The Student Website as a Digital Portfolio: Video Introductions, Blogs, Goals, and Accomplishments

NJECC Annual Conference
Montclair University, January 2018

Download our workshop materials from the mobile app.

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Who we are

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Our goal: digital engagement and digital literacy in English Composition

English composition at New Jersey City University, as at many universities, is an “an introduction to and concentration on the basic communication skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.”

What are the basic communication skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening in the 21st century? What role does digital literacy play in English Composition? What opportunities do digital communication tools and educational technologies provide today?

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Student comments about incorporating social media into our class

- Social media is a big part of our society and it's important for school to address it instead of ignoring it.
- Social media is something that everyone uses so it was fun to be able to incorporate it into the English course.
- Social media plays a huge role in everyone's life therefore making it a great idea to include it in the class.
- [F]or the most part, in education and in the classroom, social media almost has no space in any subject. It feels like a coming of age thing to finally include the "other world" feeling that social media has in the classroom.
The limits of Blackboard and other LMSs

- Not public enough
- Students can’t keep their work beyond the semester
- Clunky and cumbersome to incorporate outside content (videos, blogs, etc.)
Our idea: students create a WIX website

- Students can use Wix as a digital portfolio
- Students can archive accomplishments, goals, work both within the class and beyond
- Students can engage with a broader, authentic public, if desired
- We can harness student creativity for greater engagement

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Our first project: the video introduction

• Why?
  - More and more employers use online videos for job applications
  - Students need to think about self-presentation
  - Student introductions are an important part of building a collaborative classroom community

Bonus: video introductions are a super helpful crutch for teachers who need help learning student names!
First, students interviewed each other using a set of questions to guide their inquiry.

1. Are there any interesting stories or details about your name or how you got your name? Does your name have any special meaning or history?

2. Do you have any particular academic and/or professional goals? If yes, how did you develop these goals? Is there any story from your past that reflects an ah-ha moment where your goals crystallized for you? If no, what do you wish you could know about your academic/professional future? If you could ask your future self a question, what question would you ask?

3. What are your personal strengths? What are you good at? How did you figure out what you were good at? Are there any stories from your past that illustrate these strengths?

4. Are there any pressures from your family/community in relation to your future? What external expectations are there about what you should be/do? How do you feel about these pressures/expectations? What strategies do you use to cope with these pressures/expectations?

5. What was your best/favorite academic moment? What is your favorite memory from any point in your education? How does this moment/memory reflect what you think school can/should be?

6. How do you cope with adversity? Is there a story from your past in which you encountered a challenge and were able to overcome that challenge? What did you do to overcome that challenge? What did you learn from that experience?

7. Is there anything else you wish people would know about you?

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Second, students introduced their peers to the class, using the notes from the interview and adhering to a 90 second time limit.

- We discussed these peer introductions, including what additional questions the class had about the person – what they wanted to know more about, what worked well in the peer introduction, etc.
- We focused on staying positive, using examples to flesh out a narrative, and developing a focused, detailed story.
- Students noted that it was useful to hear a peer introduce them (and to think about what that peer emphasized and/or left out from their story).

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Next we introduced the technology: FlipGrid

- Super easy and free
- 90 second time limit provides structure (not too short, not too long)
- Students can view each other’s videos as people begin to post their work
- Students with more video facility can upload videos; others can just use their phones

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Want to see? Here are three examples.

- [https://flipgrid.com/adfc6e](https://flipgrid.com/adfc6e) (clear, focused)
- [https://flipgrid.com/938b5a](https://flipgrid.com/938b5a) (creative - narrative)
- [https://flipgrid.com/af4106](https://flipgrid.com/af4106) (creative - music)

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Students had to compose a written reflection on this project, discussing what they learned. This is a useful writing assignment companion-piece to the video, eases the task of assessment, and promotes student metacognition and reflection about their own learning.

What were you trying to accomplish with your video introduction? How successful do you feel you were? What was difficult about introducing yourself? What did you learn through this exercise? How did the in-class interviews contribute to how you decided to introduce yourself in your video? What did you learn from those interviews? What particular challenges, if any, did making this video pose to you? What did you learn from viewing your peers’ videos? What did you particularly like about how your peers addressed this assignment? What might you do differently next time?
Student 1: This project for me has been an eye opening experience and the perfect way to start off my college experience. Coming into New Jersey City University, knowing that I was entering a brand new school in which I knew absolutely no one, I was deathly afraid of not knowing how to open up or make friends. This project has not only help me to open myself up to others and not be afraid to tell my story, but it has also garnered me some new friends from this English class.

Student 2: I learned through this exercise that everybody is unique. Not everyone has the same way of introducing themselves, I mean did you see how Damani made his video? Not only did he talk about himself, but he also incorporated the “zombie apocalypse” to go with it; his video is definitely one to remember. Everyone else did a fantastic job as well, many people opened up about themselves, and I feel that as a class we were all extremely supportive towards each other. I truly believe that the class is pretty much one big, creative, and supportive family.
Let’s try -

- Go to https://flipgrid.com/590bab
- Or, login to FlipGrid and enter this code: 590bab

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Our next project: the website

- We asked students to work with one template to start, but then allowed them to choose their own.
- We added the FlipGrid video introduction.
- We embedded Twitter and Instagram feeds (we also talked about and established professional Twitter accounts).

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What students said about building a website in English Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I was surprised to be asked to build a website in composition class.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very surprised: 60%</td>
<td>Very surprised: 45%</td>
<td>Very surprised: 41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat surprised: 20%</td>
<td>Somewhat surprised: 55%</td>
<td>Somewhat surprised: 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsurprised: 0%</td>
<td>Unsurprised: 0%</td>
<td>Unsurprised: 8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I had previously made a website for myself.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True: 20%</td>
<td>True: 16%</td>
<td>True: 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False: 60%</td>
<td>False: 66%</td>
<td>False: 63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### What students said about the usefulness of building a website in English Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I plan to continue to build and use my website after this class is over.</th>
<th>Strongly agree: 27%</th>
<th>Strongly agree: 33%</th>
<th>Strongly agree: 40%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree: 45%</td>
<td>Agree: 16%</td>
<td>Agree: 40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree: 27%</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree: 25%</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree: 0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I think it will be useful for me in the future to have my own website.</th>
<th>Strongly agree: 36%</th>
<th>Strongly agree: 33%</th>
<th>Strongly agree: 60%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree: 36%</td>
<td>Agree: 25%</td>
<td>Agree: 20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree: 27%</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree: 17%</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree: 0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Example 1 – a creative student who wants to become a designer/architect

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Example 1 – his site is gorgeous

Developed in December 2017, J.Martinez is a company that is dedicated to providing high quality, one of a kind artistic creations in the field of digital media and architecture/drafting. Founder Jermontay Martinez wanted to provide a way to distribute his work to the world in an opulent panoply manner. Being in the digital age it felt suitable to create a website dedicated to display and sell his art to consumers for personal, or professional use, and thus J.Martinez was born.

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Example 2 – a student who claimed her voice as a blogger
Example 3 – this student focused on an issue – stress – rather than himself

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Example 3 – his website reflection stressed the effort he put into his research and his choices of colors and photos.
Example 4 – this student reflected on her personal experience with bullying and created an online community forum.
Example 4 – she used her site to create a social media campaign 
#ShowMeYourCrookedSmileChallenge around a song by rapper J Cole

The idea is for people to record and share mini videos singing this J Cole song and embracing their natural selves – crooked smiles and all.

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Additional student comments about the website

- It can **help professionally** when building a resume and connections.
- Having my own website is definitely **useful** for me to have in the future since I can put my voice work on there, demo reels, and along with other things.
- I always thought making websites were very hard and that I had to **code** everything.
- My website is about my personal Makeup Artistry growth. This site will **help me grow** as an MUA (makeup artist) and it is a great stepping stone for me to use and expand myself from.
- It's the new thing, there is nothing more **up to date** and accurate than a website about yourself run by you!
- It was a chance for me to **showcase myself** and it was the most **creative project** I have ever done.
Let’s get started – think about building a website that you can use as a model for what you want your students to create

Turn to our handouts/directions!

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QUESTIONS, COMMENTS

THANK YOU!

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