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ABSTRACT

Blended learning is much stronger when the Web is used to supplement instruction, rather than merely provide information to the students. This paper establishes a foundational knowledge base, where the stakeholders--technology coordinators, faculty, staff, and administrators--can make informed decisions on the role, importance, use, and educational validity of the Web in conjunction with traditional instruction. Discussion includes designing Web-based instruction; instructional issues; uses of the Web; Web content and the potential uses of the Web to deliver the content; and advantages and disadvantages of the Web. (Contains 14 references.) (AEF)

Blended Learning - Best Educational Web Uses

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Blended learning is much stronger when the Web is used to supplement instruction, rather than merely provide information to the students. This presentation will present strategies to use the Web in conjunction with traditional instruction. The advantages and disadvantages of each approach will also be presented.

For many embarking on a Web-based learning venture, there is often much confusion and misunderstanding on the role of the Web. This presentation will seek to establish a foundational knowledge base, where those stakeholders (technology coordinators, faculty, staff, and administrators) can make informed decisions on the role, importance, use, and educational validity of the Web in a blended learning environment.

The goals and objectives of the presentation are to identify appropriate uses of the Web for a blended learning approach (what can/should be delivered on the Web? And, how is traditional classroom material delivered on the Web without compromising educational integrity?). Consideration will also be given to those Web based approaches that are used within a distance-learning environment (particularly course design).

Of equal importance is to identify and relate the idea of Web based learning and distance learning within the differentiated classroom (while addressing the issues of accessibility and usability). For those involved in the decision to use or not use Web-based instruction within the public schools, this topic is of extreme importance with the growing emphasis on both blended learning and accessibility. For many that are undecided on the validity or relevance of the Web as a learning medium, this presentation will provide them with the knowledge to make an informed decision before embarking on any Web based delivery undertaking.

One interesting point about the use of Web-based instruction is the ability of the instruction to reach all learners, regardless of ability level. [1] The common use of "differentiated instruction" is an interesting by-product of the web. When properly designed, Web-based instruction can present an individualized form of instruction to each individual student. [2] This can be accomplished through the use of branched instruction, following a pre assessment or diagnostic evaluation.

Designing Web-based instruction

As with any instruction, the emphasis from the developer or educator is to challenge the student, and provide assistance, as the learner requires guidance. Regardless of the delivery method, traditional classroom or Web-based, these goals are equally important.[3]

Many have participated in a Web-based educational module, and have had mixed results. Some Web-based learners feel challenged some feel bored; some will even be confused by the new delivery method. While this may appear to be unique to this delivery method, it is not an isolated feeling for the traditional student.

The design of instruction for delivery via the Web is, conceptually, no different than the design of instruction for delivery in a classroom setting, with some subtle differences. The ever-increasing presence of technology in classrooms may contribute to the desire of many to use Web-based instruction.[4] While it would be advantageous to all to review the process for designing web-based instruction, this presentation is limited to evaluating web-based instruction for classroom use.

Instructional issues

With the latest emphasis that many public schools should include student preparation for standardized testing, be more accountable both to the parents and students, teachers are faced with far less time to teach far

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[1] Regina A. Kapusnick and Christine M. Hauslein, "The 'Silver Cup' of Differentiated Instruction," *Kappa Delta Pi Record, Volume 37, Number 4,* Summer 2001, pages 156-159.
[2] John Franklin, "Teachers and Technology: Turning the Corner on Training," *Curriculum Update,* Fall 2001, pages 4-5.
[3] Paul Starr, "Computing Our Way to Educational Reform," *The American Prospect,* July/August 1996, pages 50-59, reprinted in *Computers in Education*, Eighth Edition, John J. Hirschbuhl and Dwight Bishop, editors, Guilford, Connecticut, Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, 1998, pages 173-181.
[4] James C. Carper, "The Changing Landscape of U. S. Education," *Kappa Delta Pi Record, Volume 37, Number 3,* Spring 2001, pages 106-110.

more content than ever before. [5] Now, with the increased presence of technology in classrooms, there may be an even greater perception that the technology can be used, but to what ends?

Can the technology be used without compromising the educational value? Can technology be viewed as an asset to education, rather than an escapist game? These are but a few of the questions that face educators, principals, superintendents, and parents alike.

In a recent editorial in *T.H.E. (Technological Horizons in Education) Journal*, Dr. Sylvia Charp stated "With so much on the Web, more energy is being directed toward Web-based teaching and learning."[6] One avenue of Web-based teaching and learning that has yet to be fully explored is the uses of Web-based teaching and learning in public school settings.

Regardless of the method of delivery, one issue remains paramount in any educational module; the relationship of the curriculum to the "real world." In one aspect, this revolves around the congruence of the objectives of the educational module to the application of the educational module content in the practical mode.[7]

Uses of the Web

For many of today's educators, there is a dilemma that they must face. Not only is there the issues related to the differentiated classroom, and accessibility, but they must also decide on if the Web has a place within their classroom.[8] With the uses of technology, the question for many becomes, "Will technology ultimately help or hinder educational growth of students?" The web will not replace, but rather supplement the existing educational settings. Curriculum that was traditionally delivered from teacher to a classroom of students may now be delivered by a teacher to a larger group of students, each capable of receiving just what they needed, and no more.[9]

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[5] Susan McLester, "Virtual Learning Takes a Front Row Seat," *Technology and Learning, Volume 22, Number 8*, March 2002, pages 24-26, 28, 30, 34-36.

[6] Dr. Sylvia Charp, "The Promise of the Web," *T.H.E. Journal, Volume 28, Number 8*, March 2001, page 12.

[7] Mike Flanagan, "Clear and simple," *OnlineLearning, Volume 6, Number 1*, January 2002, page 48.

[8] Heidi Hayes Jacobs, "Improving What's Really Being Taught: Focus on Curriculum Mapping," *Curriculum Technology Quarterly, Volume 9, Number 4,* Summer 2000, page A.

[9] Allan A. Glatthorn and Jerry Jailall, "Curriculum for the New Millennium," in *Education in a New Era,* edited by Ronald S. Brandt, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

We have seen the Web used within an informational setting, where users can get the latest information via the World Wide Web. We have seen the increase in so-called "educational" software that may be used to teach or reinforce content that is normally taught in public school settings.

Yet, these uses may cause us to wonder, "Can the Web be used within the classroom?" In addition, more specifically, "Can the Web help students learn?" These questions are a few of those that we will try to provide some insight, and possible answers.

Web Content

There may be a relationship between the type of content, and the potential uses of the Web to deliver the content.

Defining Web Use

If the Web is to be used within a classroom, then what are the types of Web use that are accepted within the educational arena? There have been numerous studies noting the efficacy of Web-based learning, but primarily from the perspective of the adult or college-learner.[10]

Web-based classes

Web-based classes are primarily Web-delivered. There may or may not be any sort of instructor involvement, directly, with students. This type of Web-based learning is, perhaps, the most commonplace. One comment on this type of learning is that is more prevalent in university or college settings, also it may be found in corporate or business settings.

The totally Web-based class can require much more time, effort, and resources than a traditional class.[11] While this method of content delivery is used primarily in college, university, and professional settings, the resources are available at that level, along with technological support, to accomplish the end result of designing Web-based classes.

Yearbook 2000, Alexandria, Virginia, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, pages 97-121.

[10] Linda W. Cooper, "A Comparison of Online and Traditional Computer Applications Classes," *T.H.E. Journal, Volume 28, Number 8*, March 2001, pages 52, 54, 56, 58.

[11] Glenn G. Smith, David Ferguson, and Mieke Caris, "Teaching College Courses: Online vs. Face-to-Face," T.H.E. *Journal, Volume 28, Number 9*, April 2001, pages 18-22, 24, 26.

The web-based class is more aptly suited for self-directed learners, who have the educational experience to manage time, resources, and ultimately complete the course. These students are characterized as technologically competent and have little or no difficulty navigating through the Web-based class environment.

Web-supported classes

Web-supported classes are designed to provide additional information to a classroom setting. Web-supported classes are normally used to allow students to gain more information on a particular classroom lesson or module.

This class would be used, perhaps, for advanced or gifted students who would normally be assumed to assimilate much more information than the traditional student does? Yet, it may be used also in conjunction with challenged students, who may require a slower pace through the educational information. The web would be ideal for this, allowing students to proceed at the pace, they feel comfortable.

Web-assisted classes

Web-assisted classes are the latest hybrid of Web use. The Web-assisted class is one where the Web is used as a supplement to the classroom, rather than a primary means of instruction.

Perhaps the most exciting use of the web is in the area of Web-assisted classes. This learning environment would allow the student to develop an individualized training plan on a particular topic of interest. This information would supplement that presented in normal instructional delivery methods.

Advantages and disadvantages of the Web

While there may be countless advantages and disadvantages to use the Web within a classroom setting, the end choice rests with those who are involved in the educational process. Though there may be choices to be made, the sheer presence of technology can only cause us to stop and think.

One advantage of Web use if one accepts the notion that the Web can be thought of as a constructivist-learning environment, is that the Web

can allow each student to individualize the instruction.[12] In a Web-supported or Web-assisted class, the learning experience can be an independent learning exercise. The learner is able to proceed at a comfortable pace, review content if necessary, and assimilate the knowledge and proceed.

If technology continues to become an ever-present force within our everyday lives; it is only natural to assume that the use of technology in educational settings will increase.[13] It is up to teacher's administrator's superintendents, principals, to use technology to improve the quality of learning that all students will experience.[14]

[12] Regina A. Kapusnick and Christine M. Hauslein, "The 'Silver Cup' of Differentiated Instruction," *Kappa Delta Pi Record, Volume 37, Number 4,* Summer 2001, pages 156-159.
[13] James C. Carper, "The Changing Landscape of U. S. Education," *Kappa Delta Pi Record, Volume 37, Number 3,* Spring 2001, pages 106-110.
[14] Harold Wenglinsky, "H.O.T.S. + Professional Development = Great Technology Outcomes," *Curriculum Technology Quarterly, Volume 10, Number 4,* Summer 2001, page 7.

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