**PROJECT NARRATIVE:**

I get notices about dozens of contests a year and most of them land in the recycle bin. But two years ago, one competition intrigued me—a web design contest sponsored by a technology organization—and I encourage my students to apply for it. Three of my students entered, and each came away with impressive recognition for their efforts—two placed in the top 12, and one received an honorable mention. As an educator, I am constantly looking for ways to connect my teaching to context, and this experience made me appreciate the real-world application that contests provide. Kids want meaning—not subtle or hidden meaning, but in-your-face meaning.

After the positive results in the first go-around, I decided to sponsor students again. Eleven out of the twelve students who entered were finalists and our school took the top five out of six places in the competition. With such positive results, I want to keep pushing the envelope. These students are creating websites with basic equipment. With a high functioning digital camera and eight licenses of Adobe Flash, students will be able to continue increasing their website quality while using equipment that is an industry standard.

**PROJECT NEED:**

The latest tools aren’t required for high-end results, but they are helpful. While some entrants in other school districts used Adobe Creative Suite 5, my students worked with Notepad++, a free download, to create their website, and Photoshop Elements 9 to manipulate graphics. The contest results prove that students do not need the most expensive tools to produce high end results. Solid instruction, critical-thinking skills, and creativity are the ingredients of a job well done. A finalist commented, “The lack of equipment and software did make creating our sites and going through the class much more difficult. However, if we all accomplished such great things with so little, the things we could accomplish with newer equipment and software are unthinkable.”

Students begin taking the Introduction to Web Design class first followed by Advanced Web Design where students may enter the contest. If a student selected the Introduction to Web Design class as a sophomore, he or she could take the Advanced Web Design course twice. Since this class is new, I will have my first group of repeaters for Advanced Web Design this fall. These students have been taught CSS coding and Photoshop Elements. With 8 licenses of Adobe Flash, my super advanced students will be able to continue mastery of another industry program. Furthermore, they will be able to impress the judges with their skill level and continue to place well in the competition.

My technology department has been unable to provide my class with a high-end digital camera or Flash software due to its limited budget. I am supplied with a subscription to Lynda.com so learning how to use the new software and teaching it to my students should be relatively easy.

My board of education has asked me to write this grant because of the quality websites already created and the positive buzz from the participants. They want to see students continue to progress in both knowledge content and enthusiasm.

**PROJECT GOALS:**

The goals for creating this website are to build web pages that clearly communicate their story, three supporting pages, and bibliography and source information. In addition to the formal written content, students will apply technical HTML and CSS coding skills to build the layout for their pages, and use Photoshop Elements 9 to create and enhance photos for placement on their website. Upon completion of their website, students are required to share their work by uploading it to server and giving and oral presentation to the class. All National Educational Technology Standards were mastered through the completion of this course. I will outline the website requirements, demonstrate new codes on a regular basis, share web design tips, create Photoshop Elements 9 tutorials, help upload each site to our server, and model how-to execute a solid presentation; Students will build their sites melding content, codes, and graphics into one cohesive unit and present these websites to digital and class audiences.

By providing a high end digital camera and Flash software to students, they will be exposed to equipment found in the world of work while enhancing the curriculum.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES:**

To achieve these goals, participants will create, communicate, organize, and design a website matching the following set of criterion. These four areas take into account the NETS Benchmarks, too.

Creativity/Original Ideas (25 Points)

• The website is creative and conveys personality

• Ideas fit into the specific theme listed for the contest

• Site includes most/all introductory and advanced web codes

• The information and ideas are in-depth and thoughtful

Communication (20 Points)

• Your homepage answers the question, “What is this Place?”

• The content is organized and easy to read with no spelling/grammatical errors

• Each page has a distinct purpose

• The most useful and relevant content is easy to find

• The website uses a tone of voice that is appropriate to the audience

• Pages have clear headings and named with a .htm extension

Organization/Navigation (20 Points)

• A consistent, reliable navigation system exists

• Links and navigation provide flow to meet the website’s goals

• The website has an effective and consistent layout across all pages

• There is a logical order to page components

• Pages do not feel cluttered (Adequate “white space”)

• Links are clear and explicit (The user knows what clicking a link will do and can clearly differentiate hyperlinks from the content)

Visual Presentation/Design (35 Points)

• The website is consistent in the use of colors, shapes, patterns, layouts, and font styles

• The website has a distinct and unique visual theme

• The website has an effective and visually appealing color scheme

(uses color to express personality, differentiate, frame, and highlight content)

• Contrast is used effectively (uses contrast to differentiate elements, emphasize

dominant elements, and de-emphasize lesser elements)

• Imagery is used to add value to the message (concentrates imagery in the banner/logo, primary content, and primary navigation)

**PROJECT ACTIVITIES, TECHNOLOGY AND TIMELINE:**

The diverse characteristics and features of the class and students influence my instructional strategies and planning. Students who sign up for Advanced Web Design are typically interested in pursuing a career in a technology field. Although there is not a prerequisite grade requirement from the Introduction to Web Design to enter Advanced Web Design, it is highly encouraged that the student passed the initial class with at least a C+ or better. Due to the field of technology consistently on the rise, there are a fair amount of families who regularly work with a computer in their place of business, but show little to no aptitude for coding and/or graphic manipulation. The largest hurdle faced in teaching this course is the sheer amount of critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making that is involved in creating a quality website. Unfortunately, students are used to filling out bubble answer sheets and memorizing definitions. Advanced Web Design requires students to think outside of the bubble.

1) Setup Edublog accounts which include an avatar, custom banner, links, autobiography, and quote.

2) Learn what Photoshop Elements is and master the topics of Using Quick Fix and Photo Fix, Working in Guided Edit, Working in Full Edit and Adding Text, Working with Layers, Making Selections and Adding Special Effects, and Touching Up Photos. A reflective entry and two photo edits will be placed on a student’s Edublog per week. The digital camera will be used to take photographs for these exercises.

3) Master basic and advanced HTML/CSS coding techniques with weekly tutorials and biweekly quizzes. The website will be created using these programming languages.

4) Learn what Adobe Flash is and master the topics found in the Lynda.com housed tutorial Flash Professional Essential Training. This course starts with the basics, such as using the drawing tools to create simple animations, and progresses to automating animation with tweens and adding interactivity with ActionScript.

5) Combine 1-4 to create a contest-themed website which follows the contest guidelines.

**EQUIPMENT/MATERIALS:**

To create their websites, students would need:

Adobe Flash (8) – This software will allowed advanced web design students to embed flash videos and animations within their sites. Cost – $129.50 per copy = $1,036.00 AVL FLASH PRO CS6 LIC L3 Mfg#: 65173561AB03A00 Contract: REMC Adobe Agreement 2010-2012

Digital Camera (1) – This camera will help students capture their accomplishments and create videos and stills within their sites. Cost – $382.95 Canon PowerShot S95 10 MP Digital Camera with 3.8x Wide Angle Optical Image Stabilized Zoom and 3.0-Inch

LCD Case Logic Camera Case (1) – This case will protect the camera. Cost -- $6.43

**TIMELINE:**

August 2012: The theme for the web design contest will be announced. I will tweet, post on Facebook, and email students to give them a heads up on brainstorming.

September/October 2012: We will begin the new school year brainstorming and developing content, taking original pictures based on the theme, learning advanced coding and Adobe programs, and compiling this information to create a website that follows the contest guidelines. There will be frequent feedback given by both the teacher and peers. An edublog will be maintained for reflective learning.

November 2012: Students will learn how-to use an FTP and meet the upload deadline. Finalists will be announced.

December 2012: Students will present their web sites one at a time to the panel of distinguished judges in an auditorium setting. They will all receive certificates and the top six will receive monetary prizes. The trimester ends.

March 2013: I will present this project at the MACUL conference!

May 2013: I will present this project at to 300 middle school girls at my Intermediate School District to get them excited about technology careers.

**PLANS FOR SHARING:**

At our department/PLC meetings I have already shared past successes of the class and competition. Just last year when I received Adobe Photoshop Elements and trained my students with lessons on how-to use it, other programs like Yearbook and Journalism were enhanced. With a new camera and Adobe Flash licenses, I hope that my students will take the information learned and use it within other media classes, too.

I have been published in the MACUL journal and ISTE’s Leading and Learning and have been contacted by other educators about my projects; I see this as an opportunity to share learning with others and help them search for contests in their own communities.

This will be the third time I have presented at a MACUL Conference and the second that I will present at the Intermediate School District. The MACUL Conference is a great way to network and share with adults while the Symposium is comprised of 300 middle school girls. Since women are still vastly outnumbered in the field of computer science, it is my duty to share my enthusiasm for technology and share the fun lessons with them. Hopefully, this will motivate them to choose a career path in this area.

I plan on also sharing this project in my school’s newsletter, district’s newsletter, and the technology organization’s blog/newsletter. One grant can provide countless learning opportunities and overall enhance a school and/or workplace.

**EVALUATION:**

We have truly talented students within the district. By focusing on the student ownership aspect within each lesson, providing real world opportunities, and giving constant feedback, all students will excel in their learning. I cannot begin to try totaling the amount of unpaid hours I have spent helping students on this project. But what I do know is that it will never add up to the joy I receive by the enormous smiles, warm hugs, and you’ve-changed-my-life thank yous. Student A stated, “This was the most time consuming and meticulous project I have ever undergone and I know my mindset towards school has altered. I have never really been challenged with a class until I had -- for a teacher. She has taught me more than any other teacher has and everything she taught me can be applied to my life in the future.”

I plan on using the following evaluation techniques:

1) Website Quality. Not only will I be judging the quality of the websites, there are two rounds of judges that also evaluate each website and score it using a rubric. Because this contest is open to six counties, only the best of the best will get one of the twenty-four finalist spots.

2) Assessments. Students will be assessed in both assignments and classroom activities or projects. Examples may include Photoshop Elements/Flash tutorials or HTML/CSS coding.

3) Practical Skills. Students will be given very little homework in the class. It is not fair to expect every student to purchase all of the programs they have access to in class. However, students will be required to complete in-class tutorials/assignments. Students are assessed on their ability to use the programs they have learned in class. Students are also assessed on the aesthetics of their work. This is a judgment decision by the instructor and careful consideration is given based on abilities. A mini-rubric will be created for each exercise.

4) Edublog and Work Maturity. Students will create, maintain, and are expected to update a personal Edublog. One of the primary objectives of the technology department is to teach students excellent work habits. These skills are essential in our everyday lives and in the workforce.