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Evaluating Your School's Web Site

Are You Maximizing Its Potential?

As the bustle of another school year winds down, the summer begins to look more like a chance to catch up than a time to relax.

While your summer to-do list is most likely already long and extensive, there is one item that I suggest you include: a comprehensive evaluation of your school's web site and, if necessary, a redesign of its appearance and/or a reconstruction of its layout.

I realize that for many of you it has been some time since you have taken a close look at your web site's appearance and functionality. But if you can't squeeze it onto your list now, when will you be able to?

Don't underestimate the potential of your school's web site; it can serve as a versatile launch pad for countless communication tools. As a superintendent it is vital to have a web site that enhances communication between the administration, faculty and students within your school system, and that clearly and accurately represents your vision for education to the community that you serve.

Your school's web site can often function as an easily accessible front door into your school for the community. You are able to quickly provide current information, highlight student accomplishments, state educational goals and objectives, outline your vision as a superintendent, and display the credentials of your staff.

Furthermore, a well designed web site provides a wonderful conduit of dynamic communication between the school and the community. The community can gain greater insight on challenging budgets, staff hiring, school board issues and frequently asked questions (directions to a game, sports' schedules, etc.).

While a well designed web site has many benefits, also remember that a poorly designed web site can have a negative effect, often giving the community a sense of disorganization, lack of communication and poor leadership.

The task of evaluating your web site can be daunting and unfamiliar; therefore, I have included a list of questions to begin the process.

While reviewing your school's web site, ask the following questions:

- Is your web site straightforward and easy to navigate?

- Does it accurately represent your school or district to the community?
- Is the information relevant and current?
- Does it provide accurate and timely information for your audience (parents, teachers, students, etc.)?
- Does the community turn to your web site first for school closing information, budget details, schedule changes, and other important information?
- Are homework assignments available online for parents and students to access?
- Do you have a private section, commonly called an Intranet, for internal communication and distribution of information to teachers, administrators and custodial staff?
- Is it easy for you, your staff and associated departments to update when necessary?
- Does your web site accurately represent your school or district within the community?

Answering these questions is an important first step in the evaluating process. Is your school's web site living up to its potential?

I realize how busy your schedule may be, but, if you find that your web site is not maximizing its possibilities, I suggest that you attend to the redesign and/or reconstruction of your web site this summer. The benefits far outweigh the investment!

Enjoy your summer!



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