

Leah Kurtz - Project Report

Product URL: <http://appspsychologysummerquest.weebly.com>

Analysis

Learner and Context Analysis

This project was created for AP Psychology students at Kell High School, one of the high schools in northern Cobb County, one of the largest school districts in the state of Georgia. The student population of Kell High School is more diverse than other high schools in the northern Cobb County area. Kell High School is approximately 67% Caucasian, 4% Native American, 8% Hispanic, 18% Black, and 3% Asian. There are approximately 1,800 students; however, enrollment has been dropping in recent years. The area tends to be on the middle class portion of the socioeconomic spectrum. ESOL courses are almost non-existent with most ESOL services being provided by regular education teachers. Students in AP Psychology are primarily eleventh and twelfth graders and are aged between sixteen and nineteen years old. Very few AP Psychology students are ELLs; however, there are a variety of reading levels and technical capabilities.

This project was created to be done over the summer prior to beginning AP Psychology and will take the place of traditional summer assignments. For the 2013-2014 school year, there are three AP Psychology classes with approximately twenty-eight students in each class. At this time, I am not aware of any students with needs for adaptive or assistive technology. Additionally, because it is a summer assignment in an AP course, students are responsible for ensuring their own access to computers with an internet connection or notifying me of this need. The assignment is due several days into the school year so that I may work with students who were not able to access technology on their own.

On the whole, I am comfortable with the technology we are utilizing in this WebQuest. I am seven years into teaching, and I tend to find websites fairly intuitive. The only thing that I was not really comfortable with was the required inclusion of an audio/video clip. However, that has more to do with my discomfort with my own voice than discomfort with the technology as a whole.

This project addresses AP Psychology standards for Units III (Biological Bases of Behavior), IV (Sensation and Perception), V (States of Consciousness), VI (Learning), VII (Cognition), VIII (Motivation and Emotion), and IX (Developmental Psychology). Technology standards being addressed are NETS-S 1 – Creativity and Innovation – in that students are applying existing knowledge to create new ideas, products, and

processes. The WebQuest calls for students to evaluate information and create new ideas. NETS-S 3 – Research and Information Fluency – is also addressed in that students are required throughout the WebQuest to locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information. NETS-S 5 – Digital Citizenship – is also addressed in that students will be ethically utilizing information found on the internet and this should lead to a more positive attitude towards online learning.

Task Analysis

The cognitive objectives I am addressing through this WebQuest are to give students an overview of the first semester of AP Psychology. Basically, when the students finish with the WebQuest, they will have information on the biological bases of behavior, sensation and perception, states of consciousness, learning, cognition, motivation and emotion, and developmental psychology. This will enable us to jump right in to more advanced content when they arrive at school on August 7th. In terms of dispositional objectives, they will have a more clear understanding of how to evaluate psychological information on the internet and will also work in small groups when they return to lead class discussions on a few of the questions addressed in the WebQuest.

Design

Given the AP Psychology standards and the student technology standards, the task on this WebQuest is authentic and meaningful. Students go to a variety of internet sources and are tasked with gleaning important information from these sources. In other sections, they are required to find and interpret cartoons about various psychological concepts. In still other sections, they are tasked with finding psychological articles and summarizing them, then drawing conclusions about those articles. Resources utilized for this project are included at the end of this Design section.

Given that the WebQuest is directed at AP Psychology students before I meet them, the content, process, and product are not heavily differentiated. The differentiation will appear when I place them in groups to lead discussions of some of the questions when they return to school in August. In terms of Universal Design, I believe that I incorporated many of these design elements. The first of these is 1D – “make the design appealing to all users.” I kept the design of my WebQuest simple and, I hope, pleasing to the eye. By utilizing gray and white, the design does not focus on wild or extreme colors. The second of these is 3A – “eliminate unnecessary complexity.” I believe I did this by keeping the process all on one page. I realize that it is a very long page; however, I felt that dividing the process among multiple pages would be unnecessarily confusing to users. Additionally, I kept the links to various subpages all together on the left hand side of the page, with the teacher content the only area that flies out. The third of these is 4A – “use different modes for redundant presentation of essential information.” I did this by incorporating a video with audio onto the introduction page to help students understand how to navigate through the WebQuest and understand what would be required of them when they returned to school.

This WebQuest was created to be an individual assignment over the summer. However, when students return to school in August, they will be working with small groups to facilitate a class discussion on at least two of the questions from the WebQuest. In terms of multimedia elements used in the WebQuest, I created a short introduction video welcoming students and giving them a brief overview of how to navigate the website.

To support students with visual disabilities, more audio could have been included or a device to read the screen to those students would be helpful. In terms of auditory disabilities, the WebQuest has good contrast and is easily readable such that the audio is not completely necessary in order to benefit from the site. In terms of physical disabilities, the site requires some clicking of the mouse. An adaptive keyboard would be helpful for this.

Resources:

<http://www.emc.maricopa.edu/faculty/farabee/BIOBK/BioBookNERV.html>

http://www.emedicinehealth.com/anatomy_of_the_endocrine_system/article_em.htm#Endocrine%20System%20Introduction

<http://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?PG=fmribrain>

<http://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?PG=pet>

<http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,22556281-661,00.html>

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/index.php>

http://www.sciencedaily.com/articles/mind_brain/psychology/

http://alleydog.com/topics/consciousness_sleep.php

http://nobelprize.org/educational_games/medicine/pavlov/readmore.html

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/operant-conditioning.html>

<http://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-learning-styles-quiz>

<http://www.davidmyers.org/Brix?pageID=65>

<http://psychology.about.com/od/motivation/a/drive-reduction-theory.htm>

<http://allpsych.com/psychology101/emotion.html>

<http://www.winnipeg.sun.com/news/canada/2009/05/10/9411096-sun.html>

Development

My timeline for setup of the actual WebQuest was approximately one week. However, before that, I spent time evaluating various AP Psychology projects for possible

conversion to a web-based project. Then I completed the Analysis for this project and troubleshooted the websites that I already had to make sure that they worked. Because I was already familiar with Weebly.com from our portfolio development, I chose Weebly for this WebQuest. One of the things that I found the most challenging was actually doing the video for inclusion on the Introduction page. I did not realize how many times it would be necessary to do that video – over and over – before it finally was long enough and clear enough for use.

Implementation

Although I wish it was possible, it is really too late to implement this for this summer's AP Psychology students. However, my plan is to continue testing the WebQuest with students this year, perhaps after the AP Psychology exam, so that it is ready to go for next year.

Given that implementation of this WebQuest will take place over the summer on the students' own time, I do not need very many resources. Given the difference in technology availability for students, I will push the due date for this to the end of the second week of school for next year to allow me to make time for students to use the computer labs before or after school for the first week.

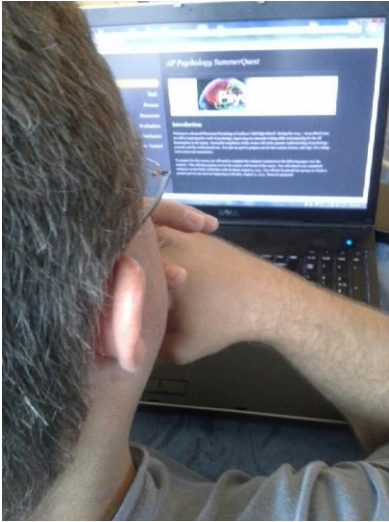
Evaluation

Student Learning –

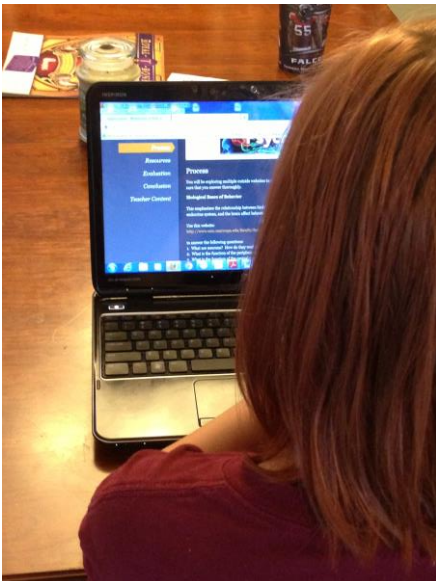
As I have not actually implemented this WebQuest yet, I can only evaluate what I will be doing to assess student learning. Students will be producing a document responding to all questions contained on the Process page. After students return to school in August, they will work with a small group to prepare a short discussion with classmates on some of the questions. Both of these activities will be assessed using the rubric contained on the Evaluation page of the WebQuest.

Product Design –

Given the evaluations of the WebQuest I have received thus far, I do believe that the site is well designed. I began evaluating the WebQuest by asking an adult friend of mine who used to teach web design to look at the project. He gave me some feedback about having the website links open into new pages as well as some issues with various parts of the text not lining up completely.



Once I had fixed the various bugs that my adult friend found in the WebQuest, I conducted usability tests with two students, one in middle school and one in high school. My hope is that by using students at different levels of school, any issues with readability and vocabulary of the site should be fixed. As each student went through various tasks on the website, I had them think aloud and what exactly they were doing. Before we looked at my WebQuest, we did a couple of practice tasks with opening various documents on the computer so that they got used to the think aloud process. Some questions I asked them to answer questions such as “what exactly is the purpose of this project?” and “what is the process?” and “how would you go about completing this process?” Then I asked them to explore the Evaluation page and see if they could explain to me how they would go about getting a good grade on this project. One thing I found particularly interesting in my testing with students was the confusion as to where they should be recording their answers. This led to my inclusion of the directions about either handwriting or typing their answers on their own paper. This seemed obvious to me, but it was unclear to them.



Reflection

Project Development – In terms of technical learning from this project, I definitely became more comfortable with using the tools available in Weebly. Things as simple as where to check buttons to make sure that websites opened in different windows were new to me. In terms of planning, what worked really well was taking a project that I already had mostly set up and converting it to a web-based project. This enabled me to be more efficient with my time. If I had not done this, I think my project would have taken at least an additional ten hours. For me, planning and developing something on paper first gives me something to hold on to and look at as I am building the website. Overall, my experience went pretty well, and I am looking forward to making another one!

Instructional Design – As a structure for student learning, I think that my AP Psychology students are going to love this next year. However, I am definitely going to have actual AP Psychology students test this site over the course of the school year. I liked the structure of the WebQuest, but I wish I had incorporated more multimedia elements. Truthfully, I just was not sure how to best incorporate more video without it seeming random and extraneous given the nature of this WebQuest. I am looking forward to making a different WebQuest that does incorporate more video – especially after seeing some of my classmates' projects!

Personal Growth – What I really learned about myself with this project is that I am much more technologically capable than I have let myself believe over the past couple of years. I think when we leave school and start teaching, it becomes very easy to let the technology skills slide. However, I do understand how to build a website now, and I enjoyed learning how to best position elements and work with them. What I am really excited about is helping some of the other teachers in my department build their own experiences for their students.

For Others – For other teachers and colleagues, I would suggest that they spend some time getting to know Weebly or another website builder first. Since we had spent so much time building our portfolios, this experience went pretty well. Being willing to spend some time playing with a new technology tool is so helpful. It reduces much of the stress and makes things go so much more smoothly.
