

ADOBE DREAMWEAVER: A TOOL FOR THE CLASSROOM

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## **Introduction**

It was in the past few years that the Newhouse School of Public Communication at Syracuse University decided to create a training program for the professors to have an opportunity to learn online components. The school realized that in order to be competitive with other institutes, they had to be knowledgeable of these digital technologies and see if there was any way to integrate them into their curriculum. One of the pieces of software taught was Adobe Dreamweaver, the industry-leader in web design software.

With the ease of online publishing and making content more accessible to a national audience, the ability to post information onto the World Wide Web is becoming more and more important in education. “With the right approach, all students’ education can be enhanced through meaningful use of technology” (Warschuaer, 2006, p. 147).

This paper presents an evaluation in the use of Adobe Dreamweaver in education for both educators and students. I will discuss some of the questions regarding the implementation of Dreamweaver, as well as some of the limitations and pitfalls that may arise during the process of adoption.

## **Statement of Problem**

When someone says HTML, which stands for HyperText Markup Language, people cringe with the thought of those letters. To them, it means learning a language with a bunch of different bracketed characters and code. In essence, it is exactly like learning any foreign language. Every language has its own unique sets of characters and ways of writing so it makes sense. It is also something no picks up overnight.

Do teachers and students need to become professional web developers in order to create their own webpage? According to Holzberg (1999), “teachers don’t have to be advanced techies to keep parents and students informed or to create a flexible portal for research and interactive projects” (p. 62). The goal for teachers and students is to have a basic understanding of what HTML is and how they can create a webpage using the tools which make it simple, easy and fun.

I believe the problem lies with the intimidation factor of learning code, finding the time to learn the software and does it make sense to spend the time and effort learning this material. This brings up the next step if school districts or higher education institutes decide to adopt this step in integrating technology into the classroom, rationalizing spending the money on licenses for the Adobe software when there are many free website software packages out there.

## **Purpose of the Study**

When it comes to implementation of digital technologies into the curriculum, the goal must be accessing and creating a plan for both educators and students to have appropriate training, access and use. Having clear objectives in the implementation of new technologies can help in improving digital and technology literacy and it can create meaningful learning experiences for both students and educators.

“Advances in digital technology and a rapidly evolving media landscape consistently change the ways we approach teaching and learning” (George-Palilonis & Filak, 2009, p.247). As we move toward a more hybrid approach to teaching and the need to improve technology literacy among educators and students, the adoption of technologies to improve instruction should be carefully evaluated. With basic web design knowledge and skills, one can begin to make their content and lessons more accessible not only to their students, but to a world-wide audience if they choose so.

The Adobe Dreamweaver software allows you to design, develop and launch your websites without having to write code. Finding a simple solution in eliminating some of the hurdles and fears of creating web pages is the first step in advancing towards integrating a webpage approach to education in the classroom.

The purpose of this study is to look at how both educators and students can effectively integrate webpage creation into their curriculum and make it useful for both sides. This will hopefully lead to the end of creating a meaningful learning experience for the students.

## **Research Questions**

I think the two questions at hand are how do educators use the software and how should students be using the software? Both of these questions are valid questions, because they reflect a pertinent decision being made not only in terms of education and development, but a financial commitment as well.

## **Significance of the Study**

Studies on this subject are not new or out of the ordinary. The concepts I have reflected upon above come back to the integration of technology into the curriculum and creating collaborative and more robust learning environments for the students.

Dreamweaver is significant in that it creates a simple, easy to learn approach to creating customized learning spaces for educators and students. Granted, you can purchase a Blogger account, use Blackboard or find other alternatives to building from the ground up. However, sometimes those options do not allow for enough flexibility in the creation and implementation of an idea.

Will knowing the basics enable educators to accomplish more complex systems of content delivery? Probably not, but it is a step in the right direction. I reflect back to my analogy to learning a new language. You cannot expect to learn German or Spanish overnight, travel to one of those countries and carry on a fluent conversation with the natives. Learning the basics of any language can help propel you in whatever direction or next step you would like to take it. It is the first step that gets people set in the right direction and by providing educators and students with this tool can only provide them with the next step in creating collaborative learning spaces.

### **How do educators use the software?**

From an educator's perspective, this opens the door to making lessons and content more accessible to students and faculty. There are thousands upon thousands of resources located on the Internet and it can be quite overwhelming for students to parse through them to get a better understanding at the topics covered in class.

“Convenience and ease of access have made the Web a favorable medium for storing personal artifacts. The more personal artifacts are stored in digital form, the easier they are to share” (Razavi & Iverson, 2006, p.459). By creating a class webpage, educators can begin to post materials relevant to weekly discussions, from class PowerPoint presentations to multimedia artifacts and links to other resources.

### **How do students use the software?**

From a student’s perspective, this not only teaches them the basics of creating a web page, it “provides students with two sets of skills: self-presentation and technology know-how” (Cramer, 2009, NP). It is not strictly about learning a software program. It is building upon other important skill sets that will make students more technologically literate.

Even when I was in middle school, every nine weeks I had to contribute an artifact from each course into my portfolio. At the end of the year, I would have pieces of work to reflect upon and show my progress throughout that year and previous years. This taught me many things about myself and taught me how to be organizational skills.

“The portfolio method has been migrating to the online environment for the past several years due to the rise in ICT [information and communication technology] in education” (Ritzhaupt & Singh, 2008, p.48). What we must remember is, even though the delivery method changes, we still maintain some forms of traditional communication theories. We are still collecting artifacts to represent that student and reflecting upon those artifacts even though they have been converted into digital form. What changes are the types of artifacts we can now include, how we include them and a more collaborative environment from the reflection and visibility stand point.

All of these factors can only benefit the student more in the long run, but it begins with teaching them the technology and the best means possible to achieve the end goal.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

When thinking about limitations and delimitations, cost to purchase the software was the first thing that came to mind, along with some that I read during my research.

Hill (2004) stated the following:

Although the features of Dreamweaver and Flash make them attractive choices for development of Web materials, the array of tools and operations within each of these programs can be daunting to a new user. Technology teachers, with schedules encumbered by numerous other pressing issues, might have difficulty finding time to master the latest versions of these software packages. Finding time to develop instructional activities for use with students might also be challenging. (p. 8)

### **Array of Tools and Operations**

Hill brings up a lot of great points when it comes to considering software that may seem overwhelming to the average user. However, the software provides a help function to search online resources, as well as the Adobe website offers simple video tutorials that can get you up and running with the basics within an hour. Educators and students would not be expected to code a website from scratch, nor produce award-winning designs. Rather they would have the opportunity to become more technology literate through the video tutorials and applying what they learned into a classroom setting.

### **Finding the Time**

With lecture preparation, grading, other administrative duties and our personal lives, when do you expect to find time to learn these new technologies? With the appropriate planning

and even the development of an instructional technology task force, workshops could be formed to allow for teachers the opportunity to be taught how to use the software without trying to struggle outside of school. Also, a school is made up of numerous teachers and administrators where you can collaborate on how others are using the technology and receive additional training if you are having any problems.

### **Finding Time to Develop Instructional Activities**

The first step in creating instructional activities is understanding the basics. You may not have the time or knowledge to build elaborate multimedia presentations. However, there may be materials and artifacts already prepared and available online, that if you know how to create a simple link, you can provide access and direction for students in your classroom.

Educators already spend time preparing for class and another task on top of that could provide more time and patience. As educators, there is an expectation that you are providing students with the highest quality education you can provide to them. Spending the time to learn this technology will pay off in the long run for the students and allow you to achieve a personal level of accomplishment upon completion.

### **Funding**

Some schools or universities may not have the appropriate funding necessary to purchase the license for the Adobe Dreamweaver software, which may lead to the purchasing one technology because you can save some money. Making this type of decision can lead to purchasing software that could become obsolete sooner or not accomplish the objectives had in mind. Adobe Dreamweaver is the premier web development software in the industry, so you

know you are purchasing a product that is among the best out there. Careful planning and investigation is crucial. If done correctly, selecting the best software available can assure that the school or university will be used effectively and for a long period of time.

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