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Building a school web site

Darin Jay Clark

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BUILDING A SCHOOL WEB SITE

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Instructional Technology

by
Darin Jay Clark
June 2002
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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

This project involves the design and development of a school Web site for Dartmouth Middle School, Hemet Unified School District. The development of school Web sites is becoming common practice at most educational institutions today. Schools, as well as homes, are getting connected to the Internet. Many educational technology leaders feel the common interests of the Internet can provide a unique opportunity for schools to communicate with parents. Having a school Web site is a great first step in opening the doors of communication. The purpose of this project is to review the literature on the importance of creating school Web sites and to show how Dartmouth Middle School can successfully plan an effective site. The project focuses on the significance of having a school Web site as a way to add to the communication process between school and parents. Dartmouth’s Web Site looks at how it can get information to parents and allow for feedback, which is a major responsibility of a school.

This project can also serve as a starting point for future school Webmasters, providing information on the importance of a school site, material inclusion, and helpful guidelines for design and development.
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this accomplishment to my family, who offered me unconditional love and support throughout the course of this project.
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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

Introduction

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into law the "No Child Left Behind Act (2002)." The act redefines the federal role in education and will help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. One significant result of this act is that funds to schools will be increased for technology. The administration believes schools should use technology as a tool to improve academic achievement (Bush, 2002).

In 1996, President Clinton (1997) challenged educators to start preparing children for the twenty-first century. In his Report to the Nation speech he emphasized a need for change. A hundred years ago the nation struggled with the transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy. Today we confront the transition from an industrial to a global, technological economy. He further stated that technology such as the World Wide Web, computer-aided design, word processing, data processing, and electronic transfers has become an engine of our economic growth and has fundamentally changed the ways we
learn and how we do business. The skills students in America need to flourish in the world of work have changed drastically. Clinton challenged states, communities, businesses, families and teachers to ensure that by the dawn of the next century every classroom in America is connected to the information superhighway with high-quality computers, creative software, and well-trained teachers. The overall goal is to guarantee that all children in America are technologically literate for the business world. They should be equipped with communication, math, science, and critical thinking skills essential for the twenty-first century economy (Clinton, 1997). The response to the President's challenge was immediate and came from all parts of the American community. While much remains to be done, an enormous amount has already been accomplished and steady progress continues to be made.

A large component of the President's plan is the use of the Internet. The Internet has revolutionized the computer and communication worlds. Initially a tool to link research and government center computers, the Internet has caused a huge wave of social change. It is changing business practices, educational pursuits, and personal communications. By providing access to world
news, commerce, and vast stores of information, the Internet brings people together and adds convenience and efficiency to peoples’ lives. Today people can search thousands of databases and libraries worldwide, browse through millions of documents, journals, books, and computer programs, and keep up to the minute with wire-service news, sports, and weather reports. An increasing number of people shop, bank, and pay bills on the Internet. Many invest in stocks and commodities on-line. People stay in contact with friends, peers, teachers, and businesses via email. The Internet has made the world a smaller place and has caused an up-roar in the business and educational arenas.

Over the past several years, access to computers and the Internet has exploded. More Americans are using computers and the Internet than ever before, according to a recent report by the United States Department of Commerce (CEO Forum, 1998). Latest results of the CEO Forum (1998) report that half of United States households now have a computer, while 41.5 percent have Internet access. The report puts the United States on-line population at 116.5 million.

Along with this ever-growing access to the Internet, it is important to look at the population getting
connected. Because of cost, there is an imbalanced opportunity for certain groups to have equal access to the information out there. This inequality has become known as the "Digital Divide." In just about every country, a certain percentage of people have the best information technology that society has to offer. These people have the most powerful computers, the best telephone service and fastest Internet service, as well as a wealth of content and training relevant to their lives. There is another group of people. They are the people who for one reason or another do not have access to the newest or best computers, the most reliable telephone service or the fastest or most convenient Internet services. The difference between these two groups has created a "Digital Divide" (Rohde, 1999). To be on the less fortunate side of the divide means that there is less opportunity to take part in our new information-based economy, in which many more jobs will be related to computers. It also means that there is less opportunity to take part in the education, training, shopping, entertainment, and communication opportunities that are available on-line. In general, those who are poor and live in rural areas are about 20 times more in danger of being left behind than wealthier residents of urban areas. Hispanic households are roughly
half as likely to own a computer as white households and nearly 2.5 times less likely to use the Internet (CEO Forum Report, 1998). A disproportionate representation of the population shows that Whites in the United States are nearly three times as likely to have Internet access at home as Hispanics and African-Americans.

President Clinton (1997) has proposed major initiatives to help bridge the technology gap among our schools, families, and communities. President Clinton’s goal of bridging the digital divide is meeting with some success. A report from the Clinton Administration’s Digital Divide Web Site (Rhodes, 1999) claims that Internet access among rural households has risen by seventy-five percent in the past two years, and the number of African-American and Hispanic people connected to the Web has increased significantly. The “age-divide” also seems to be gradually narrowing because of all age groups surveyed, Americans fifty years and older experienced the highest rate of growth in Internet use. Other findings of the report show that almost twice as many two-parent households have Internet access as single-parent households, while rural areas are falling behind cities in terms of broadband penetration.
It is important to know that the Digital Divide does exist and educators have a responsibility to help close the gap by providing access to the Internet. The shrinking costs of computers and Internet service as well as accessibility to school libraries both public and private is starting to bridge the gap of the Digital Divide.

As more and more parents and schools get connected to the Internet, communication between the two is starting to occur through school Web sites. Currently schools are a step behind the business world. Communication in the business sector has become less dependent on the use of paper and more dependent on having computers networked to talk to each other. A push for a paperless setting has made businesses more efficient with their communication. Schools have been slow to follow. Many schools today still make thousands of copies daily of memos, bulletins, and newsletters. A small percentage of administrators have found Web sites as a cost effective option for schools to get information out to parents.

According to Web66 (2000), an on-line site that posts school Web sites by region, there are 456 elementary school Web sites in California and 526 secondary schools that have Web sites. Currently there are 13,473 school sites on the World Wide Web that have been registered with
Web66. In September of 1999, the focus school of this project, Dartmouth Middle School, being one of three middle schools in the Hemet Unified School District, began its journey to becoming a statistic of Web66.

Statement of the Problem

Currently communication between Dartmouth Middle School and home is done with newsletters or flyers sent home with students. Occasionally, letters of significance are mailed to parents. School Site Council and PTA meetings are held throughout the school year to inform parents of events and changes in policy. A selected few are involved in these organizations and have the opportunity to input ideas. Communication between school and home does exist; however, interactions between the school and the community do not involve the use of technology, specifically the Internet. Today, society is using the Internet to become more connected with the world. Friends, relatives, and coworkers communicate by email. People gather information about organizations using the Internet. College courses are taken on-line. Phone books and encyclopedias are being used less frequently because information can be looked up much faster using a search engine on the Internet. A vast majority of public
schools have recently embraced a need to use the Internet for the purpose of research. Society, however, has surpassed public schools in using the Internet for research, emailing, and creating Web pages. The majority of schools in the Hemet Unified School District has not created school Web sites and do not communicate with the community through the use of email. Communication among all parties associated with schools in the district has been done primarily through the use of paper documents and without the use of computer-to-computer technology, specifically Internet usage. Dartmouth Middle School would like to create a Web site that would serve as an important tool for communication and facilitating learning.

Project Overview and Purpose of the Project

The Dartmouth Web Site became the third school to reside on the Hemet Unified School District's server and to become available on-line. By using the Web site parents can retrieve important information regarding their children, teachers can post information to enhance their programs, and a larger audience can find out information about the school. More specifically, the Dartmouth Web Site has a variety of links that include connections to the Hemet Unified School District Web Site, a newsletter,
a calendar, an email list, teacher Web pages, the California Department of Education Home Page, and a page that has a list of educational links.

The purpose of this project was to create a school Web site that uses technology in a way that serves the community and improves upon existing communication between Dartmouth Middle School and the parents associated with it. The Web site also serves as a model to other schools in the Hemet Unified School District.

Significance of the Project

The significance of the project is to utilize the Internet as an alternate method of communication between Dartmouth Middle School and everyone associated with it. Traditional methods of distributing information will still exist, but a school Web site can reach a larger audience and allow information to be easily obtainable. The targeted audience is the parents of Dartmouth Middle School. Parents that are informed can contribute more to their son or daughter’s educational experience. Having a Dartmouth Web Site also allows teachers to post information that can enhance their programs.
Assumptions

The following assumptions were made regarding the project:

1. The amount of time to manage the site once completed would be minimal.
2. A higher percentage of teacher involvement in creating Web pages was expected.
3. Parents that feel connected to the school will become more involved in their child’s education.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they apply to the project (Internet Concepts, Inc, 2002).

Compressing Graphics - Reducing the file size of a graphic to make Web pages load faster

Domain Name - The domain name is the unique name that identifies an Internet site. The Internet is made up of hundreds of thousands of computers and networks, all with their own domain name or unique address. Domain names always have two or more parts separated by dots. A given server may have more than one domain name, but a given domain name points to only one server.
Email - A software application that allows one to exchange messages with someone else

FTP (File Transfer Protocol) - A method of serving and obtaining files over the Internet

GIF (Graphic Interchange Format) - A common format for image files, especially suitable for images containing large areas of the same color. GIF format files of simple images are often smaller than the same file would be if stored in JPEG format, but GIF format does not store photographic images as well as JPEG

Home Page - Also referred to as an index page. The primary document for a Web site. All other Web documents at that site are linked to the home page. Also referred to as an index or splash page

HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) - The text markup language used to insert tags which allow a Web browser to correctly display a hyper-text document

Internet - The name given to the collective electronic network of computers and computer networks

JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) - JPEG is most commonly mentioned as a format for image files. JPEG format is preferred to the GIF format for photographic images
Links - The areas (words or graphics) in an HTML document that cause another document to be loaded when the user clicks on them.

Site - A group of computers under a single administrative control.

Universal Resource Locator (URL) - Used to specify the name and location of a World Wide Web document. Can also specify other Internet services available from WWW browsers. For example, http://www.dartmouthmiddle.com

WWW (World Wide Web) - The name given to the collection of computers which serve information in hypertext format to the Internet.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The reviewed literature focuses on the use of the Internet and the publishing of school Web sites. The intent of the review of literature is to provide an understanding of the problem statement which states: "How can Dartmouth Middle School create a Web site, as an important tool for communication and facilitating learning, that will effectively service teachers, students, and parents?" The literature review also addresses the significance of having a school Web site and explores parental involvement based on feelings of being more connected with the school.

To understand the building of an effective Web site, one needs to look at the design process, material inclusion, and staff involvement of a site. The reviewed literature concentrates on these elements. The literature assessed does not focus on school Web sites versus other means of communication nor does it focus on the pros and cons of having a school site.
The Internet and School Publishing

The Computer Industry Almanac (Petska & Juliussen, 1999) estimated that 364.4 million computers were in use worldwide. This suggests that computer usage, which originally began to assist businesses, has filtrated people’s homes and is growing at a considerable rate. In 1994, Debenham and Smith (1994) stated that 75 percent of middle-class families had a computer in the home and that number would grow at a rate of 80 percent up to the year 2000. Along with businesses and homes, computer usage in schools has also increased. In August 1995, T.H.E. Journal (Technological Horizons in Education) reported that in 1994, the U.S. Department of Education conducted a survey, which showed 35 percent of schools nationwide were connected to the Internet. The National Center for Educational Statistics reported in May 2001 that public schools connected to the Internet skyrocketed from 27 percent to 77 percent from 1997 to fall 2000 (Fitzgerald, 2000).

The Internet was born out of a need for schools to be able to share information. Allowing access to a school’s student information system through a Web gateway has caught the attention of school administrators and school systems nationwide (Goral, 2000). With more schools
connecting to the Internet, there has been a corresponding increase in the number of school-based Web pages posted on the World Wide Web (Ivers & Barrons, 1999).

Schools have joined the community of people who work together to use networks. The Internet can be easily seen as a giant living entity, but users seem to forget that the Internet involves people. Behind every "home" page there are people who are responsible for creating and managing it. The Internet, because it has grown so rapidly, unlike the slow and carefully controlled maturation of communication systems like radio, television, and print media, has no governing control of what is published. Limitations are being defined in the courts today. Consequently, the Internet user can encounter a wide variety of subject matter and graphic displays published by just about anyone (Cady & McGregor, 1995). Sadly, students that seek information on the Internet have no assurance when sifting through endless Web pages of rubbish that their findings are accurate and reliable. Educators have a responsibility to publish useful and accurate information and to guide their students to other reliable on-line resources (Gass, 1994).

One research study, conducted by Ivers and Barrons (1999), over a two-year period, set out to collect
specific data on elementary school Web pages. The research focused primarily on content, design, and purpose of existing elementary school Web pages. The authors, Ivers and Barrons, investigated the following four questions:

1. What kind of information is posted?
2. Who is responsible for creating and maintaining?
3. What types of links are included?
4. What multimedia and programming elements are being incorporated into the design?

The findings showed approximately one-half of Web pages have been created by school library media specialists, and many Web pages were used to simply share information and demographics of schools. There is a growing trend to use the Web as a tool for communication. The percentage of staff email addresses had doubled in two years. Communication between schools had jumped from 5 percent to 27 percent. Findings also showed a need for categories of displaying student work, providing classroom pages, display update notices, and furnishing users with information about the community. Ivers and Barron (1999) concluded that a strong percentage of schools used their Web presence to share the demographics and philosophy of their schools. Some schools utilize their Web pages for instructional content, student publication, and
student-centered activities. The authors stress a need for schools to make the most of the Web's potential by providing instructional components or class publishing. To create and maintain school Web pages, administrators should hire a technology coordinator who works with and trains teachers on the instructional potential of elementary school Web pages for the purpose of improving communication with parents and publishing student work.

The Significance of a School Web Site

Web pages hold a great potential for classroom teachers (Smith, 2001). Smith points out that there are possibilities for posting class assignments, developing and displaying student projects, and keeping parents abreast of what their kids are doing. He also claims that the research shows that teachers, like most Internet users, have been slow to learn how to construct Web pages. Students are 10 times more likely to have a Web site than teachers. In most districts, a teacher who has a professional looking Web page is the exception rather than the norm. Smith argues that the reason for teachers not building their own Web pages and providing guidance to student Web designers is because of a lack of technical skills. The products on the market today are making it
easier for Web construction. Slowly, more and more teachers are starting to contribute pages to the Internet.

Communication between home and school is an idea that is catching on with many schools across the United States (Clevenson, 1999). The author, Sue Palfrey (2000), stated there is an increase in schools creating Web pages and Web sites should be created for the purpose of communication. Her ideas on communication include parents emailing teachers, displaying student work, posting a monthly or yearly calendar of events, posting newsletters, on-line surveys, forms, and other important documents. Other suggestions for publishing included students contributing drawings and writing that can be scanned onto the Web site, and older students creating Web pages. At Palfrey’s school (Falmouth Middle School), a Multimedia Club has been established to help create Web pages, including school news and reports on special events and projects. Students seem to take pride in work that is published on the site and parents are becoming more involved in their child’s education.

Hackbarth (1997) states the World Wide Web has strong capabilities to provide valuable learning activities. Students can communicate via email and in chat rooms. The Internet can be a place for students to gather information
for research. The school or teacher's home page is a great location for students to begin their research or activity using the Internet. Teachers can control the places their students go by providing links to credible educational sites.

Kurkijian and Sponder (1998) centered their research on technology that is integrated into curriculum. They examined how teachers were using technology in the classroom, specifically with the use of publishing student work on the Internet. Kurkijian and Sponder's findings showed that when student work is published on the Web, students are better motivated to turn in quality work in the subject area of language arts. Parents were pleased as well, and became more actively involved in projects.

McKenzie (1997) researched the question "Why launch a school Web site?" She provides a number of arguments that support the significance of a school Web site. McKenzie states that Web sites, when properly constructed, are information systems. They efficiently structure content to provide visitors with knowledge and insight. They deliver "the goods." She further states that Web sites may also serve as "interfaces" providing bridges and translations to connect users to other worldly experiences. (p. 13). Given the sometimes poorly organized resources available
on the Web, a good school Web site helps people find educationally worthwhile information with a minimum of wasted time and wandering.

The Creation Process

Ruffini (2000) stated many faculty Web sites are designed haphazardly. The article was written to provide basic guidelines for designing and creating an educational Web site using a systems approach. An important key to an effective Web site is instructional design. Ruffini suggests the following eight elements as part of the instructional design:

1. Target audience
2. Objectives
3. Home Page and Contents
4. Site Navigation Structure
5. Page Design
6. Text and Graphics
7. Selecting a Web Authoring Program (p.60).

Each concept is broken-down by Ruffini to explain meaning and to make suggestions for effectively applying the concepts as the site is built. Structuring a site to meet the users' needs and expectations of the information they are seeking is vital. Having objectives is essential
in the planning process. A home page should include a photograph of the faculty and should include links on specific topics related to a faculty site. A site should be easy to navigate through, and developing sequences, grids, hierarchies, or Webs can help in structuring a Web site. Ruffini explains that visual balance and color are basic elements of effective page design. It is important not to overwhelm the viewer, and graphics should compliment the text.

Palfrey (2000) suggests, prior to the creation process, a future Webmaster should look at other school Web sites for ideas on content and organization. An ideal place to start is by checking the Internet and using search words such as "elementary school Web sites" or "middle school Web sites." Web 66 (2000), a site on the Internet, also has a list of school Web sites that are linked to their home pages. This makes it easy to view hundreds of school Web sites based on location and grade level (elementary or secondary). Palfrey's research describes the necessary steps to create a Web site. She suggests that schools start out simple, with less content, taking time to do the pages well, and keeping the site current. A Web site does not need many volunteers to get started. A good starting point would include interested
teachers, parents, students, the principal, and a technology coordinator. As the Web site expands, teachers are encouraged to create their own Web pages, which the Webmaster checks before uploading. It is not necessary to get 100 percent teacher participation to have a successful Web site. It is best to start out with a few interested teachers; once again, starting off small. As other teachers become familiar with the site and learn appropriate technology skills through staff development opportunities, more of them will want to participate in contributing to the site. "Administration is a key component to a school's Web site because it appeals to the broader community beyond the school." (p. 16). The principal's involvement provides a professional touch to the Web site and encourages teachers to contribute. When selecting Web software, Palfrey recommended Netscape Composer, Dreamweaver, Front Page, or Claris Home Page. This selection of software offers advanced features and site management tools, as well as help systems and tutorials. Equipment involves a computer that will run the Web software mentioned and helpful "extras" would include a scanner and digital camera to permit teachers to add personal graphics.
Carr (1998) explored rationale to properly creating a Web site. Much attention and time should be devoted to design because a large population can view a school Web site. Carr claims it is important that the right image be presented and that it not cause users of school Web sites to feel frustrated. The author discusses how the number of school Web sites has increased since 1995 by more than 1,200 percent. Web66 (2000), an international Web site registry designed by the University of Minnesota states there are now over 8,000 school Web sites in the United States. For schools to be considered a school of choice, they need to have a Web site, according to Carr. Web sites that are successful develop precise goals and are designed to meet the needs of the site’s users. Also stated, Web sites relay information more efficiently than paper sources reaching their targeted audience in a timely manner. Carr cautioned not to stop communicating with traditional sources since technology is an expensive tool and not all families have access to Web information. Another concern mentioned for school Webmasters to contemplate is to not be in a hurry to get a Web site out. Carr suggested that you use the “under construction” phrase on a site. A Webmaster should wait until the site is completely created before uploading it. An important
point mentioned in the article is that a Web site should be useful, interactive, fresh, and entertaining.

It is important that the site keep the audience's interest. A Web site should be kept up to date and current to keep readers coming back. Policies will need to be designed by a committee to properly maintain a school's Web site.

Wepner (1997) did a study on the incorporation of technology usage at the college level. The study focused on the effectiveness of telecommunication in a teacher education program at a college in Patterson, New Jersey. The use of email was introduced to students so they could communicate with instructors. The master teachers were also part of the communication process. The results of the study proved that students and professors became more proficient with the equipment they were using (email, PowerBooks, and word processing). Wepner also stated an increase in communications between teacher and pupil. Students that had problems understanding an assignment were given, in most cases, same day instructions. Meetings between professors and students were arranged over email. Students were allowed to turn in assignments, as attachments, by email. There was some frustration among participants over technical problems and the amount of
time it took to understand the procedures. Despite the frustrations, a great deal of communication transpired over educational issues and people felt open to express themselves. Seventy-five percent of students in the study appreciated this opportunity to participate. Wepner's study strengthens the need to look at ways the Internet can enhance communication between student and teachers. This study supports the value that technology has on education.

There are a number of sites on the Internet that future school Webmasters can look at for advice. Educational Service Unit #7 (2000) is a site on-line that specifically assists schools and children in the counties of Platte, Boone, Butler, Colfax, Merrick, Nance, and Polk in Nebraska, is a resource that establishes some important questions before beginning a school Web site. For each question asked, a few solutions are provided, including a selection of Web addresses that assist in the process. The following are a list of questions that every future Webmaster should consider asking:

1. Who plans the school Web site?

2. What to do before building a site?

3. What is the purpose of the school Web site?
4. How to structure the Web site?

5. What content and design standards are followed?

6. Who is the intended audience?

7. What information do you already have?

8. Miscellaneous Content Ideas?

9. How will the Web site be maintained?

10. How will the Web site be maintained?

11. What makes up a maintenance plan?

12. Who is the Webmaster?

13. What will be the policy on the staff pages?

The Educational Service Unit #7 site suggested that administrators, grade-level and department representatives, media specialist/LAN manager, and parent organization representatives be the people responsible for planning the school Web site. Before beginning the process of creating a school Web site, it is recommended that Webmasters tour other sites and make a list of likes and dislikes. Web 66 (http://Web66.coled.umn.edu/schools.html) and Bright Sites (http://scrtec.org/bright_sites/) are Web sites that are linked to a number of school Web sites.
Webmasters should consider all computer platforms and most browser versions because a Web page might look and act differently on the creator’s computer than it does to its intended audience. Webmasters need to utilize information that is already available at their school site, which parents would like to have access to. Most of the following information has been created on a word processor and can be saved into a Web page: mission statement, school information, school policies, student and curriculum handbooks, required courses and prerequisites, faculty and staff directories, board of education directory, school newspaper, class rosters, activities calendar, alumni information, and internet acceptable policy. This site also suggests that a school Web site should be a place for serving rather than surfing so parents are not mindlessly flipping from one page to the next. A site should create quality products for real audiences. An example of this can be found at Dodge Elementary School (http://www.gi.esu10.k12.ne.us/SDGI/Dodge.dragonWeb/Dodge.pages/Dodge.student.pge.html) where each grade level has contributed to the school Web site by creating a variety of projects based on subject matter they have researched. The real audiences are the students’
parents, family, friends, and community. A school Web site should teach something new and should encourage feedback.

**Teacher Involvement**

Two questions were addressed by the authors, Levin, Stuve, and Jacobson (1999); the first, “does a teacher’s conceptual representation of a network technology have an impact on how he or she uses it?” The second question asked, “do experts think about network technologies such as the Internet and the World Wide Web in ways different than novices?” The findings revealed that people have a diversity of conceptual representation, both from the Internet and Web. Novices of technical skills were less likely to report having a conceptual representation before being exposed to the Internet. At the individual level, findings suggest changes and adaptations of conceptual representations occurred as the individual gained experience. The authors concluded that the goal of technology training is to provide teachers with an opportunity to develop multiple coordinated conceptual representations that they can use at appropriate times to help them achieve their goals. A final point mentioned is that educators need to equip themselves with a “representational toolkit” which allows teachers to build
upon concepts of technology. As each tool is added to the "kit," the learner needs to know how to use the tool and when to use it. Possessing a variety of tools will help the learner meet the challenges of an increasingly dynamic and diverse world.

Summary

The literature supports the fact that school Web sites can enhance the ways schools communicate with the outside world. The amount of schools producing Web sites is growing at a fast pace. Our district alone has seen a jump in the last two years from three school Web sites to fifteen. There is little evidence found supporting the fact that school Web sites are a better form of communication, however there is an abundance of material based on the design of building a school Web site. Most of the research, in regards to design, concentrates on keeping a site simple, current, and consistent. Furthermore, Web sites should provide links that show off student work, engage viewers, inform, and keep parents coming back to the site. School Web sites serve as another way of getting information to the parents. As more and more businesses strive to become "paperless" to improve costs and efficiency, it will be interesting to see what
role school Web sites will play in the future. With the use of a Web site, a school can disperse information solely through the use of the Internet. Web sites could deliver newsletters, student handbooks, homework assignments, grades, attendance reports and notes to parents. I believe that in the near future the focus of the literature will change from design to how school Web sites are taking over old ways of communicating with parents.
CHAPTER THREE
DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Goals

The main goal of this project was to create a Dartmouth Web Site to communicate with parents through the use of the Internet, which will allow parents to feel more connected to the school. The school Web site was designed to fit the needs of the parents, as well as students and teachers.

Objectives

The Dartmouth Web Site allows parents the opportunity to review school policies, check an academic calendar, email staff, and discover educational links. Teachers are allowed to contribute Web pages to the Dartmouth Web Site to introduce themselves and their programs. Instructors can also use their pages to show off student work, post homework, extra credit, or grades. A list of email addresses is available for parents to communicate with teachers about assignments or ask questions regarding their son or daughter. The site promotes the school in a positive way to the community by showing off past achievements and learning opportunities. Communication is the key to a successful school Web site and parents will
always be the targeted audience of the Dartmouth Web Site. Parents need to feel that they are being involved in their child’s education. Dartmouth’s site allows parents to receive information and gives them an option of providing input on important decisions that affect their children.

This project encourages teachers and parents of Dartmouth Middle School to take an active part in the Web site. The Web site is designed to inform parents more than any other group. It is important to know the situation of the parents in terms of availability to connect to the Internet. Parents of Dartmouth Middle School were surveyed (See Appendix A) to find out the percentage of parents that have access to the Internet on a daily basis. The results of the survey (See Appendix B) indicate a fair percentage of parents that can benefit from the Web site. Parents were also asked questions about information they would like to see on Dartmouth’s Web Site. Dartmouth teachers were taught how to create Web pages and they have a responsibility of keeping their pages updated as well as responding to parent email.

To make sure the school Web site is being used. The school’s Web address was changed to an easier one to remember. Some URLs can be too long to remember and typing them in can lead to mistakes, leaving parents frustrated.
Registering it to a domain name shortened Dartmouth’s Web address. This improved advertising for the site. All material that is mailed to Dartmouth’s parents has the address of the school’s Web site. Advertisement will always be an important goal of this project. Parents are encouraged, at each “back to school night,” to place the site in their “favorites” on their Web browser and click on the refresh or reload button periodically. A counter was placed on the Dartmouth Web Site to see how many people are using it.

The Dartmouth site followed Simkin’s (1996) advice that a school Web site should start off simple and grow from there. The Dartmouth Web Site makes a strong effort to be accurate and current. It is also easy to navigate through with selective graphics that are simple to load. “This is very important if you want people to return to your site.” (p. 14). The Dartmouth Web Site incorporates these ideas so that it will continually serve the needs of the educational community.

Development

Creating a school Web site can be quite a challenge. In May of 1999, the principal of our school asked me, having no prior background knowledge of html coding or Web
creating software, to create our school Web site. My interest in computers and competitive spirit in accepting challenges persuaded me to take on the task. At the time, our two high schools were the only schools in our district that had a Web site. The process of creating the Dartmouth Middle School Web Site was made possible through the guidance of our digital high school coordinator, district Webmaster, and high school Webmaster, John Hill. Mr. Hill has been an invaluable resource with his recommendations and assistance with Web and ftp software. For any future Webmaster, it is important to have someone to assist in the process. In preparation for the creation of the Dartmouth Web Site, research on schools, through Webb66, was conducted to get ideas for material inclusion and design. Several variables came into play in the realm of technical difficulty and creating an esthetically pleasing Web site. Getting past the learning curve of Web creation software was a giant first step. Organizing the site with files and folders and learning how to use a file transfer protocol to upload Web pages to a server became one of the final processes on the technical side. Once the magic of getting pages up on the World Wide Web had been discovered, the design of the site had become of considerable importance. The last step in the creation
process was advertising the finished product so that parents and community could benefit from it.

Studying a number of school Web sites and reviewing several related articles helped in the process of creating the Dartmouth Web Site. Examining what has been done and written about school Web sites provided information on material inclusion, which contains the "splash" page, links to other pages, rules to follow, and overall design.

Basic School Page

The Dartmouth Web Site starts with an index page. An index page can also be called a splash or home page. This would be the starting page from which a user can get to other pages. The Dartmouth index page contains the following information: name of the school, address, telephone number, principal's name, school logo or picture of the school, and a link to the district home page. Figure 1 is a snapshot of Dartmouth's splash page, which follows these guidelines.
Important Links

From the index page, links were created to the rest of the site and other important places for viewers to discover. Having a visually pleasing "home" page will not be enough to keep an audience coming back to a site. The Dartmouth Web Site strives to be a place where a person can find an abundance of current information about the organization. Educational Service Unit (2000), a site on the Internet provides a few suggestions for creating other Web pages to link to an index page. The following are a
list of these suggestions, many of which were created and added to the Dartmouth Web Site:

- School map and directions to physical site
- Faculty & Staff Directories (including courses taught)
- School Activities Calendar (Sports, Academic Competitions, Drama...)
- School’s Mission Statement
- School Newspaper
- Board of Education Directory
- Organization Information (clubs, ASB, special programs, etc.)
- Student and Curriculum Handbooks
- School Policies for such things as absenteeism, early dismissal, discipline, etc
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- A unique feature that will keep people coming back (search engine, educational links, school calendar, etc.)
- School Web site map and/or directory
- Required courses and prerequisites
- Positive highlights (Student Achievements, Awards, Scholarships, etc)
- Links to community services

On the left side of Dartmouth’s home page are links for viewers to navigate through the site (See Figure 2). The links will take audiences to a number of Web pages, which include information about the school, a mission statement, current newsletters, staff pages, an email list, a page that has a variety of educational links, our enrollment procedures, the school and district calendar, and links to other Web sites. The Dartmouth links are set up in a frame, which stays constant so viewers have access to the links as they navigate through the Web site.
Figure 2. Links from Home Page

General Guidelines and Parameters

All information on Dartmouth’s Web site follows the Hemet Unified School District’s guidelines for material inclusion on school Web pages (As discussed at a Hemet Unified Technology Meeting, February 2002). The following are general guidelines and parameters for the Hemet Unified School District:
• Web pages created and links out to the Internet must have educational merit

• No "hobby" pictures (pets, cars, family, etc.)

• Web page must effectively communicate information to the user

• No pictures or clip art of copyrighted material

• No pictures of students or staff unless permission given

• No pictures or other information posted about students unless parental permission given

• All information should be current

Design

The first design of the Dartmouth site in 1999 was definitely a work in progress. It did not include frames. It was loaded with large uncompressed pictures and a variety of animated gifs that danced all over the pages. Over the course of a couple of years, while reviewing other Web sites and literature on school Web sites, the Dartmouth site transformed from a dazzling design to one that displayed content in a simple way. When designing a school Web site, the focus needs to be on content
(McKenzie, 1997). The Dartmouth Web Site originally failed to serve as a tool to communicate with the community and parents before steps were taken to make it visually stimulating. It is possible to have both, as long as content can be easily seen. The current Dartmouth Web Site begins with a solid colored splash page, which includes a compressed picture of the front of the school (figure 3). Two frames surround the splash page. The frame on the left has a gif of the school's logo and links to navigate through the site. The frame on top is a gif file of the school's name. Using a white background, both frames blend together giving the appearance that the two are joined to form a border. Both frames remain constant while a viewer navigates through the site; this way there is no chance for anyone to get lost in the site. There are, however, a few links that will open a separate window. The purpose of this is to avoid opening another organization's site within the border of the Dartmouth site. Links to our district's site will open up a separate window for viewers to navigate through their site, and when closed, the Dartmouth site will appear as the next window opened. Backgrounds should be simple and should not wash out text. The white background in figure 3 allows text to stand out. The splash page or any other page that is selected from
the links on the left will also stand out because of the white border. The center frame has a scrolling function to view the entire contents of the page.

![Dartmouth Middle School Home Page](image)

**Figure 3. Home Page**

Compressing graphics to optimize the amount of time it takes a viewer to load each of the Web site's pages is a necessary task for a Webmaster. Schinke (1999) states, "Patience is not a common trait in this world of instant gratification." (p. 1). The ultimate goal in Web graphic design is to create great looking images that download as fast as possible. Software has to be used to compress
images while maintaining as much quality as is feasible. The software I chose to compress and manipulate graphics was Adobe Photoshop.

Media Selection

There are many HTML editing software on the market. The Dartmouth Web Site was created using PageMill 3.0. Our district's Webmaster recommended PageMill. The basic functions of the software such as adding text and graphics were not hard to understand. Once familiar with the PageMill 3.0, I asked permission from my principal to teach a class to our teachers. Prior to the staff development, I created a document that was titled "PageMill Cheat-Sheet" (See Appendix C). The document was intended to help teachers use PageMill to create Web pages. Once familiar with PageMill, teachers used their Web pages to enhance their instruction by communicating better with parents. Teachers' Web pages were connected to the school Web site.

Organization

Organizing a Web site is an important part of the creation process. Having a well-organized Web site is necessary for future management purposes. Adding a number of graphics and Web pages can get confusing. The following
information includes suggestions based on how the Dartmouth Web Site was organized. The first step in starting a site is to create a folder on the desktop or some convenient place on the hard drive. This folder contains everything that is a part of the Web site such as graphics, sound clips, video clips, and Web pages. The main folder can be titled with a school name and possibly followed by the title “Website.” Figure 4 illustrates the organization of the Dartmouth Web Site that resides in a folder, that is titled “dartmouth.” The main folder can be titled with capital letters and have separation between words. Every page or folder within the main folder needs to be titled with lower case letters and have no spaces between words. This has become a universal rule to creating a Web site and will help when giving out the exact Web address or URL. After the main folder has been created, a folder titled “images” can be created inside the main folder. During the creation process, all background images, pictures, or animations need to be first saved to this folder before being placed on the Web pages. Just placing an image on a Web page does not ensure that when the page is uploaded that viewers will see the image. Web pages can only create a space where an image can be viewed. When images are not saved and loaded
properly a space will show up with a blank image and a red "X." To copy an image from a location outside of the Web site's folder and then place it on a Web page will create this problem. There is Web-creating software that will automatically create an image folder when an image is placed on a page. An example of this can be seen when creating Web pages using Microsoft Word. The home page of a school Web site will be saved in the main folder as well as frames or other pages that are linked to the home page. The Dartmouth's home page is titled index.

![Dartmouth Web Site Folder](image)

Figure 4. Dartmouth Web Site Folder
As seen in figure 5, subfolders are a necessary component to keeping a Web site organized. The folder "officestaff" is located in the main folder (dartmouth). This folder contains a number of Web pages profiling people that work in the office (See Figure 5). Images for these Web pages could be saved in the image folder in the main folder, but by creating folders titled "gifs" and "jpegs" in the "officestaff" folder it makes it easier to locate the images.

Figure 5. Subfolder

File Transfer Protocol Software

There is a variety of FTP software on the market. Some Web software companies such as Dreamweaver include
the functionality of transporting files. Once a Web page has been completed and is ready to place on a server that is connected to the World Wide Web it needs to be transported from the local working computer. To post content to the district Web server I used FTP Voyager. The software is available for download on the Internet for a free thirty-day trial (http://www.ftpvoyager.com). A user name, password, FTP site setting, and default directory setting to access the districts server was given to me by our district Webmaster. Figure 6 displays how these settings are inputted in Voyager’s FTP Site Profile Manager Window.

Figure 6. Site Profile Manager Window

Once the right settings are put into the Site Profile Manager, the local computer is connected to the district server. Figure 7 shows the window that appears. The top
portion represents the district server and the bottom portion represents the user’s computer. Files are easily uploaded by dragging and dropping into the appropriate folders. The entire Dartmouth Web Site resides in the "dartmouth" folder located on the district’s server. The URL for Dartmouth’s site is http://www.hemetsd.k12.ca.us/sites/dartmouth/index. The names after each slash symbol represent folders (sites and dartmouth) and the "index" after the last slash is a Web page.

Figure 7. Voyager Window
Advertising

Creating a school Web site can be an exciting experience. To know that your work can be seen by any number of people can be a gratifying feeling. Unfortunately, the fact of the matter is that probably not too many people will see the finished product. The work of a school Web site is never done. It is easy to place something on the Internet that looks good, especially in the eyes of administration, but the focus should always be placed on getting content out to parents. A Web site needs to be advertised. A product has been created that will assist in making parents and the community more connected to the school. Parents need to be aware of this product, which can be a great resource for them. In order to get a good idea of what percentage of parents has access to the Internet, a survey should be given out to students. After the Dartmouth site was created and posted, I sent out a survey (Appendix A) asking parents questions about their access to the Internet at home and work. Figure 8 illustrates the results of the survey.
Sixty-four percent of the parents at Dartmouth Middle School have access to the Internet either at home or work. That is a significant amount of parents that could benefit from accessing the school site. It is also important to allow parents and students who do not have access to the Internet outside of school, a chance to use the school’s facilities after school hours. Our library is open to the public one hour before and after school. Our public library makes the Internet available to the community in the evening hours.

A first step made to advertise our school’s Web site was to include the teachers. Using the site as a tool to communicate with parents involves getting teachers to
create their own Web pages. Teacher involvement is the best way to promote the school site. Each teacher at Dartmouth has an average of two hundred students. The more teachers that can get students actively involved, the more students and subsequently parents will be accessing the site. To get teachers involved I asked my principal if I could use our staff development day to instruct teachers in creating a Web page. Thirty of our teachers were involved in the staff development. Fifteen of the teachers continued to work with PageMill and created their own Web pages. A reward of fifty dollars for classroom supplies was given to the first ten teachers to finish their Web pages. Completed Web pages were uploaded and a link was created from the staff page. The sample pages are provided (Appendix D).

Another approach I took to advertising was registering the Dartmouth site with a variety of popular search engines such as Yahoo and Google. Parents and students could find our site by using a search engine rather than typing, into their address bar, the site’s long URL (http://www.hemetusd.kl2.ca.us/sites/dartmouth). Registering with search engines announces a Web presence to a larger Internet community. Each search engine asked for the following information to register our site:
1) Contact name
2) Email address
3) The site URL
4) A brief description of the site
5) Categories in which the site would be included

Because our address was so long, I also registered our site with Yahoo Domains (http://domains.yahoo.com/) for thirty-five dollars a year. Yahoo Domains created a quick link from the shorter and easier URL “www.dartmouthmiddle.com” to the much longer URL version of “http://www.hemetusd.k12.ca.us/sites/dartmouth.” Parents and students have a better chance of remembering “dartmouthmiddle.com” than they would the longer URL. Also, typing in the shorter URL would lead to fewer mistakes. The newsletter that is mailed out each month to parents has www.dartmouthmiddle.com at the top of the page, under the school’s name. This has proven to be the most effective way of getting the word out that Dartmouth has a Web site. Posting the URL of the school’s Web site in places where parents can see can be another way of advertising. The large bulletin board outside our school has our site’s address advertised on it.

In order to see if advertising methods are working, placing a counter on a Web site is an effective way of
keeping track of how many people are viewing it. There are a few companies that provide the service for free so that any person can place a counter on a Web page. After a few comparisons of counters available on the Internet, I chose the company FastCounter (http://www.bcentral.com). The counter was appealing because the graphics were simple and the use of the counter did not come with any advertising elements that would distract our viewers (Figure 9). The procedure of placing it on the Dartmouth's index page was straightforward and well explained at FastCounter's site. There are several options of graphics to choose from and a counter can start on any given number that is chosen.

![FastCounter](http://www.bcentral.com)

Figure 9. FastCounter Graphic Display

Formative Evaluation

After completing the Dartmouth Web site, I asked our office staff to view the project and give me feedback. All participants were pleased that we had a site up on the Internet and constructive feedback was limited. To further measure the success of the design and advertisement efforts of our site, a parent survey (Appendix A) was created and passed out to 500 sixth, seventh, and eighth
grade students. The parent survey was returned by 345 students. The survey consisted of four important questions:

1. Have you seen the Dartmouth Web Site prior to this survey?
2. After reviewing the site, are there any features about our site that will keep you coming back?
3. How can we improve the Dartmouth Web Site?
4. What would you like to see?

The returned surveys revealed that 79 parents had previously visited the site. A great majority of the surveys returned had the top section filled out, which asked yes or no questions based on Internet access, but few had taken the time to answer the above questions. Answers to question two, regarding features that would bring them back, included links to the school newsletter, calendar, educational links, and teacher Web pages. Frequent answers to question three included more pictures and information about students, more teacher created pages, and fixing run-time errors.

A link on the bottom of Dartmouth’s index page is labeled “we welcome any questions or comments.” The link opens up a viewer’s Outlook Express to email suggestions or questions. As a result of this link, I have received a
number of emails from parents who were looking for information regarding our school (APPENDIX E). The link serves as another way of evaluating the site.

Strengths

Dartmouth Middle School is one of the first schools in the Hemet Unified School District to create a school Web site. The Web site has served as a positive public relations tool and another method of communicating with parents. Our superintendent has encouraged principals in the district to start Web sites for their schools. Compensation for school Webmasters has been implemented. Our school district has held several staff development days for teachers to learn various Web creating software.

Limitations

A great limitation to this project is the fact that almost 40 percent of parents do not have daily access to the Internet (See Appendix B). A school Web site will not serve parents that do not have access to the Internet. Traditional methods of communicating with home will continue to exist. The cost of computers and Internet access is on the decline, which should allow more parents to get connected to the World Wide Web.
Another limitation was the fact that a "needs assessment" was not conducted at the start of this project. Creating a school Web site for technology’s sake without receiving input from parents and staff was not an effective approach.

Parents were surveyed regarding their accessibility to the Internet at home or at work after the Dartmouth Web Site was already completed. The survey also asked for feedback from parents that had previously viewed the Dartmouth Web Site. A limitation of this survey was that most parents did not fill out the second part of the survey that asked for feedback. The survey was intended to get suggestions from parents for improving the site, but more input was needed to serve the purpose of improving the Dartmouth Web Site.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Future Projects

Each summer, the Dartmouth Web Site will be redesigned. A new look will keep the site fresh. Next year’s site will be created using Dreamweaver by Macromedia. Dreamweaver is currently the “hotshot” program of choice by professional Webmasters. The software has more sophisticated features than PageMill. Content will still be our number one concern however, the design can always improve, making the Dartmouth Web Site a meaningful and enjoyable experience.

The Dartmouth site needs more teacher involvement. Teacher involvement is a necessary component to a successful Web site. Motivating teachers to add to the Dartmouth site has been a struggle. Three staff development days were provided on creating Web pages and 80 percent of Dartmouth’s teachers did not create a Web page. Continuous staff development opportunities, as well as time to work with the technology, will allow more teachers to improve their programs with Web pages.

Links from teacher Web pages to on-line bulletin board sites will be strongly suggested. On-line bulletin
board sites make it easy for teachers to publish information on the Internet without inundating the Webmaster. Teachers would still create Web pages explaining about themselves and their programs, but having a link to a bulletin board site would allow them to post information without going through the Webmaster. A school Webmaster can become overloaded if many teachers are constantly updating their Web pages.

The Dartmouth Web Site needs more input from teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Forms will be passed out periodically during staff meetings and PTA meetings asking for suggested material to be posted on our site. Student Web pages are going to be created in our computer classes. The pages will be added to our site.

Hemet Unified School District is in the process of allowing parents to sign a waiver during enrollment so pictures of students can be posted on our site without prior permission. Web coverage on academic and sporting events would enhance our site.

There will always be a need for understanding how school Web sites can improve communication between school and home. There will be a need to revisit Web66 to get practical ideas from other schools. Monitoring the population of parents who have access to the Internet
should be done yearly to see how many parents could benefit from the site. After-school time for parents to access the Internet should continue to be available for those who cannot afford having the Internet. A list of parents that have email could cut down on cost and time for mailing out information.

Conclusion

The Dartmouth Web Site started off simple and has improved over the last couple of years. It will continue to grow as more people become involved in the process. It is a great feeling to know that I started something that will last a very long time. I hope our Web site will continue to help parents and the community feel more connected to Dartmouth Middle School. Parental involvement is the key to a successful school.
APPENDIX A

PARENT SURVEY
Dear Parents,

I am conducting a survey to see how many parents have access to the Internet at home or work. I am also gathering information that will help me make our Web site a better tool in regards to communication between school and home.

Do you have access to the Internet at home?  
Yes       No

Do you or your spouse have access to the Internet at work?  
Yes       No

Have you seen the Dartmouth Web Site prior to this survey?  
Yes       No

If you have time and access to the Internet, please go to our school’s site (www.dartmouthmiddle.com) and provide feedback on the following questions:

Are there any features about our site that will keep you coming back?

How can we improve Dartmouth’s Web Site? What would you like to see?

Thank you for your time!
D. Clark
Webmaster
Dartmouth Middle School
clarkdms@yahoo.com
APPENDIX B

RESULTS OF PARENT SURVEY
345 students returned surveys that were filled out by their parents.

123 parents have neither the Internet at home nor work (36%).

197 parents have Internet access at home (57%).

98 parents have Internet access at work (28%).

79 parents have previously visited the Dartmouth Web Site (23%).
APPENDIX C

STAFF DEVELOPMENT ON PAGEMILL
Before you begin creating Web pages, you should know who your audience will be and what content you want to present. Then you can decide how your pages should look and how they should link together.

For each page, do the following:

Consider whether tables, movies, sounds, or other multimedia objects such as Java applets or ActiveX controls would enhance the content of the pages (see Adding Images and Multimedia Objects in the help menu).

Decide where to place links and what elements to use for navigating through the pages. Avoid using too many links on a page, which might confuse readers and keep them from following the information flow.

Setting up the proper folder structure for your Web site is crucial for avoiding problems such as broken links when you upload your pages to a Web server.

When you create a new page, it is blank and not linked to any other page. Creating a new site (see Working with Web sites) in an empty folder also creates a default page, called index.html, in the local root folder. Because this name is a common one for a home page and may be
required by your Webmaster or ISP, you should usually use it. Also note that all pages must be within the local root folder before being uploaded.

Now for the simple terminology.

Do not be afraid of this stuff. Creating a web page is easy. Things get a little difficult when you are organizing your folder and the different links you are using. This is the part you are really going to have to pay close attention to. Remember when you name a folder, page, or image use only lower case letters without any spaces. We have created an organized folder showing you this. Let's take a look at it:

Organization
Web site (folder)-This folder, with all its contents, will be uploaded to the Internet.

docs (folder)

links (page)

schedule (page)

updates (page)
syllabus (page)

index (page) This is your "home" page. Everything will be linked from here. And this is the page that will be linked to you name from the school's staff web page.

images (folder) All images must be put into this folder first before they are put onto your page.

Creating a Page

There are two modes to Adobe PageMill. There is a working mode and a viewing mode. In the upper right hand corner you will either see a curled up piece of paper with a pen (working mode) or you will see a picture of a globe (viewing mode). We will be using the working mode.

Text- Text can be added almost anywhere by positioning the mouse and clicking once to establish the cursor. A blinking cursor means you are ready to type. You can control the size, font, and color of your text by clicking on Style up at the top.
Images- Remember to have your pictures in this folder before you can put them on your page. Pictures can be in the form of backgrounds, clip arts, photos, animations, or word art. You can obtain pictures by getting them off the Internet, scanning a picture, using a digital camera, or obtaining them from a disc. An easy way to get pictures is from the Internet. There are a number of free sites to get clip art and animated pictures. Once you find a picture on the Internet, all you have to do is click the right mouse button on that image. This will allow you to save the image in your preexisting file. You can do the same for backgrounds.

Table- There is a picture of a table at the top of the page. Click on it and you will be asked to specify the number of columns and rows. You can insert text or images into tables.

Inspector- The inspector does many things. It can be easily accessed by pushing the F8 button. The inspector allows you to change the color of text, increase or decrease image sizes, and add backgrounds.
Handy-Dandy Shortcuts:

F8-Inspector

Ctrl+1       Easy access to images
Ctrl+X       Cut
Ctrl+V       Paste
Ctrl+C       Copy
Ctrl+A       Select all
Ctrl+M       Make a link (select the item first)

Right Click of the mouse to save images from the Internet
APPENDIX D

SAMPLE PAGES OF DARTMOUTH WEB SITE
Dartmouth Middle School

Dartmouth Staff

Office

Classified

Instructors:
Berkowsky, R
Boulton, D
Cameron, G
Clark, D
Companiott, C
Dobbing, T
Dartmouth Middle School

D.M.S. MISSION

It shall be the mission of Dartmouth Middle School to encourage and motivate students to become creative and critical thinkers and lifelong learners in order to function in our complex, multicultural society. It is our purpose to provide a positive transition to high school by introducing our students to a variety of activities, curricula, and experiences geared toward increasing their responsibility and allowing them to reach their full potential. We will develop self-esteem and provide a safe learning environment by having students, parents, and teachers work together toward these goals.
Dartmouth Middle School

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dartmouth Middle School, 41535 Mayberry Avenue
Hemet, CA 92544
(909) 765-2550

We have a knowledgeable staff of teachers who are experts at working with middle school students. Dartmouth students have consistently won awards for their performance in science fairs, spelling bees, band, choral music, and many other academic competitions. We have state-of-the-art computers in every classroom with internet accessibility.

Our library has two computer labs; one for internet researching, and the other lab is used by students to access educational software and word processing. The library is open to students before and after school.

If you are interested in Dartmouth Middle School and would like more information on how your child can join us and our quest for excellence, please contact us at (909) 765-2550.

Please click on the play button below to see our campus.
From the Principal:
Spring brings us to the “testing season.” Dartmouth students will be participating in various testing; some voluntary and some required, over the next few months. I would like to briefly highlight each opportunity. If you would like additional information on any of the tests, please call your child’s counselor or me.

MARCH 28, 2002 -
G.A.T.E. Screening
If your child is not already identified as a Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) student, Dartmouth offers an annual opportunity for any child recommended by their parent(s), teacher(s), or counselor to participate in testing. A separate article regarding GATE testing appears in this newsletter.

APRIL 9, 2002 – SEVENTH GRADE STAR WRITING TEST
As part of the comprehensive STANDARDIZED TESTING AND REPORTING (STAR) administered each Spring to all California public school students in grades 2-11, Dartmouth seventh graders will take a writing exam through their Language Arts class on Tuesday, April 9th. A make-up test for absent students will be administered on Wednesday, April 10, 2002.
Dartmouth Middle School

2001-2002 DARTMOUTH SCHOOL CALENDAR

- September 4, 2001: 1ST DAY OF SCHOOL
- September 18, 2001: QSP MAGAZINE FUNDRAISER ASSEMBLIES
- September 25-27, 2001: PICTURE DAYS
- October 4, 2001 (minimum day): "SHADOW-A-STUDENT" DAY/STAFF DEVELOPMENT
- October 7, 2001: 2nd ANNUAL BAND FUNDRAISER GOLF TOURNAMENT
- October 26, 2001: FALL BALL DANCE (2:15-4:00)
- November 12, 2001: VETERAN'S DAY HOLIDAY—NO SCHOOL
- November 15, 2001 (minimum day): PARENT CONFERENCE DAY
- November 22, 2001: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY—NO SCHOOL
- November 23, 2001: LOCAL HOLIDAY—NO SCHOOL
- December 14, 2001: WINTER DANCE (2:15-4:30)
- December 16 to January 4, 2002: WINTER BREAK—NO SCHOOL
- January 21, 2002: KING'S BIRTHDAY—NO SCHOOL
- January 25, 2002: NON STUDENT DAY (End of Semester)
- February 11, 2002: LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY—NO SCHOOL
- February 15, 2002: VALENTINE'S DANCE (2:15-4:30)
- February 18, 2002: WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY—NO SCHOOL
- February 19, 2002: 6TH GRADE HONOR ROLL AWARDS (6:30 P.M.)
- February 20, 2002: 7TH GRADE HONOR ROLL AWARDS (6:30 P.M.)
- February 21, 2002: 8TH GRADE HONOR ROLL AWARDS (6:30 P.M.)
- March 21, 2002 (minimum day): 9TH GRADE CAREER DAY/PARENT CONFERENCE DAY
- April 1-5, 2002: SPRING BREAK—NO SCHOOL
- April 13, 2002: EASTER TESTING
- April 15, 2002: SPRING DANCE (2:15-4:30)
- April 25, 2002 (minimum day): STAFF DEVELOPMENT
Dartmouth Middle School

Hemet Unified School District

DARTMOUTH MIDDLE SCHOOL
ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT CARD

A Profile for the Community
41535 Mayberry Avenue * Hemet, CA 92544 * 909-765-2550

Mr. Jim Olynger, Principal 2000-01 School Year

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE
The requirement for the issuance of a School Accountability Report Card was established by Proposition 98 an initiative passed by the California voters in November 1988. The Report Card, to be issued annually by local school boards for each school, provides parents and community members information about the school, its resources and successes, as well as plans for any areas where improvements are needed.

The Dartmouth staff view this document to be an excellent opportunity to tell you about our vision and our goals for the 2000-01 academic year.

Founded in September 1994, Dartmouth Middle School currently has an enrollment of 1,298 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Community support has provided donations to supplement the library and purchase additional science equipment. We take great pride in our school, student achievement, and staff commitment to excellence.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION
Hemet Unified School District, one of the geographically largest in the state, covers 700+ topographically diverse square miles and presently consists of 19 elementary and secondary schools. In common with the rest of Southern California, the Hemet area is growing with an accompanying school-age population surge. Our student enrollment has increased in the past ten years to 17,451 in 2000-01. This growth pattern is expected to continue or accelerate.
Dartmouth Middle School

DMS email list

jolynger@yahoo.com
dmsmanager (Bridwell)
swainmichael@hotmail.com
clark@dartmouthmiddle.com
allanmik@hotmail.com (Mikolaycik)
donnamercer@hotmail.com
dmsbands@hotmail.com (Boulton)
teachertilley@yahoo.com
Dartmouth Middle School

[Image of the 2001-2002 Traditional School Year Calendar]

Adopted by the Governing Board on April 2, 2001

Legend

Student/Classified Days

 Classified and Administrative Holidays

In-House Reopening

Theater/Concerts

[Calendar grid with dates and events]

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Dartmouth Middle School

Educational Links

Search Engines
- Search.Com
- Webcrawler
- Yahoo
- Lycos
- Galaxy
- World Wide Web Worm
- Starting Point
- Excite
- CEARCH
- Google
- Yahooigans

News and Weather
- CNN Interactive - an excellent place to receive up-to-the-minute updates on the latest world events
- ABC RadioNet - with the help of RealAudio, you can LISTEN to Peter Jennings list the top stories of the day as well as the ABC hourly news update
- NBC News - Tom Brokaw and Co.
Dartmouth Middle School

Office Staff

Select a link:

Jim Olynyk (Principal)
Greg White (Vice Principal)
Sue Bridwell (Office Manager)
Dana Rolfe (Secretary II)
Michele Peterson (Secretary I)
Mary Chennault (Attendance Clerk)
Wanda Schlosser (Nurse)
Evelyn Richards (Clerk II/ASB Assistant)
Josie Hysen (Counselor)
Jeff Gaulke (Counselor)
Mr. Olynger has been the principal at Dartmouth Middle School since November of 1995. He has a Bachelor of Arts degree in physical education and social science, a Master of Arts in education and a Master of Science degree in school administration. Mr. Olynger believes every student should be respectful of others and responsible for himself. He would also encourage every student to become involved in clubs, student government, academic,
Dartmouth Middle School

Mr. Clark's Homepage

Clark's Physical Education Program

PowerPoint Presentation of our P.E. Program
Clark's P.E. Program

Physical Education at Dartmouth Middle School provides a wide range of activities designed to develop basic coordination, teamwork, individual responsibility, life skills and a desire for fitness. Emphasis will be based on participation and maximum effort in physical fitness. Students participate in a variety of team and individual activities. My classes will be involved in the following activities: flag football, basketball, hockey, frisbee games, softball, soccer, and cooperative games. Grades will reflect efforts in dressing out, attendance, and participation.

Click on one of these great sport sites (5 pts extra credit for each site you explore and write about):

- NBA.COM
- NFL.COM
- Baseball Sites
- GUL.COM
- Soccer Sites
- Basketball Test

http://www.nfl.com/
Dartmouth Middle School

D.M.S. Drill Team

Rocks the Staples Center
Welcome to Mr. Rossi's Computer Class

Introduction

Welcome to the Dartmouth Middle School Computer Class. This is a 19 week, 1 semester class given through your exploratory-elective program. Computers and their software are simply tools that we can use to make our lives more productive. My job during the next 19 school weeks in this class is to teach you how to use these tools, and more importantly, how to apply them to the tasks you will be facing outside of this class. You will be given many opportunities to learn new skills in this class that will help you not only in your student career, but long after you are done with school and working in the real world. The definite key to being successful in this class is simple... make an
Greetings!

I am originally from Washington State, and my family and I moved to California in 1999. I have my Masters in English and have taught English & Literature at the middle school, high school, and college levels. I am currently working on my Ph.D. in Instructional Design for Online Learning.

I love what I teach and enjoy reading and writing. I also enjoy the outdoors, traveling to new places, and dabbling in arts & crafts such as Native American beadwork, ceramics, and porcelaine. Most of all, I enjoy spending time with my two children.

Email: excell@charterannex.com
Fax: 909-925-4189
While this online handbook is a great resource for the basics, students are encouraged to have a regular handbook too.

Writing HANDBOOK

Essay Basics

- Writing Process
- Paper Structure (Unity)
- Outlining
- Paragraphs
  - Introduction
  - Body
  - Conclusion
- Thesis Statement
- Topic Sentence
- Supporting Sentence

Sentence Structure

- Verb
- Subject
- Phrase vs Clause
Dartmouth Middle School

Excell English

Resource Links

- Content Standards for California Schools K-12 are sorted by subject area and then by grade level.
- California State Writing Rubrics - grades 4 and 7, used for assessing the spring writing prompts.
- California High School Exit Exam Information includes a teacher guide that gives an overview of the test and the rubrics used for scoring the writing prompts.
- STAR Test Blueprints provide information on what topics are covered on the STAR test and the number of questions for each topic.
- FindArticles has access to over 300 magazines online - for free! This is great for research papers.
- Google is the leading search engine for getting exact matches instead of wading through numerous results.
APPENDIX E

SAMPLE EMAIL RESPONSES FROM PARENTS
Sample Email Responses from Parents

The "questions or comments" link on the Dartmouth Web Site produced the following emails from parents:

I would like information on becoming part of the school site council. Can you please email any information on this position? Also, are the meetings open to the public (parents of Dartmouth Students)? Thank you for any information!

Andrea D.

Does Mr. Henderson have a school e-mail address I can write to him at? I want to keep up on the progress of my daughter in his class? Her name is Kasey J.

Would you please pass on to your principal that in the mailing I received today regarding Measure E (two copies, one for each child), the last item listed on the Fact Sheet stated "A list of specific improvements for the school in your area is attached."

There was nothing attached. The only other paper in the envelope was the letter from Jim discussing the parent question and answer night.
Thanks,
Ted

Hi to all at Dartmouth middle school,

My name is Charmaine H., I am looking at your middle school to enroll my 12 year old Daughter Tina in. We shall be moving into Hemet at the end on December, Tina has attended school here in Escondido for a short time, but we had to return to Australia to arrange to get her older Brother here.

I have a few questions that I am hoping you will be able to help me with.

1) Does Dartmouth have a school bus, that will collect children that attend.

2) When do the Christmas holidays start and end.

3) What grade shall Tina be put in, she is 12 (we would like her to be in year 7)

I thank you for taking the time to answer our questions, and look forward to talking to you very soon about Tina attending Dartmouth Middle School.

Kind regards,
Charmaine.

Hello,
We will be moving to Hemet from Canada, this summer. My daughter will be entering 7th grade. I have been doing some research on middle schools in Hemet and found your nice website. Like most parents, I would like my daughter to get a good quality education and make some good friends. I will mention that last February, my mother passed away in Hemet, and we spent a month there. I enrolled my daughter at Santa Fe for the month. I have nothing to compare the school to, but was not overly impressed during her short stay. I hope you can give me some insight so when we arrive in July, I can make an informed choice as to the school she will attend. Thanking you in advance.
REFERENCES


