

# Student-Produced Website Strikes the Heart of Lakeshore Lanes Owner

By Tasha Candela

Standing out in the crowd is essential in a job interview. Employers will be judging you based on the content of your response, the design of your application materials, and the color of your wardrobe. Just like an interview situation, establishing a web presence and standing out with quality content, design, and color is key to attracting business. In my advanced web design class, students were tasked to create a website for Lakeshore Lanes, a local bowling alley. Using basic design principles mastered in the introductory class while continuing to learn more HTML, CSS, and photo-editing techniques, each pair presented a finalized website to the owner by the end of the trimester. Students had roughly thirty-five hours to complete their websites. That equates to a mere 1.5 days. With a tough deadline, advanced web design gurus had to begin work immediately in order to accomplish this goal!

The National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) were my guiding principles in facilitating this project and I will briefly outline all six and share how my students mastered each one.

## Creativity and Innovation

Everyone who has ever taken a shower has had an idea. It's the person who gets out of the shower, dries off, and does something about it that makes a difference. This phrase by Nolan Bushnell is true for my students. On day one when I walked my juniors and seniors through the advanced web design syllabus and told them about the Lakeshore Lanes project, I could see sparks – each student began buzzing about their thoughts. As a teacher, it is wonderful to see everyone enthusiastic about an assignment. I knew that I had them hooked. I also knew that I would have a lot on my plate to ensure their success. The facilitation part proved to be easy. My students had ideas. Superior ideas. Creating a product for someone else and then being given the chance for it to be seen by the public is all that was needed.

## Communication and Collaboration

Much like in the real world, students were able to work with a partner. There were countless benefits for doing this. First,

students were able to collaborate and communicate at all times. As the cliché goes, two heads are better than one. Passion would ignite from idea conversations. At first, I suggested having one person in charge of the copy and the other person in charge of graphics. This worked well, but the more hours students invested into the project, the more I noticed the pair working simultaneously on all aspects of the site. You could sense frustration at times because of faulty concept ideas or absences. As ideal as it would be to not have kinks in a team, that is not the case. They learned how to work through problems. From late night phone calls and sleepovers to back-and-forth in-class idea-sharing conversations, students mastered the art of getting along and learning from each other. Moreover, the need to be

persuasive to convince a partner to use your idea was becoming more important than ever. It was enjoyable to watch from the sidelines as my students had tongue battles fit for a boxing ring. In the end, the sheer quality developed from two-person teams and the lessons in soft skills would make all players victorious.

## Research and Information Fluency

Choosing a business that students genuinely care

about is important. As part of our physical education program, students use Lakeshore Lanes to bowl. They have experienced it. They know the owner, Mr. Jim LaHood, the product, and the facility. These factors made building their website easier because they already established a personal connection to it. With budget issues, selecting a business that is close to your school is another essential tip. Lakeshore Lanes is a five-minute walk from our school. This key detail saved time and headaches when obtaining information for the website. After speaking with the owner, I scheduled a 2-hour field trip to the bowling alley as an informational session and photo opportunity for the students. Now that they had the framework for the website, each team realized that the biggest task of all would be piecing it together.

## Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

Throughout this project, students had to think critically, problem solve, and make decisions. In the beginning, I





distributed a rubric and gave them guidelines as to the content of each page. Using their Harry Potter-esque wands (pencils), students drafted a prototype of their website. Once completed, they began work on the computer. From the specifications gathered from Mr. LaHood as well as research from other bowling websites, each team had to decide on the look and feel. Mr. LaHood did not give a lot



technology in positive, meaningful ways.

### Technology Operations and Concepts

There were three major technology components taught and applied in this class: code, graphics, and the blog. We used notepad as our editor and hand coded all items. Using basic design principles

of information to the students; instead, he wanted the students to use their best judgment and come up with the material on their own. Marie said, "Sometimes working with customers is not always easy. With little information, my partner and I had to conceptualize everything. It was a problem at first, but we adapted and created a website that merged our personalities with his audience needs." Although this project is not a bubble sheet assessment, students learned much more than a traditional test could possibly measure.

### Digital Citizenship

It is imperative to model understanding of social, ethical, and legal issues and responsibilities related to digital culture. As an educator, one of the first steps that should be taken when introducing technology into the curriculum is sharing why it is important followed by the specific protocol regarding how to use it. Copyright laws, plagiarism, and Internet safety help students understand the necessity of knowing the proper use for technology. When assigning any project, I try to limit the use of downloading copy or pictures from the Internet. It seems like such an unoriginal way of capturing an idea and can lead to copyright issues. Instead, I had my students write all information and take all pictures on their own. Is this more work? Absolutely! The educational gains and personalized touch outweigh the old method of telling a student to Google that bowling photo. If a student felt it was necessary to include an unoriginal photo or an article about Lakeshore Lanes from a newsletter, then a citation page was created using Calvin College's Knight Cite. Because of real stories I have shared throughout the class, students seem to ask more questions about social, ethical, and legal issues. They want to know the answers and do the right thing. The web sets up a seemingly impossible amount of traps and the map for navigating these obstacles can be difficult to read at times. Through instruction and their continuous questions, we will use

mastered in the introductory class and continuing to learn more HTML and CSS, students were able to design a professional layout. From Lynda.com's videos on The Essentials of Using Adobe Photoshop Elements 9, students learned how-to use the full edit workspace, work with layers, make selections, add special effects, and touch up photos. These tutorials provided powerful graphic design lessons that students mimicked on their collection of bowling photos. The final resource was the edublog. During the first week of class, all students were required to maintain a blog. Posts ranged from finding model bowling alley business links to posting graphic edits with reflections. Since all student blogs were linked with each other, students were able to peek at another team's ideas and revise and increase the quality of their own site. Exposure to these technology tools in high school will certainly increase their chances for future employment.

One week prior to the seniors leaving high school, Mr. LaHood selected seniors Marie Scheppman and Katie Verner as the winners of this web design contest and their site will be live this summer. Since her freshman year, Katie was eager to become a nurse, but she will now pursue a degree in graphic design and web development. She says, "It is a great feeling knowing that I won something that relates to the career I am going into. It really shows that hard work and dedication does pay off." Marie has chosen to stay in a career field that can show off her artsy talents; she has decided to major in Video Productions and has already landed a summer internship with Epic Motion. Allowing authentic opportunities like this one is truly the hallmark of the teaching profession.

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