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Essential Websites for Educational Leaders in the 21st Century, by James Lerman

Jim Deputy

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ESSENTIAL WEBSITES FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY (CD-ROM INCLUDED)

JAMES LERMAN
SCARECOW EDUCATION, 2004
$34.95, 120 PAGES

Reviewed by Jim Deputy

Lerman's *Essential Websites for Educational Leaders in the 21ˢᵗ Century* attempts to give an insight to the technological advancements of educational resources and research. In the not so distant past, words like website, URL, World Wide Web, or Google, would have had no place in our educational vernacular. As educators, we cannot deny the impact of the Internet. The days of card catalogs are long gone, and the need for a website address has become as common as the phone number or home address. Lerman endeavors to give us a nice sampling of an enormous informational highway by spotlighting 280 websites that provide valuable resources to our educational community.

Anyone that has ever "surfed the web" knows the challenges of using search engines. The increasingly competitive market has created a strategic plan in luring consumers to purchase goods on the Internet. Lerman made it a part of his criteria in choosing resources that all sites were "free of charge." Although there were a fair share of solicitations for journals, newsletters, or membership privileges, the websites were user friendly and offered an arena to browse and discover an abundance of literature and sometimes interactive programs. Using five areas of criteria, Lerman evaluated the sites and looked for them to demonstrate: "ease of access, content of value, ease of navigation, credibility/reliability of content, and relevance for the reader" (p. x). Consulting a variety of venues, the author assembled the collection from professional magazines, conference presentations, recommendations, and award-winning websites by credible organizations.

In an attempt to provide a wide variety of interest, Lerman organized the book into 25 sections that were specifically geared toward meeting the needs of the given topic. Lerman summarizes the collection:

Whether you need policy research, data on school expenditures or student achievement, lesson plans in advanced placement physics, sources for grants, a free online collaborative workspace, or exercises for elementary students to practice their spelling, you will find current, relevant, and reliable information through the websites listed here. (p. viii)

In an effort to evaluate the content of Lerman's findings, this reviewer randomly selected one website from every chapter. Basing the overall impression of websites on three criteria, the first was on "curb appeal." There are thousands of websites that offer similar content, but lack the ability to be appealing to the eye. Websites are expected to be more and more inviting to the user to come and explore what they have to offer. Without the ability to solicit attention, the content can become as flat as the screen. The second criteria was identifying the predominant audience for the content. Specifically, is the content geared toward elementary or secondary education? The final area of assessing quality was the accessibility to content. Navigating through these webs can offer too much distraction in reaching the intended destination. Eye fatigue can quickly set in from reading page after page of like content. When this happens, the risk of missing the information becomes greater and the time-on-task starts decreasing.

Sorting through Lerman's websites, certain topics lent themselves to more creative designs. The websites on assessment, general reference, personal productivity, and selected strategies for teaching failed to inspire a desire to spend the time searching through them, while websites such as School Grants, Fact Monster and Teacher Net-Lessons A-Z created a desire to spend more time browsing through the pages. While looking at chapter 4 (Curriculum Resources), the interactive "creating music" site offered plenty to see and do. In looking at the resources with regard to target audience, two things were found. The majority of lesson plans, hands-on activities and overall practical, applicable items seemed to be geared for elementary. The general knowledge or information websites could apply to both elementary and secondary education. An overlapping of material on multiple sites was inevitable given that the websites objectives were to offer a variety of resources. A number of websites utilized the searches on keywords and titles to help identify specific topics. While helpful, linking from one source to another became laborious. On numerous occasions one could find the message of "file not found" or "currently not found" on pages where information was simply not available or had found a new address.

The last observation left this reviewer with the concern of a constantly changing Internet. While not in possession of the number of websites created and closed everyday, the number is most likely high. Lerman acknowledges this concern in the introduction by addressing that "sites may be here

today are gone tomorrow, with a new name or location, or they may have just disappeared into the ether. It can be quite frustrating" (p. xi). Lerman used good judgment in having a cd-rom included. The accessibility of locating the websites was practical given that the addresses did not have to be typed in. However, the practicality of creating a book that appears to be outdated upon publication is questionable. Regardless, this is a good resource for school personnel.

Jim Deputy is an assistant principal at Clearwater Central Catholic in Clearwater, FL.

THRIVING IN THE MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING

MARY DILG
TEACHERS COLLEGE PRESS, 2003
$23.95, 240 PAGES

Reviewed by Mary McCoy

Dilg explains how critical, yet difficult, it is for teachers to create thriving, successful classrooms made up of students who come from different groups and neighborhoods. In *Thriving in the Multicultural Classroom*, Dilg examines factors that complicate the coming together of students from multiple cultures. The author gives many wonderful examples of actual student conversations and writings taken from home and school. Dilg uses years of classroom experience along with educational research to give suggestions to classroom teachers working with different cultural backgrounds. This book is a must read for teachers seeking advice and assistance in understanding how to meet the needs of students in a multicultural classroom.

The author begins the book focusing on the students themselves. Dilg gives several different examples of actual students whose experiences of their journeys between home and school differ greatly. These different experiences and influences are brought to the classroom, which leads to the challenge for the teacher to understand and support these students' daily journeys. Dilg describes these journeys made each day: "For other students, leav-