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Creating Web Pages to Improve Student Research

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CIEM 513: Foundations of School Librarianship

Needs Assessment

The Rochelle Park School District is comprised of one school, Midland School #1, with an enrollment of 499 students in grades PreK through 8. There are approximately 50 staff members. Technology is extremely important to the Board of Education and the administration of Midland School. Every staff member is required maintain a web page using Teacher Web; every classroom web page must be updated daily. The school's website contains a staff directory with no direct library link on the main page of Midland School's web site.

The current web page for Midland School's Media Center contains links to the Bergen Electronic Library for Schools Catalog (BELS) and Bergen County Cooperative Library System (BCCLS). There are also links to the following search engines: Google, Yahoo, Yahoologans, Ask, Ask for Kids, Kids Click, and Think Quest. There are approximately six additional links for homework help sites.

In grades PreK through 5, Midland School's Media Center is used to supply preparatory time for classroom teachers. Library class is not included in the curriculum for students in grades 6 through 8. Currently, there is no reason for students in upper grades to visit the library or use the Media Center's web page for research. The only upper grade classes that use the media center for research are music and art classes, which use the center once a month. Due to the librarian's teaching schedule, the Media Center is only available during specific times throughout the week for classroom teachers to use as a resource. Social studies and language arts teachers have found that by grade 8 students in Midland School are still having trouble finding enough high quality information to write adequate research papers. Their students are relying on Google searches to find all needed information. According to research, it is a common trend among students to rely solely on Google searches (Minkel, 2002).

In order to assess the need for a new web page for the Media Center, surveys will be created and given to students, teachers and parents. These surveys can be found in Appendices 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The data collected from these surveys will be used to justify the completion of this project.

Supporting Evidence

It is extremely important for Midland School's Media Center to have a high quality, information rich web page. The Media Center's web page should provide a wealth of tremendous resources to students, teachers, and parents. In schools where school libraries don't have adequate web pages, students, teachers and parents are led to believe that the media center does not hold a valid place in the curriculum (Janowski, 2005). If that is the view of students, teachers and parents at Midland School, it is clear why the media center's resources are not being used.

According to research, it is important for the administration of a school to support the library web page. In 2004, 126 school library web pages were studied in six southeastern states. In 73% of those schools, there were no links to the school library's web page from the main school page (Baumbach, 2005). For the Media Center's web page to be thought of as important, the administration of Midland School needs to be supportive and display the Media Center's link in a prominent place on the school's main web site and on correspondence sent home to parents.

School library web pages can vary tremendously from school to school. There are no standards for the contents of a library's web page. Being that there are no concrete standards, the school librarian needs to constantly review and update the content of the web page based upon the needs of the students and the school community (Bussiere, 2006). Some of the common features that should be contained on every school library web page are links to other websites,

databases, school and library policies, OPAC, mission statement, and library news (Jurkowski, 2004). Some of the best school library web pages contain annotated catalogs of links to make student research more effective (Minkel, 2002). By having annotated catalog of links, students can quickly and easily determine which high quality web sites to use for research. They also gain the benefit of using more reliable, high quality web sites that have been gathered by a librarian. Currently, the Media Center's web page contains the bare minimum for web page content. The web page was last updated on March 12, 2007. According to research, a school library web page should not be left to stagnate. The goal of any web page is to get people to use it. In order to get repeat users, some school library web pages contain a "word of the day," "quote of the day," or links to current news and sports events (Baumbach, Brewer & Renfro, 2004). It is extremely important to constantly change material on the web page so the information is new and current. Students, teachers, and parents will keep visiting and using the page.

Goal Setting

In the 21st century, technology is extremely important. Midland School needs to prepare its students for high school. One goal of this project is to increase the usage of Midland School's Media Center by creating a web page that can be used by students in grades 6 through 8 to enable them to easily complete high quality research both in school and at remote locations, such as the public library or at home. This web page will include meaningful information and informative links to aid students in the research process. The web page will also include educational links to aid teachers in their lesson preparation, tutorials on software, and links to materials that will enrich lessons. Links for Internet safety and general technology topics will be provided for parents. In addition to providing information and technology resources, this web

page will also highlight media center programs in an effort to better serve the school's population.

A second goal of this project is for teachers to see an increase in students' grades on research papers. By having an informative Media Center web page that will be used throughout their time at Midland School, students in grades 6 through 8 will learn to use technology to access quality information. Students will learn the necessary research skills that will enable them to write better quality research papers. Gaining these skills will result in higher grades on research projects and better prepare them for the high school of their choice.

By creating a web page that will contain useful information, teachers, students and parents will use the media center's web page as their first choice for researching topics. According to research, in schools that have a quality library media program, there is higher academic achievement (Lance, 2001). Building upon this research, Midland School will improve the Media Center's web page, observe an increase in web page use, and will see grades on student's research papers increase by 5%. A counter will be placed on the web page to track visitors. Due to the fact that teachers assign research on a random basis, this data will be analyzed over time and used for future web page updates.

Program Design and Selection

The construction of the new Media Center's web page will take approximately one full school day and will be created using Teacher Web. Midland School has a contract with Teacher Web for staff web pages and every staff member has participated in workshops on web page construction. During regularly scheduled school-wide curriculum meeting time, the computer teacher will research other school library web pages and analyze data from the needs assessment surveys. Based upon the survey results, a meeting will be set up with the administration of

Midland School to discuss the creation of the new web page. The administration will need to provide one day's release time for the computer lab teacher complete this project. A substitute teacher will be brought in to teach computer classes for the day.

After gaining approval, library web page content needs to be researched. Local school library web pages will be accessed to get an idea of information of what they include. Maywood and South Hackensack's library web pages will be looked at because these towns, along with Rochelle Park, are sending districts to the same high school. There is much research and many opinions on the content of a good web page for a school library (Baumbach, 2005; Baumbach, Brewer & Renfroe, 2004; Jurkowski, 2004).

This web page for the Media Center will be created using Teacher Web for uniformity with the rest of Midland School's staff web pages. Teacher Web is very user friendly and web pages can be fully functional in a short period of time. It is a simple process, with no technical knowledge needed.

Budget

The administration of Midland School maintains the position that all staff is required to have and update a web page; the Media Center is no exception. There is no monetary compensation for updating web pages; it is part of an educator's responsibility at Midland School. Due to the magnitude of researching and completely revising the Media Center's web page, the administration has given permission for the computer lab teacher to receive one day of release time to work on the new web page. A substitute will be hired at the daily district rate of \$80. Any work over this one day period must be done without compensation. After the creation of the web page, it is the responsibility of the school librarian to provide daily maintenance to

this site. In order for the web page to stay effective, it must continually change and be updated accordingly (Clyde, 1999).

Implementation

Administrative Approval

In order for the new Media Center's web page to be successful, many people will need to be involved in the project. There will be an initial meeting between the school librarian, computer lab teacher, and the principal to discuss the need for a new web page. At this meeting the estimated timeline for the completion of the project will be presented. A detailed timeline can be found in Appendix 4.

The planning of the web page will take place during regular curriculum planning meetings. The computer lab teacher will ask for one day of release time to create the web page. If release time is not granted, this project will still be completed, but it will take longer than the indicated timeline.

Surveys

In order for the students in grades 6 through 8 to benefit from the resources of a high quality media center, a new web page must be created that will fit the needs of Midland School. It is important to know as much as you can about your target audience before creating a web page (Braxton, 2004). Teachers, students and parents need to be surveyed about their current use of technology, research methods, and their knowledge and use of the Media Center's web page. Surveys for students, teachers and parents will be distributed on December 3, with a return date of December 10.

Web Page Creation

Using the information from the surveys, the computer lab teacher will review and interpret the data during the curriculum meeting on December 17. Using that data and current research, a new web page for the media center will be created. According to research on web page content, there are numerous items lacking from the initial web page (Baumbach, Brewer & Renfroe, 2004). The new sections of the Media Center's web page will contain general information topics, student resources, teacher resources, parent resources, and miscellaneous information. In order for a web page to be used, it is important to keep the end user in mind when creating the page (Braxton, 2004). Each individual section of the Media Center's web page has a specific purpose and a different target audience. By creating a web page in sections, the web page will be attractive, user-friendly, and a tremendous resource to students, teachers and parents.

General information. This section would include librarian contact information, library policies and hour of operation, and library events. This section will be geared towards students and parents to keep them informed.

Student Resources. This section would include links to BELS and BCCLS, annotated web pages on curriculum topics, link to the Rochelle Park Public Library, link to Hackensack High School's library web page, grade appropriate databases and search engines, reading lists, research tips, resource tools for writing, and study skills resources. This section will be a tremendous help to students while they are completing the research process.

Teacher Resources. This section would provide links to lesson plan sites, links to New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, tutorials for Smart Board, software tutorials, and

workshop information. This section will greatly aid the faculty and staff of Midland School by providing them with easily accessed links to pertinent topics.

Parent Resources. This section would provide links on technology, Internet safety, and information on local high schools. Some parents aren't as computer literate as their children. This section will help answer some of the Internet and technology questions they might have.

Miscellaneous Information. This section would contain Rochelle Park weather, school announcements, school contest information, and an inspirational quote of the day. This section would change from day to day and provide interest and excitement in the Media Center's web page, even if a student is not currently involved in a research project.

Usability Testing and Training

After the new web page is created, it will be tested in the computer lab with a sampling of students from grades 6, 7 and 8 during regularly scheduled computer class. Ease of use, content and youth appeal will be observed. Any changes to the web page will be made at this time. When the web page is complete, training sessions can begin. The school librarian will hold training sessions for teachers and parents. The teacher training session will take place during the in service faculty meeting on the first Tuesday in March. In April, there will be a training session for parents following the business portion of the monthly PTA meeting. Student training will be completed throughout the month of March by the computer teacher during regular class time.

Promotion

In order for the new library web page to be used, faculty, students and parents need to know of the web page and become familiar with its contents. The technology coordinator will update Midland School's web page to indicate an announcement of the new web page and its

link. The school librarian will write a promotional article for the monthly newsletter that gets mail home to residents by the technology coordinator. The parent training session will take place during the information portion of the April PTA meeting.

In subsequent school years, it will be important to continuously highlight the Media Center's web page. There are numerous ways to market the Media Center. Once a week during the morning announcements, there could be a media blurb highlighting a new book, a new program, etc. that the media center has to offer. This announcement can end with, "Find out more information on the Media Center's web page!" During Back-to-School Night, the librarian can have a short presentation for the parents. In service workshops on how to use the Media Center to its fullest potential can be given as needed. Publishing students' projects on the Media Center's web page would get the students and parents excited about visiting the web page again and again (Wiltsee & Yates, 1998). These are just a sampling of ideas that will be used to promote the Media Center's resources.

Evaluation

The first goal of this project was to create a web page that would be used more frequently by students, teachers and parents. To evaluate the success of this goal, a counter will be placed on the Media Center's web page to track users. In addition, a post assessment survey will be given to students, teachers, and parents to measure web page use. This survey is found in Appendix 5. The results of this survey and web page counter will be used for future web page updates.

The second goal for this project was to enable students in grades 6 through 8 to perform more efficient searches in school and at remote locations which will improve the quality of their research and improve the level of their writing. The success of this goal will be evaluated by subject area teachers. They will compare grades given on research papers during the current year

with the grades from subsequent years. Due to the high quality links and content on the new Media Center's web page and the promotion of this web page, teachers should see an increase of at least 5% in students' grades.

Appendix 1

Needs Assessment Survey for Students

1. Do you find researching for information easy?
 yes no

2. Do you find researching for information time consuming?
 yes no

3. When asked to research a topic, where is the first place you look for information?

4. Are you satisfied with the information you find?
 yes no

5. Within the past month, how many times have you accessed the Media Center's web page?
 never 1-5 times 5 or more times

6. Was the Media Center's web page easy to use?
 yes no

7. Did you find useful information on the media center's web page?
 yes no

8. Where do you access the Media Center's web page?
 home school public library

Appendix 2

Needs Assessment Survey for Teachers

1. Have you ever brought your class to the Media Center to use the school resources?

_____ yes _____ no

2. If no, why not?

3. If yes, how many times during an average marking period have you brought your class to the Media Center? _____

4. Do you feel that the Media Center is a vital part of the educational process at Midland School? Why or why not.

5. How many times have you, as an educator, accessed the Media Center's web page?

6. Did you find the information you were looking for?

7. What could be added to the web page to improve it?

Appendix 3

Needs Assessment Survey for Parents

1. Are you aware that every staff member at Midland School maintains a web page?

_____yes _____no

2. Have you ever accessed a teacher's web page?

_____yes _____no

3. If yes, how many times in a week would you access teacher web pages?

4. Where do you access web pages?

_____home _____work _____public library

5. Are you aware of the media center's website?

_____yes _____no

6. Have you ever accessed the Media Center's web page?

_____yes _____no

7. If yes, what type of information were you looking for?

8. Were you able to find information on the Media Center's web page?

_____yes _____no

9. What information would you like to see added to the Media Center's web page?

Appendix 4
Duties and Responsibilities

	November	December	January	February	March	April
Computer Lab teacher	Meet with principal for initial discussion of project	Gather and interpret data	Web page planning Web page creation			Distribute and evaluate post surveys
School Librarian	Meet with principal for initial discussion of project			Write article for newsletter promoting web page	Train faculty and students on the use of the new web page	Train parents at monthly PTA meeting
Principal	Approve release time for web page construction		Arrange for a substitute for the computer lab teacher			
Technology Coordinator				Insert web page article into monthly newsletter	Update school web page to link to new library web page	
Teachers		Complete survey			Participate in training session	Follow up survey
Students		Complete survey		Participate in usability testing	Participate in training session	Follow up survey
Parents		Complete survey				Participate in training session at PTA meeting

Appendix 5

Post Assessment Survey

1. How many times in the past month have you accessed the Media Center's web page?

2. Were you able to find the information you needed?

_____ yes _____ no

3. What type of information were you looking for?

4. Were you satisfied with the quality of the information you found?

_____ yes _____ no

5. What additional information, if any, would you like to see added to the web page?

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