The WebQuest as an Instructional Strategy

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The 21st Century is an age of Edutainment where students want to be entertained when obtaining knowledge. The more involved a student is in the teaching/learning process, the more knowledge he/she will obtain. Brain research, media, video games, technology and interactive computer programs provide information about how students are motivated to learn. The Dale Cone shows that the least effective way to learn is the lecture. According to Edgar Dale direct, purposeful experiences promote greater knowledge. The days of lecturing, taking notes, and rote assignment are over. New instructional methods that have emerged during the past few years include cooperative group work, hands-on activities, use of manipulatives, building/making models, videos, interactive computer software, and Internet research. These all have their place in the age of Edutainment.

The WEBQUEST is a new method of instruction that has emerged from Internet research. The blanket “just go look on the Internet” method of instruction has several weaknesses. Students who merely surf the Internet end up “chasing rabbits”. The student gets so much information that he/she loses sight of the research objective. Information given is so broad that students have trouble sifting through it to decide what is useful. Determining whether the Internet source contains true or reliable information is another problem. Students tend to believe that everything on the Internet is true. Also, students have limited time in the computer lab and may not have access to technology in the home to continue this research. Another weakness is accessing appropriate sites. Although schools have filters, students can still contact some inappropriate sites.

A WebQuest is a guided research activity that addresses the weaknesses of using the Internet for research. WebQuests are constructed as inquiry-oriented activities that encourage higher-order thinking skills. Other traditional research sources can be used in conjunction with the Internet. A WebQuest activity is considered an inquiry lesson by which students obtain knowledge through investigating facts as directed by the instructor. Advantages of using a WebQuest include: 1) students are directed to websites whose primary focus is information to be used in the WebQuest, 2) the objective of the research is in constant view, 3) the amount of information is limited, 4) information is true/reliable, and 5) a student may stop and start at will and always locate the information sites. The WebQuest “fits” into the Edutainment Age that is motivating to students. WebQuests can be on any subject/topic.

The objective of the WebQuest is the end product as determined by the instructor. An instructor can motivate student work by directing the inquiry, i.e. setting up a mystery scenario interests the students to discover answers. Using a journalistic approach, students assume the roles of investigator, reporter, editor, etc. The instructor uses a grading rubric to ascertain specific objectives have been met as students progress through the tasks.

This Tutorial Session will define a good WebQuest, show examples of WebQuest, and demonstrate how a simple WebQuest is designed. Examples from different disciplines will be shown to demonstrate the usefulness of a WebQuest in the classroom.