

Integrated Media Literacy Project

Improving Your Diet (Intermediate Grades)

Project Description

Students will create a webpage and a blog, in this case using Weebly (www.weebly.com), to demonstrate and share information on the topic of food production and healthy diets. Students are asked to develop two different types of pages: the webpage as a “title page” or presentation tool to provide an overview of the topic, and a Weebly blog that uses an active voice and invites dialogue through blog posts and surveys. Through these tools, students will be able to demonstrate and share their knowledge of food and diets with other classmates, and also learn about producing and interacting with online content.

Before the Project

- Research and Learning: The science and health curriculum should be reviewed before working online, and teachers should decide on a specific focus for the project. For example, students could be broken into groups to each develop a possible healthy meal plan for diet improvement, or could take examples from a specific food group to research their means of production and distribution, and their vitamin, mineral and nutrient content.
- Technical and Media Setup:
 - Teachers should create a set of class accounts on Weebly and have students log in at <http://students.weebly.com>. Creating student accounts through a teacher account is useful as it removes links to social networking like Twitter and Facebook, and because in the case of generic naming or numbering (Student 1, Student 2, etc.), these accounts can be used in future years.
 - Teachers should familiarize themselves with Weebly prior to the lesson to ensure ease of use and answers to possible student questions. Possibilities and limitations of Weebly’s education accounts should also be reviewed. For example, using these accounts ensures security, but free student accounts limit users to 5 pages within their created websites.

First Online Session

- Teachers can start their session by reviewing the project outline and criteria. To encourage students to be thorough in their research on diet and food, we recommend being explicit about the number of references students will need to use for their projects, and outlining specific criteria for students to cover in their research.
- Teachers should demonstrate features of Weebly to encourage students in their project planning:

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- Have students individually, or in groups (depending on your project's parameters) create a personal desktop folder for image and text file storage, and sign in at <http://students.weebly.com> to begin creating their websites.
- Students can be shown how to begin their research by saving information and picture files to their personal desktop folders, and by adding components to the website through dragging and dropping the respective elements they want to include. They can rearrange the order or delete the elements at any time.
- Each student website is limited to 5 pages but they can add subpages by dragging each individual page bar a little to the right in the "Pages" tab.
- Please note that it is important to remind students the importance of having a visually appealing website and to encourage them to edit their pages with aesthetic considerations in mind after all their textual information is entered.
- Discuss the importance of responsible Internet use, and researching while citing references and respecting copyright regulations and laws.
 - Show students websites where copyright free images are readily available, such as Wikimedia Commons (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page), Creative Commons (<http://search.creativecommons.org/>), Flickr (www.flickr.com) (Search through Creative Commons to ensure they are licensed under CC), Pics4Learning (www.pics4learning.com), Picdrome (<http://www.picdrome.com/>), and the Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/index.html>)
 - Engage students in beginning to add references to their Weebly website. Images and information being used in the project should be referenced with their website addresses and titles.
- Students should then log into Weebly with their assigned username and password. Teachers can use the rest of class to provide students with research and website development time. Several sessions (or the use of homework time) will likely be required for the completion of the website.

Second Session

- Students should begin by logging into their Weebly account, and should choose an appropriate pseudonym for use with their blog.
- Students should then start to write blog posts to support their website's main contents, providing personal information as defined by the project parameters. For example, if students are creating websites with diet plans, they could write about their own current diets and how they could find ways to eat healthier and adapt their favorite foods or meals to become more representative of the Canada Food Guide's recommendations. Or, if students are exploring food production and distribution, they could write about what local foods are grown nearby, and discuss how many local foods their family consumes, or what local grocery stores prioritize buying from local farmers.

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- Writing a blog post includes:
 - Not revealing personal information that could identify students.
 - Writing a title that acts like a headline.
 - Writing from a personal perspective in an informal tone, about a topic that interests the writer.
 - Ensuring that students write with their intended audience in mind and using proper spelling and grammar. In this, the teacher can identify if fellow students are the sole intended audience (indicating very casual language and colloquialisms), or if teachers and parents are included in their audience as well (indicating a mix of casual and semi-formal approaches).
 - Making sure that students have their blog posts reviewed by peers for spelling, grammatical and style suggestions.
- Students can then publish their first blog post following this informal peer review.

Third Session

- Students should begin this session by logging into their Weebly account and opening the files in their personal folder for the project.
- Students should add any last media to their websites and blogs, including images, videos and hyperlinks, making sure to attribute creators and use copyright-free work wherever possible.
- Students can also create follow-up blog posts different from their introductory post, if desired by teachers. As an alternative, students can also provide comments to each other's posts, practicing commenting etiquette, providing insight, helpful critique, and writing in a respectful manner. Comments can be published after self-review.
- Student work and projects can be displayed for other students and parents to see and interact with, time permitting.
- To engage students in reflecting about their online learning, ask:
 - Why are blogs or websites useful tools to learn to create and manage information?
 - What other ways could blogging be applied to your schoolwork? How could you make use of the interactive comments feature for other topics of study?
 - What were some of the challenges that you faced in finding, creating, and sharing information? What will you do differently the next time you create a website or blog?

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