

Advanced Web Design Article

By: Jason Edwards, Harlan Daily Enterprise

A new course at Harlan County High School is giving students the real world experience needed to succeed in the fast paced world of Internet Web site development.

Career and technical education instructor Scott Pace said underclassmen who have completed Web page design, which is a dual credit college course with no expense to the student, at HCHS will have the option to enroll into advanced Web page design the following school year.

“The primary focus of the class is to prepare students to take the skills and techniques learned into a business type setting where they develop and improve Web sites for businesses, churches and non-profit organizations,” said Pace. “Routine maintenance is also provided throughout the school year, and their service is free of charge although donations are accepted and obviously allow the students to realize the importance of their education and make the connection between school and career.”

Pace said so far this year the advanced Web design class has published over 16 Web sites, with several more still in production. He said the students have completed sites for the Harlan County Animal Shelter, Ken and Paul's Family Steakhouse, Trophy Mounts Taxidermy in Middlesboro and Manderley Healthcare Center in Versailles, Ind., to name a few.

Pace said the students are responsible for making contact with the person or organization with whom they will work and plan their Web site. He added that students will organize and design the structure of the Web site and offer input to the owner about how to purchase hosting and a unique domain name for the site.

Pace said Web design can be a very time consuming process.

“In regard to time, it really depends upon the scope of the project and how many pages the owner wants, the amount of pictures and information that will be added, etc.,” said Pace. “Graphic design is probably the most time consuming aspect of any Web site the students create. We use a lot of templates which does help increase our productivity, but spend a lot of time on the manipulation and design of images, color schemes, layouts, etc. We can use a lot of generalized information but are basically at the mercy of those providing the items we need to complete each project. If the owner gets everything to us that is needed and is prompt in obtaining hosting, we can have a typical site published in less than two weeks.”

Senior Joshua Rowe said working on Web sites has changed the way he views the Internet.

“It has changed my perspective on the way I look at Web sites on the Internet,” Rowe said. “Now, when I look at my favorite sites, I see not only the page itself, but all the work that went into that page. Whenever I look up a page online I say to myself ‘I can do that,’ which has helped make a big difference, and given me a better understanding of my own abilities, and taught me that no goal is beyond reach.”

Pace said one of the primary goals within his department of career and technical education is to ensure the students make the connection between school and career.

“We want them to realize the value of their education and understand how it can impact their lives as they transition into college and the workforce,” said Pace. “When we began to lay out some of the courses for information technology, I was asked to teach Web design and immediately began to look for an industry standard in regard to software, something that my students would see again and be able to use on the job... When I saw how well the students were doing, I thought that it would be a good idea to offer my underclassman an advanced Web design class the next year and basically run it like you would a job site.”

Senior Candace Boggs said advanced Web page design gave her many real world business advantages. She said one advantage is the skill to go into businesses and talk to entrepreneurs. She said this skill will be extremely beneficial as she goes off to college and begins pursuing her career.

“This class has also given me a feeling of accomplishment,” Boggs said. “It gives you a great feeling of capability when you can look back and view what you have created anywhere, on any computer around the world. Being a senior, life starts to get a little hectic. Trying to do your best on all your class work and homework, as well as work part-time, and fill out college and scholarship applications. It’s nice to be able to come to class and do something that you actually enjoy doing.”

Pace said in the near future he hopes to secure sponsors willing to make a donation for each Web site that the students publish, with the funds going toward a charitable organization. He said this would create a great opportunity not only for the students, but also the members of the community to make a difference and impact other people’s lives.

Student Breanna Pittman said the class has given her and her classmates a sense of great accomplishment through their hard work.

“I believe that it has also given each of us an idea of what it is like to work hard and achieve a goal,” she said. “People see Web sites every day, but very few think about the hard work and time it takes to produce the Web site. Web design is a difficult thing to do, so when I finally finish a Web site and get it on the Internet I feel such a sense of accomplishment.”

Pace said anyone who would like a Web site, needs one “tuned up” or would like to become a sponsor, should contact him at 574-2020, Ext. 3597 or by e-mail at scott.pace@harlan.kyschools.us.