

WebQuests

Using WebQuests is another excellent way to differentiate curriculum via technology. They were developed in early 1995 by Bernie Dodge at San Diego State University. According to Dodge, a WebQuest “is an inquiry-oriented activity in which most or all of the information used by learners is drawn from the Web. WebQuests are designed to use learners’ time well, to focus on using information rather than looking for it, and to support learners’ thinking at the levels of analysis, synthesis and evaluation.”

Since WebQuests were first introduced, thousands of them have been developed by teachers and posted on various websites as resources for others. Because there are so many excellent examples of WebQuests, teachers using them are able to learn from each other. WebQuests infuse technology into the curriculum and are excellent learning tools.

A good WebQuest has:

- Guidance and clear directions for students
- A creative and flexible final product or project
- Working website links for research and information
- Relevant and up-to-date information
- A design that lets students work independently

WebQuests develop research skills by giving students a task that allow them to draw on their imagination and problem solving skills. Using WebQuests, students do not merely copy and print out information. Because the answers are not predefined, students use creative and critical thinking to figure out solutions to the problems that are posed. Students explore a topic in depth in a structured and meaningful way and find their own answers, especially when the topic is multi-faceted and has no obvious right and wrong answer.

WebQuests can be developed to accommodate students’ diverse learning needs. Special needs students can work on a WebQuest with a group when they are given predetermined tasks based on their abilities and readiness. Gifted and other high ability students can extend the basic WebQuest tasks in much the same way extensions were shown in the previous chapter.

To develop your own WebQuest, start by looking at some that have been developed by others. Make note of what you like and what you don’t like in the ones you see. Use Dodge’s six building blocks of a WebQuest as a structure for writing your own:

1. **The Introduction** – Orients students and captures their interest.
2. **The Task** – Describes the goal and end product of the activity.
3. **The Process** – Explains the strategies students should use to complete the task.
4. **The Resources** – Links to the websites used to complete the task.
5. **The Evaluation** – Assesses and measures the results of the activity.
6. **The Conclusion** – Sums up the activity and encourages student reflection.