



Web Site Redesign Recommendations for the
FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

An exercise to answer a hypothetical request for proposal.



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PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Fox Chapel Area School District (the District) launched its current Web sites in 1999. The design and content of these sites were developed through a combined effort of the administration, school board, and the District's information technology instructors.

The District determined that their excellent reputation in the education community and region should be better reflected in their Web sites. In addition, the District has received a fair amount of negative feedback from their target audience regarding the sites' ease of use. As such, the District believes a redesign and rewrite of the Web sites are warranted.

The District is searching for a professional marketing team with Web site experience to complete this project in a timely and cost-effective manner. A budget of \$6,000 has been established. A completion date of August 1, 2005, is desired.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Web sites are an important marketing and communications tool. A recent survey conducted by *Information Age Magazine*, shows that 85% of the U.S. population uses the Internet to obtain information and purchase products and services. BrayMazur's supporting research concludes that public interest in a Web site increases when it is attractively designed, informative, and user-friendly.

The Fox Chapel Area School District is a local and national model for education, providing its students with a learning environment in which they can maximize their potential and achieve success. The District Web sites should reflect this vision.

BrayMazur proposes a creative, multi-faceted approach to achieve this goal. The Web sites currently provide users with basic information about the District and the individual schools, but great potential exists to increase their effectiveness as marketing and public relations tools. Our recommendations will allow the District to use its Web sites to effectively promote academic excellence and professional achievements. The new Web sites will be a hub of information for current and prospective parents, teachers, and students, with a design that will better reflect the high standards of Fox Chapel Area School District.

PROJECT GOALS

After reviewing the District's requests as listed in the Request For Proposals (RFP) and supporting information, BrayMazur has identified three project goals:

- The redesigned look and rewritten content of the Web sites should provide the target audiences with consistent information that is easy to find.

Topeka Public Schools in Kansas recently revised content and design of its Web sites. Currently, 73% of students, teachers and parents use the site daily, up from 41% of previous users.

- The new sites should be effective marketing and public relations tools that will heighten credibility, visibility, and notability of the Fox Chapel Area School District locally, regionally, and nationally.

The Ogden School District is the premiere education center in the Salt Lake City area. The district recently began promoting itself through its Web site. More than 35% of the new students moved from other areas of Utah to attend Ogden schools.

- The entire redesign effort should be target audience driven, emphasizing the District's willingness to understand users' concerns and implement suggestions for improving the usefulness of the Web sites.

According to Web Site Weekly, 89% of companies in its recent survey stated that conducting focus groups and surveys was critically important when redesigning a Web site.

TARGET AUDIENCE

As one of the fastest growing school districts in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Fox Chapel Area School District has been successful because of its good reputation. However, other high achieving Pittsburgh area school districts, such as Upper Saint Clair, have realized that strategic marketing and public relations strategies can no longer be avoided and are using their Web sites as marketing tools. Continued success for Fox Chapel relies heavily on meeting the needs of and communicating with the target audience. BrayMazur identifies the following groups as the District's primary target audience: parents, students, teachers, administrators and District community residents.

The District's secondary target audience includes potential or future parents, students, teachers, administrators, District community residents, the Pittsburgh region, news media, the Pittsburgh business community, colleges and universities, text book companies, and technology vendors.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After a review of the current District Web sites, BrayMazur was pleased to find a wide array of information that was current and informative. This review provided BrayMazur with three primary observations for improving the site. We are also offering preliminary recommendations. If the District accepts our proposal, BrayMazur will launch a detailed review of the sites. In addition, BrayMazur will conduct focus group sessions with the target audiences. These sessions will help us to garner supporting evidence of our recommendations, observe needs, and gather additional information. Surveys will also be conducted of the primary and secondary target audiences. These surveys can help identify education industry trends and gather information for user profiles.

OBSERVATION ONE: CONSISTENCY

Design

The design of each of the District's seven (7) Web sites is not similar and does not create a sense of continuity for the target audience. The individual school sites do not seem to be sub sites of the main District site.

The Web sites use attractive imagery that is not divided equally among the sites. Unfortunately, this makes some sub sites more interesting than others. The quality of the imagery varies among the sites as well.

Content

Each school in the District offers the user similar information — daily happenings, extra-curricular activities, lunch menus, sports, homework, emergency action plans, school closing information, etc. — but each school's site presents this information in different places and in different formats.

OBSERVATION ONE: RECOMMENDATIONS

Design

BrayMazur will upgrade the design of the District's main site. We will mirror that design in the sub sites, while maintaining the individual personality of each school. As a result, the District's main site and its sub sites will all be identified as part of the Fox Chapel Area School District.

BrayMazur will evaluate the District's current imagery and choose those photographs which best represent the district and its goals. We will add imagery to some sites and remove it from others. Professional photography may be required.

Content

BrayMazur will develop a blueprint and navigation system that correspond among the sites. The blueprint will help create a sense of familiarity for the users and reduce anxiety and frustration about accessing hard-to-find information.

We will develop content that guides users through the site more easily, creating a consistent and distinct "voice" from site to site. Basic forms will be developed for use by the faculty as an aid in posting homework assignments and student work. Our sample blueprint on page 7 better indicates our plan for site organization.

PROPOSED FCASD SITE MAP



OBSERVATION TWO: INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Currently, the primary function of the District Web sites is to provide information about school events and general knowledge. Areas do exist that highlight faculty and student achievement; however, those areas are buried at the bottom of the pages. Areas are not designated for specific audiences. The press release section is static and does not invite a user to read about the District's outstanding commitment to excellence. Parent endorsements are showcased, but are anonymous and difficult to read. Overall, the site content does not effectively market the District and its schools.

OBSERVATION TWO: RECOMMENDATIONS

BrayMazur understands that communication is an integral part of both public relations and marketing. The District must do a better job communicating to its target audiences and promoting itself as Pittsburgh's premier school district. A creatively written, redesigned, and up-to-date Web site can help in this regard, while potentially reaching new audiences. As outlined in the design challenge recommendation, organized information creates consistency for the users. There is a large volume of information on the site; however, rearranging this information is necessary.

Providing a virtual experience that creates a sense of community allows users to feel comfortable obtaining information and trusting its source. This can be done by providing comprehensive information specifically for parents, students, and teachers. Press releases should be listed on the site in an area identified for the news media. This virtual newsroom should also provide the media with contact information of District administrators and specialized teachers who are experts in their fields and who would be available for interviews and insights on education trends. A section highlighting student achievements, homework, and student activities will encourage interest from the target audiences and should be a premiere link from the home pages.

BrayMazur suggests the District increase the project budget in order to create a presence on popular search engines — either through sponsored links or keywords — that will result in a top-ten placement of the District's link when a Web site user types words such as "blue ribbon high schools," "best Pennsylvania high schools," or "awarding-winning high schools in the Eastern United States." We will investigate the best and most cost effective options for achieving this goal. The District should also include its URL in all correspondence mailed to student households and all printed District literature.

OBSERVATION THREE: EASE OF USE

BrayMazur's evaluation revealed the District's site navigation system does not provide clear direction nor promote integration among sites. Although the District site is informative, it is easy to get confused when moving from site to site. The sites' imagery is not optimized for maximum download speed, creating long wait times for most dial-up users.

OBSERVATION THREE: RECOMMENDATIONS

BrayMazur will redesign the Web sites as indicated by the site map on page 7, making the sites parallel. The new structure will increase the sites' consistency and create a user-friendly environment that invites continued exploration through clear and easy-to-find links.

BrayMazur will rely on user profiles to accomplish this task. Using focus groups and surveys, we will develop a way to allow users to share their concerns about the Districts current sites and offer suggestions for improvement.

All imagery will be high in quality but formatted to allow the sites to load quickly for dial-up, DSL, or Broadband users.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Upgrade the District's main site and its sub sites with corresponding content and design. This will improve continuity and visual interest.
2. Improve relationships with the target audience by providing specific and timely information — a virtual community for students, parents, teachers, etc. This will increase awareness, strengthen communications, and build credibility.
3. Enhance the overall site navigation system. This will provide direction and invite users to continue exploring the site through clear and easy-to-find links.

PROJECT TIMELINE

BrayMazur has developed a project timeline based on acceptance of this proposal by January 3, 2005.

January 3, 2005 - February 25, 2005

INFORMATION GATHERING PHASE

BrayMazur will gather information to develop user profiles and address the concerns of target audiences. Information will be gathered through focus groups and surveys, as well as through reviews of Web sites that have a similar function to that of the Fox Chapel Area School District.

February 28, 2005 - March 18, 2005

INFORMATION EVALUATION PHASE

BrayMazur will compile its findings in a report for the District's review. We would like the opportunity to share this report with your primary audience, so that we can make additions or corrections before we proceed with design.

March 21, 2005 - April 15, 2005

PRELIMINARY DESIGN PHASE

BrayMazur will create rough designs and content drafts of the District's home page, as well as the home pages of each school site. In addition, we will create one mock-up for each of the lower level pages. BrayMazur will submit concepts in a brainstorming session on April 18, 2005. Your project committee should develop a process to evaluate the designs and make corrections or suggestions for revisions. BrayMazur can guide you in this revision process. Revisions should be returned to BrayMazur by May 2, 2005.

May 2, 2005 - May 31, 2005

REVISION PHASE

BrayMazur will revise the concepts according to the suggestions of your committee and present final boards on June 1, 2005.

June 1, 2005 - July 30, 2005

DESIGN PHASE

BrayMazur will design the content and look of the districts' (7) web sites. This work will include commissioning any needed photography, writing all copy and developing all web code. We will periodically push the sites up to the Web as we proceed with design and coding to discover and correct any flaws before actual launch.

August 1, 2005

PUBLICATION

Final Web sites will be pushed to the Internet.

August 3, 2005

OFFICIAL WEB SITE LAUNCH

BrayMazur will organize a launch event for the target audiences. This catered (snacks and beverages only) event will include a large screen demonstration and how-to workshops for adults and students. Laptop stations will be set up where individuals can have the opportunity to surf the sites. Computer and audio-visual equipment will be provided by the District. BrayMazur will coordinate the catering. The event will help convey the District's commitment to the community and the people it serves. BrayMazur will also assist with the publicity effort surrounding this event.

COST ESTIMATE

Information Gathering Phase	\$1,500
Focus Groups	
Surveys	
Worksheet development	
Design Phase	\$4,000
Concepting of look and content	
Revisions	
Coding and Testing	
Launch Event	\$500
Workshop Development	
Catering	

TOTAL PROJECT COST **\$6,000**

POSSIBLE ADDITIONS TO ESTIMATE

Professional Photography \$1,000 - \$3,000

BrayMazur works with Terry Clark, an award-winning photographer who specializes in candid images of children in educational settings. Mr. Clark's normal fee for services is \$1,000 per day. BrayMazur will work with Mr. Clark to make the photo shoot as economical as possible. Mr. Clark may, at his discretion, offer a non-profit rate to the District, which would decrease this cost.

Photography will be provided digitally, and the District will have permission to use the images for any promotional materials with no limitations.

All original digital files will remain property of Terry Clark Photography.

Requests to Mr. Clark for professional reprints will be billed to the District directly from Terry Clark Photography.

Search Engine Proprietary Placement \$500-\$1,500

BrayMazur will research avenues for proprietary link placement on popular Internet search engines should the district decide to proceed with this marketing concept. Fees are estimated only and can vary widely. Normal length of contract for this service is one (1) year.

Professional Proofreading Services \$500-\$1,000

BrayMazur strongly suggests contracting a professional proofreader as a final check on content and style, before the sites are launched.

GENERAL NOTES

The District should assign BrayMazur a District liaison, or contact person, for the project. The liaison will secure access to all resources during the scope of this project.

The liaison will be responsible for obtaining any permissions or written releases that may be necessary for the use of photographs, endorsements or other personal materials used on the sites. BrayMazur will provide simple release forms for such use.

The liaison will also be responsible for ensuring that content is reviewed by all appropriate parties, so errors can be corrected. This individual will meet with BrayMazur to discuss revisions and approvals if such meetings are warranted. It will be his or her responsibility to ensure that District personnel are meeting their deadlines to keep the project on schedule. Please note that BrayMazur will not be financially responsible for any errors that may appear on the final web sites, but will make every effort to correct any inaccuracies that may occur.

The August 1, 2005, deadline for this project can be met only if the projected timeline is followed by all involved parties. BrayMazur cannot guarantee completion of this project by the requested deadline if any or all parties fail to complete assignments by the dates outlined on pages 10 and 11.

The cost estimate outlined on page 12 is not a firm quote, but an estimate of what BrayMazur believes the project will require given the information provided by the Fox Chapel Area School District. If more work is involved, the actual price may be higher; if less work is needed, the actual price may be lower. BrayMazur will, however, keep the District informed of any change which exceeds 10% of this estimate.

Payment terms and conditions will be discussed upon acceptance of proposal.