Goals and Learning Objectives of the Project

This project provides us with a real-life opportunity to help an educational website to improve itself, during which we can learn relative knowledges and technologies as well as practice the skills of evaluation, analysis, synthesis and collaboration.
Overview

Purpose of Site

The purpose of this site is to provide students, parents and teachers of West Genesee Central School District with useful information and resources related to public elementary schools, middle schools and high school inside the school district.

Target Audience(s) of Site

- Students attending schools of West Genesee Central School District and their parents.
- Faculties and school administrators who work at schools of this district.
- Superintendent and board trustees who work for this school district.
- Whoever interested in the schools of this district.

Content Included

- West Genesee High School
- Camillus Middle School
- West Genesee Middle School
- East Hill Elementary
- Onondaga Road Elementary
- Split Rock Elementary
- Stonehedge Elementary

Techniques Employed (ed. sound, interactivity, animation, color, etc.)

This website used a color scheme of blue, gold and white which are colors of the school district’s emblem, with visual technologies mainly such as graphics and photos.

Hyperlinks of relative social media, school tools as well as some most used links such as registration are offered at the homepage. The contact of Superintendent of Schools is listed below the content. A link of downloading free Adobe Reader is also offered below.

In addition, there is a monthly calendar of all the schools’ important activities on the right side of the homepage for each visitor to quick check what’s happening recently.
Methods

Evaluation Instruments

Two instruments provided by professor of IDDE Department were used to evaluate the West Genesee Central School District website:

**Website Motivational Analysis Checklist (WebMAC) Professional® (v. 2.0).** WebMAC Professional® (Small & Arnone, 2004) is designed for website assessment for use in classroom instruction or homework assignments. It is constructed by two parts. The first part contains 2 yes-or-no questions and 32 items which can be classified into four different columns: How Stimulating(S), How Meaningful(M), How Organized(O) and How Easy-to-use(E). The 32 items are assessed through a 4-point scale, in which 0 indicated *strongly disagree* and 3 indicated *strongly agree*. The second part contains 2 questions about the strength and shortage of the website for evaluator to give some personal reflections.

**Content Validity Scale®.** The Content Validity Scale® (Arnone & Small, 1999) was a 5-point scale formed of 10 items, in which 1 indicated *strongly disagree* and 5 indicated *strongly agree*. This instrument mainly focused on the validity of the website content, including the accuracy and completeness of information, credibility of resources and hyperlinks and unbiasedness of the content.

Evaluators

Three evaluators with various backgrounds participated in this assessment. Two of them are graduate students in the IDDE program at Syracuse University, with different backgrounds of Special Education and Educational Technologies respectively. The other evaluator is graduate student in Teaching & Curriculum program at Syracuse University with a background of Comparative Education.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

The data of Website Motivational Analysis Checklist (WebMAC) Professional® was analyzed by averaging all the evaluators’ scores and adding up the average scores to get the scores of How Stimulating(S), How Meaningful(M), How Organized(O) and How Easy-to-use(E). Then the S, M, O, E scores were transformed onto a visual representation for understanding the quality level of the website. After that, scores of S and M were added to get the value V while scores of O and E were added to get value XS which reflected a summary motivation score on the Value dimension and on the Expectation for Success dimension, respectively. Value V and XS were transformed onto a coordinate system to see if the intersection point would drop on
the part of Awesome Website.

The data of Content Validity Scale was analyzed by averaging all the evaluators’ scores of each item.

Results

WebMAC Professional® Total Scores

How Stimulating(S) = 18.01 (highly motivating)
How Meaningful(M) = 20.67 (highly motivating)
How Organized(O) = 20.67 (highly motivating)
How Easy-to-use(E) = 20.54 (highly motivating)

Graphic Display of WebMAC Professional® Attribute Scores:

WebMAC Professional® V and XS Scores:

Value Score (V) = 38.68 (average to high)
Expectancy for Success (XS) = 41.21 (average to high)
Graphic Display of *WebMAC Professional® V and XS Scores*:

![Graphic Display](image)

*Content Validity Test® Score:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The source of information for this Web site is credible.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There is a way to contact the author of this Web site, if necessary.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The factual information or content of the Web site seems accurate.</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>If the Web site presents concepts or principles in its domain (e.g. science, art), they are appropriately presented without confusing or missing information.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>There are no typographical or spelling errors that could potentially cause the information at this Web site to be misunderstood.</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The content is appropriate for the intended audience.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The links from this site appear to be credible.</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>This Web site appears to be free of bias.</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The information at this Web site is current enough for the type of information it includes.</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The links from this Web site appear current and unbiased.</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpretation of Results

WebMAC Professional®

The results of WebMac Professional® have shown that this website’s qualities of stimulating, meaningful, organized and easy-to-use are all at the highly motivating level, and the intersection point falls at the Awesome Website area, which means this website has high value and high expectation for success.

**How stimulating:** Two evaluators have reported that the website had a clear layout and catalogue which made visitor comfortable and motivated to browse it. It also has some eye-catching slides at the center of homepage which shows students life in the new fall semester and that really helps the visitor understand what this website is about. However, this quality got the lowest score among the four, though still at the highest level. The possible reason might be that this is the official website of a school district, so it is supposed to be formal and professional and thus less interesting and creative.

**How meaningful:** This quality got the highest score, because the website provides a large amount of useful information about the schools from the administrative level to everyday life. With the calendar on the right site of page parents and students can easily find out what’s going on at school. One evaluator has also mentioned that the site provides teachers’ sites of many subjects in which you can not only get teachers’ contact information but also the class schedule, the homework and even some videos. All these resources are valuable for its audience.

**How organized:** The website is well-organized by its clear catalogue and layout. The news is updated in time with calendar to show conferences and activities at school. Each school’s page has common types of content such as *About the school, Library, PTA, Teacher Sites*, which is useful for either getting a general idea of a school or searching for some specific information. Many active hyperlinks are also provided for further exploration. Nevertheless, evaluators have reported that there is too much information on the website to understand how the school works, which means the framework of the website is well-organized whereas the content on each page is not.

**How easy to use:** With the clearly classified catalogue every student can find the information of their own school quickly. And the search bar on the homepage also helps visitors search for resources quickly. Besides, several most used links are offered at the homepage. But visitors should filter information by themselves from the
result of search bar. Maybe some links for highly asked questions like “How to…” or a help function can better support the audience.

**Content Validity Test**

As presented at the table above, all items are above the average score, which means the content of the website is accurate, credible and unbiased. The lowest score appeared on the item 2 and the reason was that it is difficult to find contact of the website author which is the West Genesee Publication Office. The contact of Facebook, Twitter and Superintendent of Schools is provided on the homepage while the contact of the publication office is somehow hided in some pages. So if there were some problems about the website it should be not easy to contact the authors.

**Recommendations**

- Put the contact information of the West Genesee Publication Office on the homepage.
- Construct a help function, such as listing the most asked questions with responses.
- Try to better organize the content or information at each page, not just listing all the resources on it.
- Put more photos or even videos to better stimulate visitors. Many photos were found repeated at different subpages.
- Construct a part to better support student visitors, especially elementary students.
- Provide a list of useful sites, not putting useful links separated in subpages.
- Ask each school to complete the teacher sites. Many schools only have teacher sites of a little subjects.

**Reflection on the experience**

Nowadays we are living in a more and more international and digital world and many schools or educational institutions use websites to construct their identity online, to show themselves to the whole world and to better support their audience through it. Web evaluation exerts its significance through giving assessment to websites to improve them. A better organized website can not only attract more visitors but also better serve its fixed users.

On the other hand, this assignment made me learned how to evaluate a website through different technologies and from different aspects, so in the future I will go
through any other websites with various angles. The collaboration is also very important in this assignment because other evaluators may have different opinions which stimulated me to think fully and comprehensively as well as making the evaluation unbiased. Sometimes I think more evaluators are needed because you cannot guarantee other evaluators have checked the website thoroughly.

What’s more, compared to the educational websites of America, I have found that the Chinese educational websites are not so well-organized. Many websites are not updated in time. Sometimes they easily breakout with issues of browsers. One possible reason is that the leaders haven’t recognize the importance of the websites so they seldom ask evaluation for them. Nor did Chinese students use the school websites as frequent as American students. Let alone the English version of websites. I hope this could be improved in the future to help foreigners better understand the education of China.

Reference

[1] https://www.westgenesee.org/