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Final Project Planning Document (Option 1)

Answer 1: For my instructional unit writing assignment I will require my students to develop a website based on one of three topics. Those topics are entertainment media (a video game, movie, or book), a hobby or skill (skateboarding, mountain biking, ballet, skiing), or a historical event (first man on the moon, development of the Internet, history of the cellphone). The project will involve several types of written content throughout the four-week course.

The assignments will vary during the project, with each student having the opportunity to work individually and collaboratively. Students will be required to research a topic and write an informative article on some facet of the class's chosen topic (as mentioned above). They will have a chance to write catchy and informative headlines for their articles. They will also write summary Tweets in 140 characters or less that describe their article and excite readers in a succinct manner.

The primary motivation for this multigenre project was the supplemental reading I selected, *Joy Write*, by Ralph Fletcher. In his book he discusses the importance of creating projects that are fun for students, exploratory, playful, and of their own choosing. He also suggests the importance of workshops and collaborative writing. In the introduction to the book he says, "Low-stakes writing is important because it builds muscles that strengthen other kinds of writing…we need to respond to it differently than we would to the traditional writing assignments," (Fletcher, xii). With the purpose of creating a low-stakes but high-impact project that is focused more on creativity, diversity, and collaboration than rigid rules applied to testing, students will develop a wider range of skills that will serve them in their future writing careers as students and professionals.

Another primary source of information is the article *Teaching to the test…not! Balancing best practice and testing requirements in writing".* The article discusses how writing instruction has become more and more focused on teaching to specific test requirements as opposed to building well-rounded and excited writers. The guiding principle behind using this essay was the quote, "The goal of instruction is to produce lifelong learners, not test takers," (Higgins, 311). The website building project is varied enough that students will have exposure to a variety of genres, all of which are applicable to their future in school and later careers. The essay also includes the 6 traits that define strong writing. These traits include, "Ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions," (Higgins, 312). Specific assignments will be tailored to improving skills in one or more traits.

Another course reading that inspired the project was the article, *The Fantasy of the Seamless Transition.* In the article, Mike Bernard-Donals suggests that "Seamlessness may not be an appropriate or realistic goal," (Bernard-Donals, 117). Part of the problem seamlessness is not necessarily realistic is that college writing is different according to whom you ask. After teaching at four different colleges with the same mission statement, he says that, "College writing at each couldn't have been more different," (117).

Since it's impossible to specifically teach to a specific college goal, I propose that the best way to make a more seamless approach is to provide writing opportunities that cover as many genres and styles as possible. Building a website provides perhaps the best literary bang for your buck as it applies to writing instruction.

Answer 2: Lessons will be based on the individual parts of the website, with adequate instruction given to each. The website will include the following objectives: 1. writing an informative article, 2. composing headlines, titles, and topic summaries for use throughout the website and social media, 3. Introductory text describing the purpose of the website, 4. Formatting, font choice, and layout work. Each lesson will comprise a single week with approximately one hour per day given to instruction, classwork, and research depending on the unit's specific requirements.

Lessons will begin with an introduction to the specific writing project and will include examples written by the teacher and real-world examples. The topic and content will be discussed and decided on as a class. Initial ideas will be proposed by individual students and each idea will be voted on by students (students will not be allowed to vote for their own idea). Students will be assigned specific aspects or topics within the website and work individually. After viewing examples students will be given time to pre-write their ideas based on what they know about the selected topic (or wish to know if they don't know anything). A lesson on research will follow, during which students will research relevant information for their selected assignment at home and in the library. This part of the course will include library and research instruction (and any technical lessons students need to use a computer, web browser, and word processor). After researching and drafting their work, workshopping will occur between groups of students. After workshopping students will finalize their work.

The other readings mentioned have helped to inform lesson plans and the project's layout. The article, *Teaching Writing for the "Real World": Community and Workplace Writing.* This article provides examples of ways students can connect classroom writing with real-world writing. The essay suggests that, "Research on workplace writing tells us that there are salient features to this kind [community and workplace] of writing that are rarely taken up in school, including writing collaboratively, writing for multiple audiences, writing for multiple purposes…" (Cox, 73). This article was used to help design a lesson that expands a student's view of what writing is, and how the classroom connects to the real-world.

Answer 3: The biggest issue with a project of this scope is time. Enough time must be allotted for instruction. While most secondary school students are familiar with websites and social media, knowing how to browse the web is not the same as creating content for it. The four-week plan will need to be carefully crafted to ensure students receive enough instruction during each unit while also having enough time to produce their work.

Another consideration is more technical. There are a number of free website creation tools (such as WordPress) that allow individuals to drag and drop website elements with templates and widgets. But students would all need a standard level of technical proficiency for the course to work.

Student privacy and digital safety is a concern with any digital assignment. However, websites can be created without being published online. If the finished product is not made publicly available, permission would not be required from parents and district supervisors.