IDDE 611 Assignment 1-Website Evaluation

Taylor Creek Elementary School Website Evaluation

Site Title: Taylor Creek Elementary School

Site URL: https://www.lisdtx.org/domain/449

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Website Creation Program: Blackboard Web Community Manager

Goals and Learning Objectives of Evaluation Project

The learning objective for this evaluation report is to assess how this website performs against my assignment criteria and understand the evaluation process. The overall goal for this evaluation is to provide the school with an examination of the website's clarity of information and usefulness to its audience. In addition, this evaluation is meant to provide the school with information on how easy it is to interface, read, and provide context on the value of the information on the site.
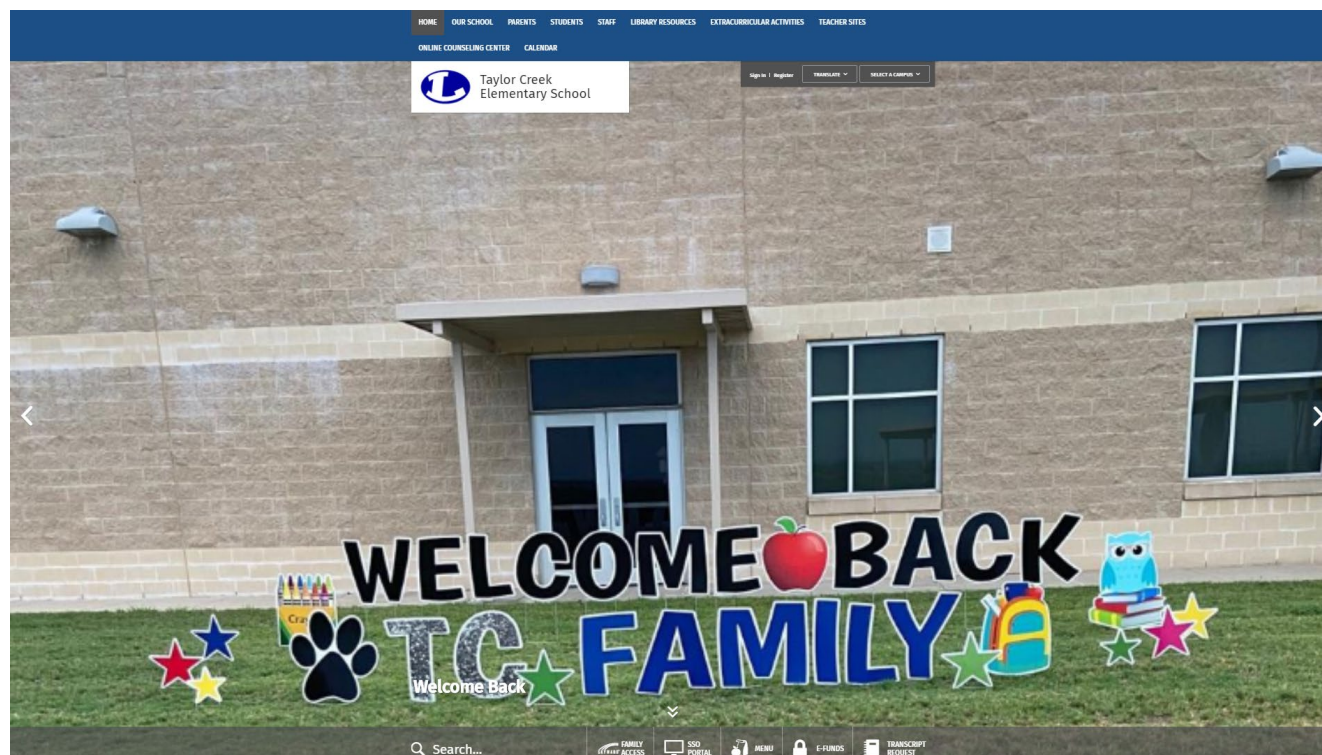
Background Information and Description of Website

Purpose of Site:

    The purpose of this school website is to serve as a technology based online communication platform for the parents, guardians, students, teachers, and faculty of Taylor Creek Elementary School. This platform ensures effective communication among its audience and provides a common picture of the overall vision of the school. Through this website the parents and guardians, along with the students gain a deeper understanding of what is happening in the school every day. The school leverages this website to ensure its audience has the most updated and current information. The website provides an easy to locate meeting place to share information, upcoming events, and any issues that may arise within the school.

Target Audience(s) for the Site:

The target audience for this website include

- parents and guardians of the students who attend the school.
- teachers that deliver lessons and instructions for the school.
- students who attend the synchronous, asynchronous, and blended learning environments in the school.
- any member of the faculty and administration that provide support to the school.

Description of Content on the Site:

A review of the website provides the following content present:

- homepage search engine
- general information about the school to include demographics on student to teacher ratio; and technology offered for students
- information for parents'
- students' resources
- information on staff and staff resources
- school library resources
- teachers' sites
- extracurricular activities and opportunities for the school
- school calendar

Up in the left corner of the website sits the district logo letter "L" and is depicted in the school colors. The website uses a singular rotating background of pictures in the school. The pictures are always rotating on a timer and include current and past events of the many things ranging from school pride, activities, students in action, teachers and faculty in action, and even the school mascot poodle named "Tayt".

This logo as described above serves as a commonality across the entire district for every school website. This helps to provide unity across the district in the website design.

Lampasas Independent School District Logo

Unique Features to the Site:

This website contains several unique features to its design. The first is a link to the Single sign-on (SSO) authentication portal. This portal helps create a singular set of credentials for login allowing easy and secure access for faculty and staff program use. With this technology it allows the staff and faculty to not have to remember multiple authentications across the website. This ease of access reduces strain on the schools Information Technology (IT) department. It also ensures proper security for both the school programs and its staff and faculty.

Another unique feature is the skyward family access link. This link uses login authentication for the parents or guardians to view students' grades, classes, schedules, and reports. This unique feature provides clarity of information and reduces time cost to teachers and staff. It also helps bridge the communication gap for the status of its students.

The website also has a unique link to e-funds for schools. This link allows parents or guardians the ability to manage their child's lunch fund account. In addition, this link allows users to provide donations to less fortunate kids for nutritional needs.

The school currently has another unique feature on its website due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The website has a page on protection measures and need to know health information about the current pandemic. This page provides all the current information as put out by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). On the left of this includes a "important" series of links that provide instructions on the asynchronous at-home learning environment, to include special pick-up and drop off procedures.

Methods of Evaluation

Evaluation Method Overview:

I was interested in performing this assignment on this website to provide real live feedback to its owner. My selection of this website allows honest feedback with the recommendations and the hope that it will help institute positive change for the school. To provide the best possible report and recommendation, I used two other individuals for the evaluation. The other individuals used the exact same process and tools to provide the most accurate and honest feedback to the owner of the website. This evaluation report encompasses all three reports into the following information:

Evaluation Instruments Utilized:

There are several website evaluations tools out there but for this report, the two tools utilized within this website evaluation report are listed below.

Website Motivational Analysis Checklist (WebMAC) Professional© (v.2.0)

Content Validity Scale© (Arnone & Small, 1999)

The two tools used in this evaluation provide a unique approach to helping provide the feedback on the overall appeal and value of content within the website. The developers of evaluation tools are Dr. Ruth V. Small who is the Professor of Information Studies at Syracuse University and the founding director of the Center for Digital Literacy (CDL). Her research focuses on the motivational aspects of information design and use. The second is Dr. Marilyn P. Arnone. Who is a research professor of practice of information studies at Syracuse University in the School Media Program and serves as co-director for the Center for Digital Literacy (CDL).

The Website Motivational Analysis Checklist (WebMAC) Professional© is a 32 numerical rated questionnaire ranging in options from N/A=Not Applicable, 0=strongly disagree, 1=somewhat disagree, 2=somewhat agree, and 3=strongly agree. In addition, the checklist has some administrative data to provide context about the evaluator, and two short answer questions for strengths and weaknesses of the website. This checklist was designed for students for projects just like this evaluation. The WebMAC questionnaire helps the evaluator to guide an in-depth review of everything from overall appearance to credibility of the website.

The Content Validity Scale© is a 10 numerically rated questionnaire ranging in options from 1=strongly disagree, 2, 3, 4, to 5=strongly agree. The ten questions focus on content, principles, grammar, and bias as it relates to the website.

Important to understand when using these two methods of evaluation is the motivational quality within the website. According to (Arnone, Small, 2014) "motivation explains why people choose certain activities over others. One of the most widely researched and applied motivational theories, Expectancy-Value (E-V) Theory specifies that a person's motivation depends on his or her perceived value of expectation for success at a given task". These evaluation tools were formed using the expectancy-value theory. According to (Arnone and Small, 2014) "these WebMAC instruments, based on E-V Theory, emphasized motivational quality while including functionality, information design, and content validity issues framed in terms of their effect on motivation". The WebMAC questionnaire is unique according to (Arnone and Small, 2014) because of the following reasons:

- they are theoretically based
- user centered
- use an inquiry approach
- are designed for use by children and adults
- provide both text-based and graphical data representation
- are useful to website consumers and designers
- offer mechanisms for accessing and improving websites from multiple perspectives

Information on Evaluators

A total of three evaluators was used in this evaluation. The use of a variety of evaluators was used to provide unbiased data collection and reporting. The ability to take an unbiased approach allows multiple perspectives and unrevealed awareness.

The first evaluator holds an undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice and Social Ethics. He is currently a senior leader in the United States Army with over 26 years of experience and is currently studying in a Master of Science program for Instructional Design, Development, and Evaluation at Syracuse University.

The second evaluator holds an undergraduate degree from Iowa State University in Civil Engineering. He holds a Master of Education in Adult Education from the University of Georgia. In addition, he is currently studying in a Doctoral Program for the

same field.

The third evaluator is a security analyst financial professional who has been studying research and valuation reports for over 4 years. He holds an undergraduate degree from Drexel University and is currently working for the Department of Homeland Security.

Analyzation and Results of Data Comparison

The analyzation and data comparison were a two-part process: In the following tables and diagrams those results will be revealed.

Content Validity Scale©

Content Validity Scale© Data Comparison

The first process used the Content Validity Scale© applying the combined averages from all three evaluators. The following chart will depict both the questions asked within the Content Validity Scale©, and the averaged combined score for each question. This provided an average to narrow down the areas in which the site is strong, and those areas the site needs improvement. This method of evaluation as you can see from the questions have a more subjective approach to how the website is evaluated.

Content Validitiy Scale° Results	
Question	Combined Score
1. The source of information for this Web site is credible.	4.00
2. There is a way to contact the author of this website if necessary	3.33
3. The factual information or content of the Web site seems accurate	3.66
4. If the Web site presents concepts or principles in its domain (e.g. science, art), they are appropriately presented without confusing or missing information.	4.33
5. There are no typographical or spelling errors that could potentially cause the information at this Web site to be misunderstood.	4.33
6. The content is appropriate for the intended audience.	4.33
7. The links from this site appear to be credible.	3.33
8. This Web site appears to be free of bias.	4.66
9. The information at this Web site is current enough for the type of information it includes.	4.33
10. The links for this Web site appear currrent and unbiased.	3.33

5=Strongly Agree
4
3
2
1=Strongly Disagree

Content Validity Scale© Results

From the table above the following results can be concluded. The Content Validity Scale© averages show stronger areas in the bias and principles questions of the evaluation, and weaker in the accuracy of content and links within the website. Most of the areas within this method of evaluation sit above average. Overall using this evaluation method, the scores showed only some improvement needed.

An area of concern for the evaluation team with this website is within some of the links on the page. The link to the COVID-19 important information has some issues. When following the link to this section it led to a page that was inactive or protected by the site administrator. This causes confusion as the site seems to want the information to be available to the user. Given the current pandemic the evaluation team concluded that the intent of the link was to inform the user of vital information. This was not possible due to either a broken link or site administrator error or protection rights accessibility.

Another area of concern for the evaluation team using this method, was in the ability or way to contact the author of this site. The contact information for Taylor Creek Elementary is present at the bottom of the page however, it seems most of the ways to connect to page take you back to the district webpage. This can be confusing as there is not a clear way to connect with the author responsible for the website. In addition, there are many other links embedded on the website that take you back to the district website, which causes confusion on how credible the links within the site are.

Finally using this evaluation method, the team found some outdated information within the student section. The student handbook link path leads you to the 2016-2017 school year. The team was confused as to whether the book link is not up to date, or if it was intended for this school year's attendance. In the parent resources link to student handbook section, the student handbook is current and up to date. This is again a district handbook that covers all elementary schools and is not specific to Taylor Creek Elementary. This led to the reduction in the total combined number for the information on the website, being accurate and factual.

Website Motivational Analysis Checklist (WebMAC) Professional©

WebMAC Data Comparison

The Website Motivational Analysis Checklist (WebMAC) Professional© uses four sections to help in its evaluation process. The "S" column helps in determining how stimulating the user thinks the website is, the "M" column reflects how meaningful the website is to the user, the "O" column reflects how organized the user thinks the website is, and the "E" column reflects how easy-to-use this website is for the user.

The first step shows obtaining scores for each question within the 32-question evaluation that are depicted into columns to give you an overall score for each column. These four columns totals provide an easy to follow visual representation on if the website needs much improvement, needs some improvement, or is highly motivating for the user.

Stimulating	Meaningful	Organized	Easy-to-Use

QUESTION#=AVERAGE

Stimulating	Meaningful	Organized	Easy-to-Use
1. =1	2. = 3	3. =1	4. =2
5. =1	6. =2	7. =1	8. =0
9. =1	10. =2	11. =2	12. =2
13. =1	14. =2	15. =2	16. =1
17. =0	18. =2	19. =1	20. =0
21. =1	22. =3	23. =3	24. =1
25. =1	26. =0	27. =3	28. =2
29. =2	30. =0	31. =1	32. =3
TOTAL S =8	TOTAL M=14	TOTAL O= 14	TOTAL E=11

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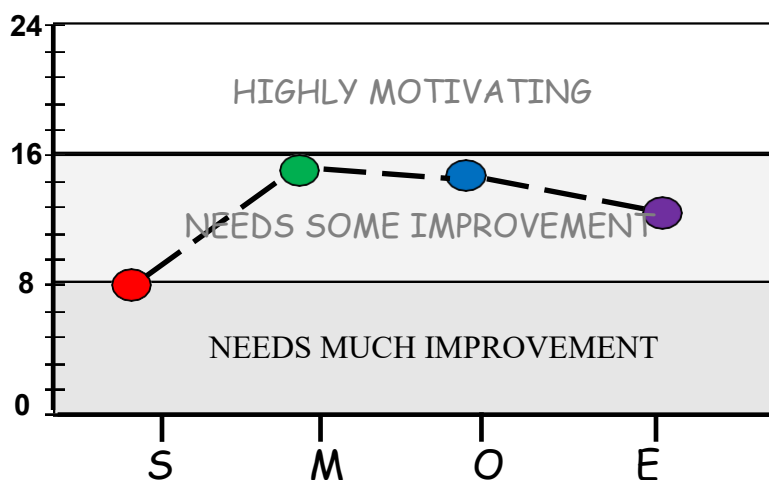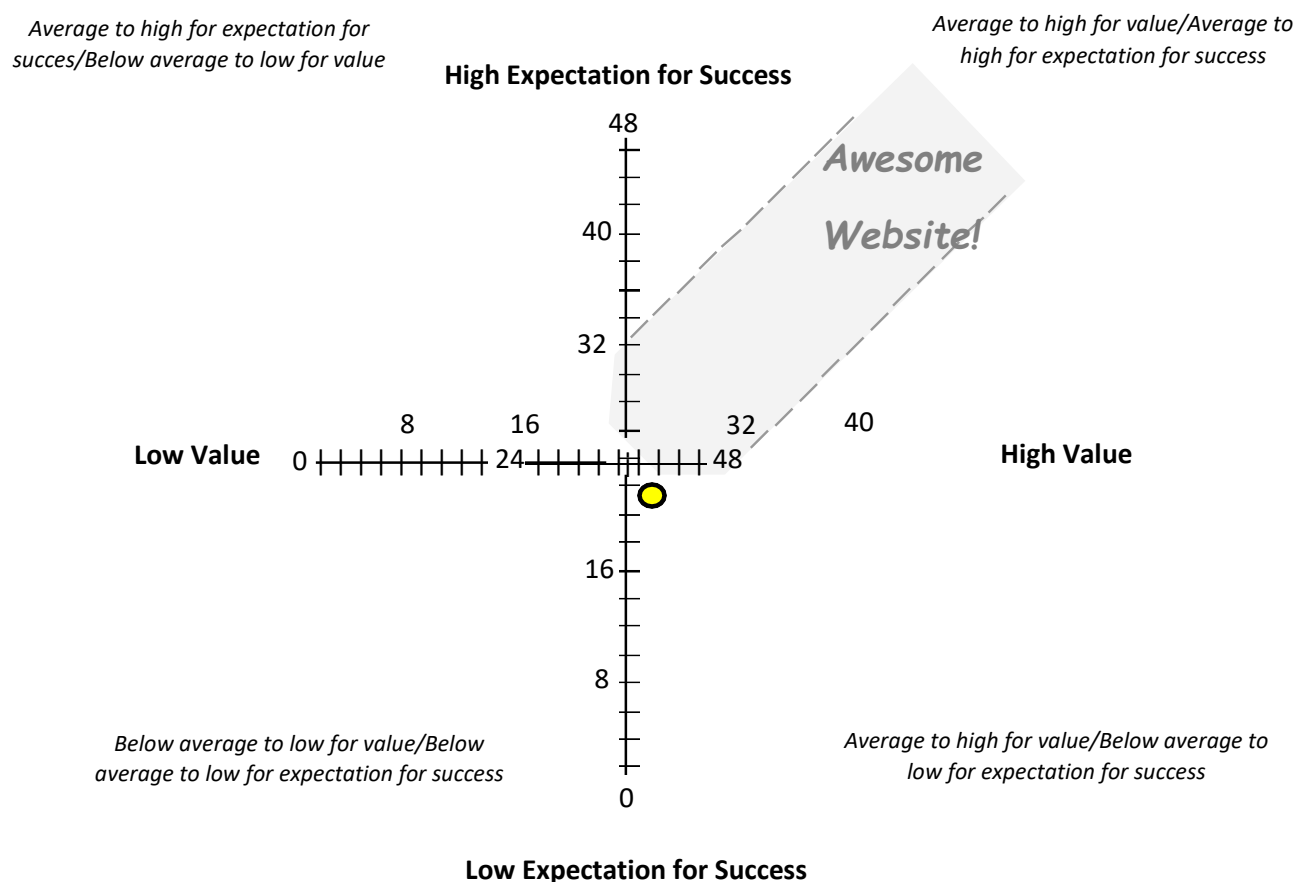
The second step in the evaluation is taking the column totals in each column and performing an equation. This equation determines the value dimension (V) score by adding the "S" stimulating and the "M" motivating columns together. Overall, this score will help determine how stimulating and meaningful the website is. The other equation determines the summary motivation (XS) score by adding the "O" organized and the "E" easy to use columns. Overall, this reflects how organized and easy-to-use the website is. The obtained values are then graphed on the below quadrant chart to provide you with the expected future outcome of the website. The below graph depicts this evaluation method revealing a "high value" for the website with "low expectation" for success.

$$S + M = 22\_\_(V) \qquad O + E = 25\_\_(XS)$$

Average to high for expectation for succes/Below average to low for value

Average to high for value/Average to high for expectation for success

High Expectation for Success

48

40

32

8   16   32   40

Low Value   0 ++++++++ 24 +++ ++ ++ 48   **High Value**

16

8

Below average to low for value/Below average to low for expectation for success

Average to high for value/Below average to low for expectation for success

0

Awesome Website!

Low Expectation for Success

<u>WebMAC Results</u>

The Website Motivational Analysis Checklist (WebMAC) Professional© evaluation although still subjective, allowed the team to take a bit more detailed approach than the Content Validity Scale©. The team was able to familiarize itself with the deeper content, use, and overall appeal of the website. This section will describe the evaluation team findings and results.

The evaluation team results yielded the area of stimulation as the biggest column for improvement. The initial homepage provides pictures that are current and up to date and this helps the website. The use of personal pictures with the teachers, staff, and students makes the site seem very personal. It gives a family-oriented appeal to the website. The team noted that the lack of audio and formatting was a concern. The menu options at the top of the page do not allow even flow with the menu items at the bottom of the page, making it difficult to follow the text, layout, and format of the website. The lack of audio within the page hurts the website by missing out on the ability to stimulate curiosity and hinders the overall appeal to the website. The lack of overall format does not make it fun for the user to explore the content within the website. It can be noted however that most of the teacher's individual pages within the website are very interactive and fun for the user. Some individual teachers' pages within the teacher's sites tabs are excellent and provide vast depth fun and interaction.

The meaningfulness column overall produced some positive content and left some room for improvement. The top menu feature is easy to use and provides lots of great content about the school. There is an enormous amount of relevant information within this menu that is well structured and easy to follow. This allows the user to know what content is located within the website quickly and easily. The evaluation team did not find a lot of redundant information within the website. An area of concern however was found in the user's ability to contribute ideas to the website. There is no area for the users to input ideas or receive feedback on the website. The ability to communicate with the manager of the website could not be found. If this option exists within the website the average user will have a hard time finding it.

The organization of the website also produced some positive results along with some areas that need improvement. The evaluation method revealed the overall text and readability of the website to be positive. The lack of grammatical errors within the website add to the credibility of the content. The overall content is one of the best features as it provides a wealth of information to its intended users. An area of concern is the ability to find the purpose of the website. There is purpose provided under our school link, but it does take some bit of navigation to get there. The average user might not navigate properly and miss what the purpose of the site is. This in conjunction with the ability to easily find yourself accidently on the district site as discussed prior, can make the user easily miss the whole purpose for the visit to the website.

Results in the easy-to-use column were in the median for this evaluation method. The site is not having an issue with its connectivity or speed. The content is available in a timely manner and the user does not have to wait for content to load. Even the teacher's sites that have mass amounts of interaction perform well. Just like with the Content Validity Scale© the results yielded issues with certain links. Although there is a search function to assist with finding things, the evaluation team determined it would be difficult to get any help with the website. Many of the searches again take you to a district site that does not have information pertaining specifically to Taylor Creek Elementary. This could have potential time-management cost by making the user frustrated with the site and increase unnecessary communication between the staff and its intended audience.

Recommendations for Improvement

This website as discussed before provides an extreme amount of valuable content to its intended audience. The manager has done a good job to ensure valuable content is well organized and structured within the website. Many of the menu items such as parents' resources, students' resources, and the COVID-19 resources are extremely valuable and have easy interaction. The manager has done a good job in including relevant information on the asynchronous environment and how to navigate it for success. The evaluation team concluded that the appeal and formatting need the biggest improvement. The school's pictures as the website background should be maintained, but they should also be reduced and not be the sole focal point of the homepage. The recommendation is to restructure the homepage so that it includes easier flow for navigation with the bottom page menu items. An added side menu along with the pictures can provide even flow, texture, and appeal. The website manager needs to ensure it meets the technical criteria for accessibility for people with disabilities. The evaluation team recommends the addition of an audio component to the website, not only to aide in the accessibility, but it can inject a bit of emotional human connection with its intended audience. In addition, the links on the page should be verified and nested to ensure they meet the intended purpose. The website should also include a comments section to allow valuable feedback to the school. This comments section can serve as a place for positive and negative comments, along with the ability to serve as a helpdesk to work through any issues within the website. All links should be credible and reliable to ensure the user does not follow broken paths or misleading information. Any unnecessary or redundant links should be removed. Finally, the school's mission statement and purpose should be placed up front on the homepage as it can prove to be valuable by providing clarity for why the website exists.

Reflection

In today's society the value of website evaluation cannot be understated. We live in an age where the focal point of our daily lives relies on webpages. We use webpages for almost everything we do. The centric reason for webpages involves an easy to access place for people on the internet to gain information on various topics. Since it is a huge source of information for our society, it is only fitting that we have a mechanism to ensure the information received is credible, current, and valuable. Anyone in the world can set up a website. With such a broad range of people having the ability to set up webpages, the credibility of the website comes into question. Without an evaluation mechanism much of the information we receive can potentially be misleading and cause confusion amongst our society. The websites we gain our information from must be trustworthy and not lead the user to false information.

Although the methods used in this report help with the evaluation process, they are very subjective. In the future we should continue to leverage technology to develop a less subjective means to website evaluation. I know that there is continuing development of tools to assist with this website evaluation process. Fact checking should be part of website criteria to stay useable. A thought of mine although difficult, might be to require designated sites for mandatory periodic fact checks to stay valid. Whatever methods or tools we continue to develop should include a huge emphasis on ensuring we take as much subjectivity out of the evaluation as possible. This will help validate the credibility of the websites we use. This project has allowed me to understand the importance of website evaluation. Until this project, I never realized the importance of ensuring the information we get through websites is validated. The age old saying of just because you read it on the internet does not make it true, could not be more relevant in my findings on the importance of the website evaluation and its process.

References and Resources

Content Validity Scale© (Arnone & Small, 1999) [Class handout]. Department of Education, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.

Small, R. V., & Arnone, M. P. (2014, January). Webcheck. The Website Eval. Retrieved September 11, 2020, from https://ischool.syr.edu/articles/news/view/arnone-and-small-launch-webcheck-evaluation-tool/

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