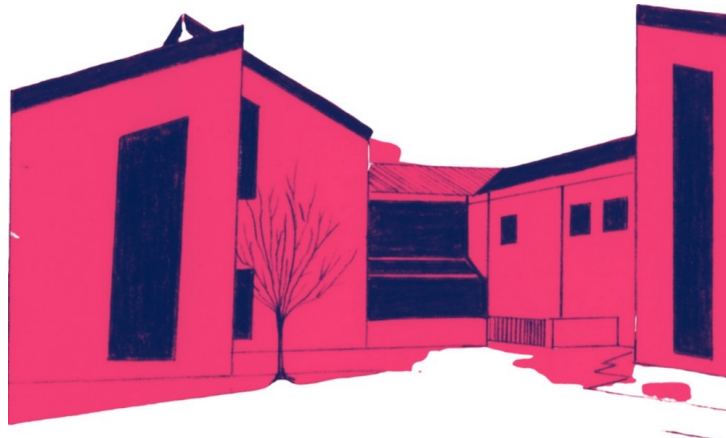
# A Little About Sarah Lawrence College

- Small liberal arts college (about 1,500 undergrads)
- Alternative approach to education
- Very research- & writing-intensive
- Located in Yonkers & Bronxville, NY
- Strong institutional focus on community engagement



# A Little About Sarah Lawrence Library

- Four research services librarians (including me)
- Focus on one-one-research consultations and instruction
- We love working with the Yonkers IB students!



# Program History

YHS becomes an IB school in 2001.

In 2003, the YMHS school library media specialist feels that her IB students need more help with their research skills. She needs backup.

She calls the SLC Library Director to see if she might be able to partner with them. The SLC Library Director loops in the YPL Head of Research Services.

The partnership is born and the first sessions begin in 2004.



# Program History


- The IB teachers and the librarians at each library work together to devise the specifics of the program.
- YPL commits to developing a print collection to support the historical investigation project.
- The program developed over 20 years ago is basically the same as it is today!
  - *Detailed overview to come...*



# Program History

The YHS school library media specialist retired in 2008 due to an unreasonable work load. For a time, the media specialist position at the school was discontinued.

**Note:** There is currently a school library media specialist at the school. She is a solo practitioner who is responsible for all students at the school, grades 6-12. She does not have the bandwidth to focus on research and information literacy for the IB students.



# Program History

For an overview of the program at 10 years old, please see:

Angell, K., & Tewell, E. (2013). Collaborating for Academic Success: A Tri-Institutional Information Literacy Program for High School Students. *Public Services Quarterly*, 9(1), 1–19.



# Our Program: The Details



**YONKERS  
MIDDLE HIGH SCHOOL**



**Yonkers**  
Public Library



**SARAH  
LAWRENCE  
COLLEGE**

# What We Do

## **Fall:**

What: First day-long info literacy session

Why: Supports the 11<sup>th</sup> grade IB Historical Investigation Essay

Where: Yonkers Public Library

When: Depends on YPL space & staff availability (Oct-Dec)

Who: This event is organized by YPL



# Historical Investigation Day

The 11<sup>th</sup> grade Historical Investigation assignment has been about Slavery in the Americas for over 20 years, until a change this year (more to come on that)

## **Presentations by Librarians:**


- Topic Development (all together)
- Catalog Searching (break into groups)
- Database Searching (break into groups)
- Print Reference (break into groups)

**Independent Library Research:** Time for individual research and consultation with librarians



# What We Do

## Spring:

- What: Second day-long info literacy program
  - Why: Supports the IB Extended Essay, written in their senior year; in an IB subject/course of their choice
  - Where: Sarah Lawrence College Library (and campus center)
  - When: Usually SLC Spring Break, but has been as late as June
  - Who: This event is organized by SLC
- 

# Extended Essay Day

## **Presentations by Librarians:**

- Time management (all together)
- Topic development (break into groups)
- YPL resources and catalog searching (break into groups)
- Advanced search strategies (break into groups)
- Citation and academic integrity (all together)
  - *Time to add discussion on generative AI?*

**Independent Library Research:** Time for individual research and consultation with librarians

# What We Do

## **Year-Round:**

Student Research Consultations

Research Guide





# Research Consultations

- For over ten years, there was a third component of the program: Students were expected to make an hour-long consultation with an SLC librarian in the spring, during the SLC spring break. Three days were set aside during which students scheduled their meetings. This took place on site.
- This no longer happens, due to the burden it placed on students, the fact that it required them to miss school, and the fact that many students simply could not easily come to campus.
- In some years, their teachers have required consultations, in person or on Zoom, with either SLC or YPL librarians.
- They are always welcome!

# Research Guide

- Research basics
  - Topic development
  - Finding materials
  - Evaluation
  - Citation
- Our presentations
- YPL resources & services
- How to contact all of us

<https://sarahlawrence.libguides.com/IB>

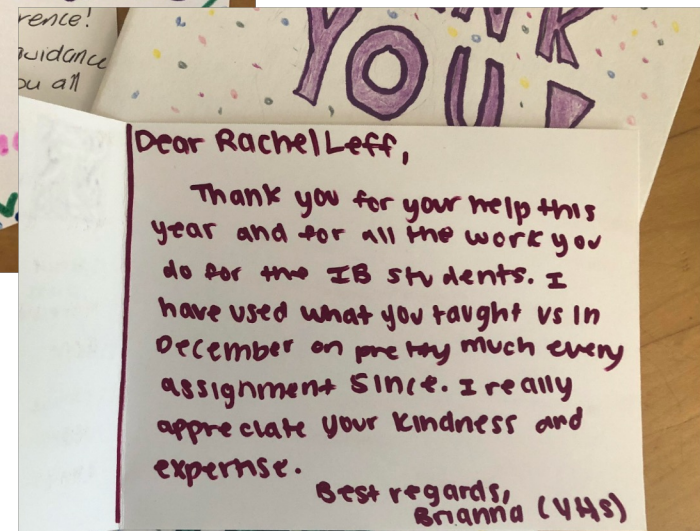
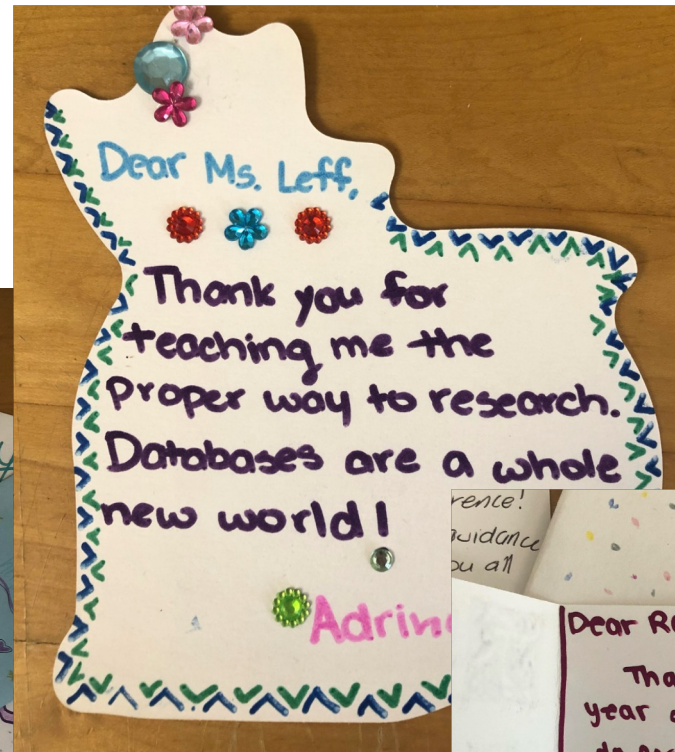
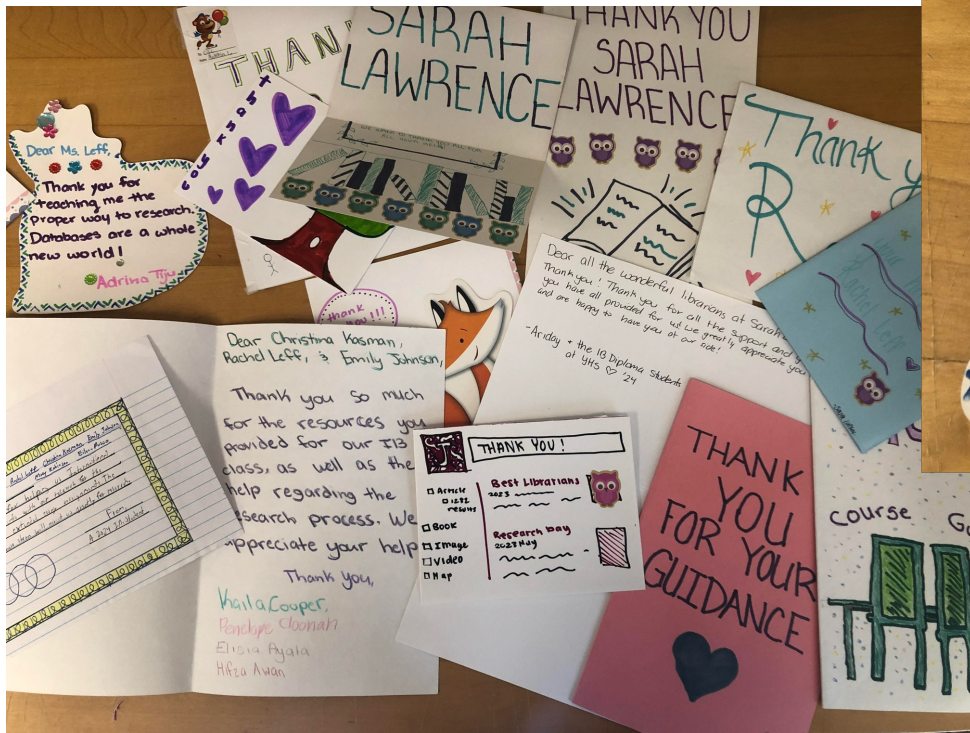


# Student Impact

- We do not conduct formal assessment of the programs!
- Anecdotally, the YPL and SLC librarians can see student engagement with the research process
- The teachers always stress to us that the program is of great help to their students



# Student Impact




## The “Why”: For YHS

- To help their students with their research
- To give them tools to succeed in their IB classes and papers, and ultimately in higher education
- To help the overburdened school library media specialist



## The “Why”: For YPL

- The students of Yonkers are very much their constituents.
  - Programs, collection development, reference, and interlibrary loan for these students is entirely within scope of their mission.
  - Welcoming young adult students and helping with their research was, and is, greeted with excitement.
  - *The elusive teen patron!*
- 

# The “Why”: For SLC Library

- Information literacy – one of our main values
- Community engagement
- Engagement with the public library
- We love the students and their wonderful topics!
- Different teaching experience



# Theoretical Underpinning

There is a body of research on academic library and high school partnerships.

Increased student success in higher education is the primary motivation





# Challenges

*Because nothing is ever easy...*



# Challenges to Expect: Time, Bandwidth, Space, Logistics, Expertise

- Do staff have the time and bandwidth for a new initiative?
- Where to hold the events? When are spaces free?
- How on earth do we plan all of this? How do we get all these people to be free at the same time?
- What do we cover?
- Who handles what? Do we all agree on who has what expertise?

## Our Challenges: Staff Changes

Of the founding partners in the program:

- The media specialist at YHS resigned (and was not replaced for some time)
- The head of reference services at YPL retired
- The director of the SLC library retired

## Again, Staff Changes

- In 2021, all SLC Library staff with any existing experience with the program have left the Library
- All new librarians and a new director



# Pandemic

- Like basically *everyone else on earth*, we had to pivot and deliver the program virtually.
- While the dates where shuffled, and probably were not at the ideal times, we still held all of the sessions.
- In January of 2022, a spike in cases made us reschedule an in-person event as a virtual one

# Major Staff Changes

The *amazing* history teacher who taught U.S. History and oversaw the Historical Investigation essay (junior year) retires!

In many ways, she was the heart of the IB program.



# Topic Change(!)

For over 20 years, the Yonkers High School Historical Investigation topic was:

Slavery in the Americas

This year, that was changed to:

Civil Rights & Social Movements

**Major Impact:** Collection Development at YPL

**Minor Impact:** Presentation changes for SLC Librarians

# Size

From **about 75** students in Fall 2023 to **over 120** in Fall 2024!

From **about 60** students in Spring 2024 to **over 100** in Spring 2025!

- How to fit every student into our spaces?
- How to reach every student?
- And, importantly, how to not have librarians have to repeat sessions *5 times in a row*?



## Major Staff Changes, *Again?*

Is the YHS IB coordinator really retiring?!

What does that mean for our partnership?

What does that mean for the YHS IB?



# New Collaborations: YPL & SLC Library

- YPL Library Card Sign-Up Events
- Readers Advisory Resources



# New Initiatives for Yonkers Students

- YPL has started an information literacy/research basics program for any interested high school or college students
- SLC ready to participate!



# Implementing Similar Programs

Cross-institution partnerships for  
information literacy

- Identify partners
- Discuss needs, usefulness, and goals



# Implementing Similar Programs

Cross-institution partnerships for  
information literacy

- Consider staff bandwidth issues
- Consider logistical issues
- Determine if and how to assess the program





Any questions?



## Want to Connect?

If you'd like to connect about this program,  
please feel free to contact me!

[rleff@sarahlawrence.edu](mailto:rleff@sarahlawrence.edu)

Thank you!

