BEST PRACTICES CHECKLIST FOR CLASSROOM WEB SITES

Want to make sure your Web site makes you shine? Here are some simple, but important steps to follow as you develop or update your site:

____ Style and Layout "Best Practices"

- Don't use more than two or three font types on your Web site (looks cluttered and unprofessional). It is common to use a San-Serif font for text and Serif font for category titles for emphasis-- provides a nice variation, but is not too distracting.
- Don't center everything on your Web site. It's hard to read. Print layout rules are well established and work quite well, even on your Web site. Left justified text is your best bet. You can center an occasional major title or page divider, but do it sparingly.
- Don't use ALL CAPS in your Web site. Hard to read and looks like you are shouting.
- Don't underline text for emphasis (underlined words indicate a link). When you want to emphasize text, use bold or bullets, etc.
- Don't use more than two or three colors on your Web site (particularly the text colors) and make sure those colors match the overall site color scheme.
- Use contrasting text (dark text against light background). Keep your site easy to read.

____ Spelling & Grammatical Glitches (Proof your site)

If must take care of the basics like spelling, grammar, and good communication. Your site visitors (students and parents) will expect you to set the example, so be sure it is accurate. Check your text quickly in Word or your favorite text editor with grammar and spell check turned on before pasting your text into your Web site. Careless and avoidable errors can tarnish your reputation. Proof your site!

____ Write in Active Voice

Passive voice writing is the verb construction that shifts the focus of a sentence away from the doer. It is wordy, vague, and distances your reader from your message. Your goal with a Web site is to be as customer-focused as possible and active voice helps you do that. Here's a comparison between passive and active voice:

Passive Voice: A certified application form may be downloaded, completed, and faxed to the number included on the form. Further information can be obtained by clicking on the following links: employee benefits, how to apply, current job openings.

Active Voice: To apply, just click on the certified application form we provide below. We've also included information for you about employee benefits, how to apply, and current job openings.

The active voice description puts your visitor inside the activity. The copy speaks directly to them and you have their emotional attention and involvement. The passive voice description sounds a bit pompous, distant, and is certainly not engaging.

___ Update Monthly (at least)

Don't let your class or team Web site becomes a neglected stepchild. It can really make you look good while helping your parents and students becomes advocates instead of critics. If you don't have time to update your classroom or team Web site frequently then be sure to have good, solid generic information on your site (classroom rules, classroom goals, tips for student success in your classroom, tips for parents to help their children succeed, etc.) Remember…first impressions are hard to change. Make it a good one.

___ Check Those Links

You should periodically check all those links on your site, especially those that link to other Web sites and resources external to your Web site. It is quite common for site locations to change. Even well established Web sites are sometimes disabled. Frequent dead links on your site are an indication to your visitors that you aren't maintaining your site and this evidence can decrease your credibility.

___ What to Avoid

- Forget about using blinking and flashing text. That's it. Enough said.
- Keep font sizes standard throughout your site. Changing font sizes frequently within a page looks sloppy and unprofessional, so be consistent. Standard font sizes are between 10-14 pt (10 for body text and 12 or 14 for sub-titles).
- Forget the background music on your site. It works on a few sites (like Disney maybe) but they usually take too much time to download, many computers don't have sound capability, and most people surveyed find it irritating.
- Keep your classroom site simple. Remember, although you look at it daily, your site visitors are just there to find the information they need. They don't get bored with simplicity and clean, easy to read Web sites. They'll appreciate your consideration for their time.