Chelsea Quatman's Classroom Website

(www.mrszehr.com)

Compatible with the Firefox browser

An Honors Creative Project (HONRS 499)

By

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<u>Abstract</u>

The field of education, along with most other fields in the workforce, has been largely affected by recent developments in technology. The prevalence of the Internet in homes, as well as in the classroom, has made technology a valuable resource in all areas of education. With email and accessible ways to create and publish websites, the Internet offers many ways for teachers to communicate with their students, as well as the parents of their students. Yet, many teachers and parents do not often utilize the Internet as a communication tool. I created a classroom website with an original design and content that I will be able to use in my own classroom as a professional educator. The website contains pages for both students and parents with, school and classroom information, homework schedules, announcements, class rules and expectations, information about the teacher, and links to helpful Internet resources.

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Classroom Website Rationale

I chose to create a classroom website for my capstone project because it exemplifies much of what I have learned through my classes and experiences at Ball State. I was able to display my capabilities in technology, showcase many of my beliefs about classroom management, and create a valuable professional resource I will be able to use as I start my teaching career. I utilized my experiences of working in various classrooms as reference in order to create a more relevant and meaningful project.

I was not able to make my website in time to use it in my student teaching classroom, but much of the inspiration came from my experiences there. I came to realize that many of the students in my classroom, as well as their parents, were extremely adept with technology and the Internet. One mother made a comment about how she used the Internet application "Edline" for her high school aged son everyday. She expressed her desire to have that kind of resource for her younger children in elementary school.

It often became apparent that an online source of communication and information would be beneficial. Students would be able to have access to classroom information and resources. Parents would have a source for all school and classroom information going home, homework, spelling words, as well as helpful resources. The teacher would have a direct line of communication with parents and a reliable website from which the students could navigate the Internet.

I used the Apple iWeb software for the creation and design of my website. This software gave me the chance to create a streamlined and professional looking website without having to master "html" codes and programming. It gave me enough options to make a personalized website that was unique and appealing. The setup of the application also made the navigation of the website simple and easy to follow.

In its creation, I had several goals and expectations. Firstly, I wanted to create a resource that I would be proud to use as a professional educator. I wanted the website to contain relevant and useful information for my students and their parents. Secondly, I wanted it to be easily navigated by everyone using it. I

also wanted it to have a professional appearance that was appealing with a timeless design that would stay current. Lastly, I wanted website to be, not only a resource, but also a line of communication between home and school.

Since one of the goals was to provide useful resources and relevant information for both students and parents, I decided to create two different sections within the site. I created a parent site, as well as a student site. In this way, I was able to customize the information, style, and format for the two different audiences. There are many portions of the two sites that overlap, but they are presented in different ways. The separate parent and student sites also provide me with room to grow in the future. As I form my own classroom curricular plans, I can build from the student website to encompass Internet activities that relate to the subject matter we are studying.

My classes at Ball State gave me an advantage when I was creating my website because I knew how to use the program and publish my work to the web, as my student teaching portfolio was made in the same program. I did, however, run into some problems I was not anticipating. The first problem was finding

images. Since I wanted my website to have a professional appearance, I needed to use high quality images that related to the content of the site. I also had to keep in mind copyright laws and crediting the creators of the images I used. It was for those reasons that I decided to buy royalty free images from the online provider iStock.com. Since I had the license to use the pictures I purchased, I did not have to put a caption saying where I got the image. This gives my site a higher level of professionalism.

The biggest challenge I had to overcome in making this creative project was the visual aspect of it. I had to make many revisions and small changes in order to create a website I was proud to call my own. Since I was using software to create the webpage, I wanted to make sure it was not too generic. The iWeb software allows you to use templates in order to create webpages with a uniform design, but I added design elements and themes to the pages I created. I used my own color schemes, shapes, and added lines and textures to give my site a unique appearance. The small details in the placement of objects, words, and colors were tedious and time consuming, but gave the end result of a unique website.

Along with my challenge in making a visually appealing and unique design, I found there were certain limitations with the software I was using. Since the software is made to be used as a template for webpages, the design tools it contains are fairly limited. If I had more experience with web design and coding, I would have had more freedom to customize every element of the design. I also would have been able to control the structure of the website. Despite the limitations, using the software allowed me the opportunity to create a versatile website with a professional design that would have been far beyond my capabilities otherwise.

Due to its versatility, I will be able to change and customize my website for years to come. I can very simply make small changes to bring it up to date or add elements that I deem necessary. The framework I have set up will be a strong foundation for me to build from, once I know my specific needs as a teacher, and those of the students and parents using the website. It is my aim, as a teacher, to be at the top of my field. This website will allow me to do so by using up to date technology to best serve my class. I will put forth my best effort

in making sure I do everything I can to communicate with students and parents, as well as provide them with the best resources possible. My website will be an adaptable tool that caters to my needs and those of the students and parents with whom I work.

The work I have put into the creation of my classroom website exemplifies my Honors College experience because I applied much of the knowledge and skills that I have gained as a Ball student. I was able to synthesize practical and creative ideas into a useable resource that will serve me well into the future. The website I have created displays my proficiency in technology, classroom management, and most importantly my ability to adapt. As an Honors College student, I have found that adaptability is key to progressing in such a fast paced society. As a teacher, I hope to maintain this skill so that I can move forward with the times and change for the better.