

Q377 Foundations of Educational Technology

Instructor: Bob Borst

Group Analysis/Evaluation project



Group Project Learning Team 1

Boeschen, Caryn
Callahan, Lisa
Chang, I-Hua
Kendrick, Theresa

July 13, 2000

URL and brief description of the web site and its purpose

<http://www.funbrain.com/index.html>

The Funbrain site is an interactive learning and edutainment web site that links children, parents and teachers. It develops technology for kids, which includes interactive games, activities, and quizzes for students of all ages to promote children's education and development. This site is also designed to serve as a resource on providing teachers and parents with the tools that they need to succeed by providing educational experiences, which include giving paperless quizzes to their classes, participating in children's education, finding the perfect game for children to play, and allowing parents to be more fully engaged in their children's education.

Except a Chicago software Co. founded the web site, however, State Farm Insurance also sponsored the site. Some of the links under familyeducation.com were unrelated to the education of children such as links to Honda, AOL, cameras and Insurances Company. Although the links were well organized, not all were related to education. We suspect whether this site is run for a profit.

Intended audience and your assessment of the web site's "fit" to that audience

The Funbrain site is intended mainly for younger children. It was also broken down into sections for teachers and parents. The design is very appropriate and very colorful which conveyed energy, and seems appropriate for the intended audience. For example, the interactive games are very appealing to kids, the quiz lab is appealing to teachers thanks to offering paperless quizzes and automatically grading the quizzes for teachers, and the parents' place is appealing to parents due to offering much educational information for parents.

However, some graphics for games intended for teens may be a bit immature. As indicated on the home page, it is the number one site for K-8, parents and teachers. Some modifications may need to be made to make the site more appealing for students beyond the 8th grade level.

Description of how a needs assessment for this site might have been conducted

There are many tools for determining the “need” for a particular site, and the best solution probably involves combining many of these tools. One obvious option involves utilizing a survey to determine what the needs may be. However, if utilizing a survey, a couple of important factors need to be resolved. First, how will the surveys reach those in the target audience? Second, what can be done to motivate those that have received the survey to fill it out? In order to obtain addresses for the survey, various mailing lists can be bought from companies that keep track of parents with children in a certain age range as well as teachers. An incentive for filling out the survey may include something such as a free piece of software such as one of the games that may have been developed in advance.

In addition to surveys, focus groups would be a good tool to determine needs. Surveys may not be a good method for compiling the children’s needs, however, bringing together a focus group would allow children to voice their opinions on the spot. Creating a prototype for the web site and demonstrating it to kids, teachers and parents would facilitate input. Allowing for hands-on experience may induce additional input.

There may be additional assessment tools, but a key factor in developing a web site, is that money is not often made from the web site itself. This holds true for the FunBrain web site due to the fact that they are not charging for the usage of the site. The

games section for kids, which is the main focus of the site, can be utilized without a fee. With this in mind, any needs assessment that is used should not have a large cost. In addition, there should not be too much development work done on the prototype in case there is not good feedback.

Development and Management issues that might be applicable to this web site

FunBrain.com is a large and complex site. Although it is not clearly stated, I suspect when looking at the large amount of advertising, this site is run for a profit. Considering FunBrain's claim that they are the "Internet's number one site for k-8 teachers and kids" with 60,000 page visits per day, 35 million visits per month, and 65,000 teachers registered, this site is very big business. Developing and managing such a large enterprise is a daunting task, requiring a large staff. The site lists a Content and Business Management department headed by a publisher, Marketing and Advertising department, and employs a Dr. Robert Skinner, PhD as Curriculum Advisor.

Associates of PMPublishing, a software company that specializes in producing risk management and training systems for banks and option traders, founded FunBrain in May of 1997. According to their web site information they decided to apply the technology they have developed to kids learning games. The concept grew and the site became its own entity in 1999.

In order to design, develop, and maintain such a large project, FunBrain would probably need the following working groups:

- Design team: involved in the planning from objectives to storyboards including graphic artists.
- Production team: produce the actual website including flowcharting and programming.

- Marketing and Advertising team: sell advertising to be exhibited on the site and advertise the site itself both on and off the web.
- Curriculum Advisors: guide the content of the pages, make sure the games are age appropriate and decide upon the subject areas to be addressed.

Below are the steps this company might have completed to develop this web site. This plan could be summarized in a Pert chart with deadlines and personal assigned to each task:

1. Needs Assessment: It appears the personal at PMPublishing began by asking the question: How can we use our skills as software developers of training tools to provide an educational experience for children? Keeping this focus in mind, they should have performed a needs assessment, probably a questionnaire to a focus group of children, parents, and teachers.
2. Phase One of Design: Based upon the needs assessment, the Design team along with the curriculum advisors would plan the goals of the project, write objectives, analyze the ability level of their targeted audience and describe the type of activities to be included (in this case educational games and the Quiz Lab).
3. The design and curriculum teams should review the assumptions checklist at http://mime1.marc.gatech.edu/MM_Tools/design.html. This will ensure the ideas and goals for the projects are still inline with the original intent.
4. Phase Two of Design: The objectives are now clearly stated and the activities to be included in the site are outlined. The next step would be to develop a storyboard including artwork, planned links, and finally detailed diagrams for individual pages.

5. The project should then be reevaluated using the assumptions checklist.
6. The Production team now selects the authoring tools, the software and programming languages to be used to produce the site.
7. Site Production: The production team produces the site pages as outlined in the storyboard.
8. Evaluation must occur throughout the production of each game, the home page, and the Quiz Lab using the assessment checklist found at:
http://mime1.marc.gatech.edu/MM_Tools/AC.html. This will ensure each objective is being met and the pages run smoothly.
9. Test the finished product. After designing an evaluation plan using the tool at http://mime1.marc.gatech.edu/MM_Tools/EPT.html, the site should be tested by the members of the team and then by a selected focus group of teachers, parents, and children. The website should work functionally so that the links move where and when they should, and cognitively so that the directions are easily understood and the games are meaningful and enjoyable to the audience.
10. The Marketing and Advertising group must now sell advertising to support the site, and develop a plan for advertising the site including hooking it to web search engines.
11. Launch the site.

The following would have to be considered in the ongoing management of the site:

1. Evaluation and modification: The games on the site must be evaluated through time. Looking at the number of hits for each game and replacing those not used could accomplish this. The comments from users should also be taken into

consideration. Periodically another survey could be performed with a focus group of teachers, parents, and kids with the intent of searching for new game ideas and improving previously existing games.

2. The production team must continually troubleshoot problems, modify existing games and add new games.
3. Marketing and advertising is an ongoing process.

Evaluation data, including a copy of the evaluation form or the URL if you used an online form

SELECTION CRITERIA (<http://www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/criteria.html>)

How to Tell if You Are Looking at a Great Web Site

The Web is a lot like a flea market: there is a vast selection of sites to choose from but not a lot of order to it. Reputable dealers and some from offer some sites individuals who want to show off their personal favorite items. Sometimes it's hard to tell what is a hidden treasure, what is worth taking a look at, and what is a waste of time.

It is not hard to find sites if you use a search engine like Hotbot, or a subject directory like Yahoo (or Yahoooligans for kids). But how can you tell if a site you find is worthwhile?

Sometimes what is in a Web site's address can indicate the nature of the site. Sites from commercial businesses usually include .com; federal government sites end in .gov, K-12 school sites often include k12 in the address, and college and university sites often include .edu. Sites from non-profit organizations often include .org. A site with a tilde (~) in the address usually indicates that this page is

maintained or created by an individual, rather than representing an organization, a business, or a school.

Children's librarians evaluate books, magazines, tapes, and software for children to find the best of all. Web sites are no exception. On this page, we have collected some excellent sites for young people. We will share with you what we look for in a great Web site.

1. Every site does not need to meet every one of these criteria to be a great site, but the more of them a site does meet, the more likely it is to be a worthwhile place to spend time.
2. The content on the Web changes faster than anything we have ever seen in our culture. Therefore, in any recommended list of Web sites, the recommendations apply only to the primary sites that are listed, not to every site linked from the primary sites.

The evaluation form

A. Authorship/Sponsorship: Who Put up the Site?

1. The name of the individual or group creating the site should be clearly stated.
2. The creator should give a source for information in the site where necessary.
3. The Web site author or manager should provide a way for users to make comments or ask questions.
4. The Web site author or manager should be responsive to any questions regarding copyright, trademark, or ownership of all material on the site. Sites that knowingly violate copyright statutes or other laws should not be linked, listed, or recommended.

B. Purpose: Every Site Has a Reason for Being There.

1. A site's purpose should be clear and its content should reflect its purpose, be it to entertain, persuade, educate, or sell.
2. Advertising should not overshadow the content.
3. A good site should enrich the user's experience and expand the imagination. Sites promoting social biases (gender, racial, religious, or other types) rather than enlarging the views of the child should not be considered worthwhile sites.

C. Design and Stability: A Great Site Has Personality and Strength of Character.

1. The information on the site should be easy to find and easy to use.
2. The site design should be appealing to its intended audience.
3. The text should be easy to read, and not cluttered with distracting graphics, fonts, and backgrounds.
4. Users should be able to get around the site easily.
5. Pages consisting mainly of links should be well-organized and appealing to young people, and the collected links should be well-chosen and useful to children exploring the subject.
6. The site's design should be appropriate for the intended audience.
7. A game or recreational site should have a clear interface and playing instructions.
8. The page should load in a reasonable amount of time.
9. The page should be consistently available and load without problems; stability is important.
10. Required "plug-ins" or other helper applications should be clearly identified.

11. The design elements and features on the site, such as searchable databases, animations, graphics, sound files, introductory and transitional pages, etc., should enhance and not hinder the accessibility and enjoyment of the site.

12. The interactive features should be explained clearly.

13. A user should not need to pay a fee or type in personal information (such as his/her name or e-mail address) before using the site.

D. Content: A Great Site Shares Meaningful and Useful Content that Educates, Informs, or Entertains.

1. The title of a site should be appropriate to its purpose.

2. A site's content should be easy to read and understand by its intended audience.

3. There should be enough information to make visiting the site worthwhile.

4. If there are large amounts of information on the site, some kind of search function should be provided. There should be at least an outline of topics covered, allowing the users to find topics and move among them easily.

5. Spelling and grammar always should be correct.

6. The information should be current and accurate, and if the topic of the site is one that changes, it should be updated regularly. A last updated date is a plus.

7. Links to more information on the topic should be provided.

8. Graphics on the site should be relevant and appropriate to the content.

9. The subject matter should be relevant to and appropriate for the intended audience.

10. The viewpoint presented should be comprehensible to the intended audience.

11. The skills required to use the site's features and structure should be appropriate or appropriately challenging for its intended audience.

12. In informational sites, especially those used to support school assignments, quality of content should be most important. Appealing sites for general audiences that are accessible to young people sometimes provide the highest-quality content.

13. Some sites, such as health and life-education sites, may include mature content. Such material should be developmentally appropriate to the information needs of youth.

Suggested changes based on the evaluation data that would improve the web site

It would be nice to have an update. We know that it was created in May of 1997. But when was it last updated? However, I saw it was updated weekly with the quiz part. The answers are given at the end of each quiz week. I assume that the questions are changed weekly. But.... the rest of the site needs an update listing. Updating could mean creating more problem solving and higher-level thinking. It would be nice if this site could help with providing sample MAP questions that schools are responsible for teaching. Actually, this would be a good area for parents to have also. The site needs to have questions that are more clearly understood by the viewer about violating copyright. Violation of copyright could take place easily because their standards are not clearly stated. The site has linking pages in the parent section but could use more in the kids and teacher section. But then again, kids aren't interested in computers when they have to spend time reading off of it. Games are the fun part. It would be nice if they update it regularly (maybe monthly or weekly with information meaningful for teachers and

parents. As a teacher, it would be nice to visit a section that has articles pertaining to education. It would be nice to see another site like this for the older audience such as high school. But for younger kids it can be quite challenging and a lot of fun. They need to change the title to FunBrain, the Internet's #1 educational site for kids, teachers and parents. The print could stand to be enlarged for the younger audience.

APPENDIX: Individual evaluation

AMERICAN LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION WEB SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

<http://www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/criteria.html>

Site Evaluated: FunBrain.com URL: <http://www.funbrain.com>

Evaluation performed by: Michelle Kendrick Date: July 6, 2000

A. Authorship/Sponsorship: Who Put up the Site?

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Comments</i>
The name of the individual or group creating the site should be clearly stated.	The site has an About Us button. The site was developed by a software co. in Chicago and then was acquired by the Family Educational Network. There is a link to the FEN site and to an article describing the acquisition. It is not clear whether this site is run for a profit.
The creator should give a source for information in the site where necessary.	In the Kids Game section, there is no documentation for information used in the games.
The Web site author or manager should provide a way for users to make comments or ask questions.	Asking questions is very easy. The About Us section contains email addresses of many staff members. A Write Us A Message button goes to an area for comments or suggestions. A lot of the games have Make a Comment buttons on every screen.
The Web site author or manager should be responsive to any questions regarding copyright, trademark, or ownership of all material on the site. Sites that knowingly violate copyright statutes or other laws should not be linked, listed, or recommended.	I'm not clear on this. Every page of the site has the FunBrain.com copyright symbol on every page. I would suspect that the artwork on the site is original by artists on staff. (But I can't prove it.)

B. Purpose: Every Site Has a Reason for Being There

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. A site's purpose should be clear and its content should reflect its purpose, be it to entertain, persuade, educate, or sell.	The purpose stated in the About Us section was to: "focus solely on providing teachers, parents, and kids with the tools they need to succeed by providing educational experiences including interactive games, activities, and quizzes for students of all ages." The FEN connected with FunBrain states its purpose as: "brings together leading and private sectors to help parents, teachers, schools, and community organizations use online tools...to positively effect our children's education and overall development."

	It is not clear if the site is making a profit by selling advertising or just maintaining with advertising.
2. Advertising should not overshadow the content.	Home page advertising consists of a small square in the lower corner. Once inside a game, an advertising banner at the top of the page takes up approximately 1/8 of the viewing window. It doesn't seem to be a large amount. However, the ads are very kid-orientated and designed to be attractive to children. I choose a few of the ads and they link to kid sites sponsored by corporations, such as Ball Park Franks or State Farm Insurance. They were not "hard sell" sites.
3. A good site should enrich the user's experience and expand the imagination. Sites promoting social biases (gender, racial, religious, or other types) rather than enlarging the views of the child should not be considered worthwhile sites.	I observed no cultural or sexual bias. The games I observed were neutral and made no reference to people.

C. Design and Stability: A Great Site Has Personality and Strength of Character.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. The information on the site should be easy to find and easy to use.	The games are easy to find. They are divided by subject and age level. In the teacher's section, Quiz Lab, is very user-friendly. I signed up and selected an existing quiz, then logged in as a student and took the quiz. This took only about 10 minutes and I had no problems following directions.
2. The site design should be appealing to its intended audience.	I believe the site is very appealing, especially to younger children. The graphics for games intended for teens may be a bit immature.
3. The text should be easy to read, and not cluttered with distracting graphics, fonts, and backgrounds.	Text is usually easy to read. The graphics are kept away from text boxes. Text areas have solid backgrounds. I believe the games for smaller children should have enlarged print for easier reading.
4. Users should be able to get around the site easily.	All pages are linked with an easy-to-use bar at the bottom of the page. Site navigation is easy. However, some pages do not have a link back to the home page.
5. Pages consisting mainly of links should be well-organized and appealing to young people, and the collected links should be well-chosen and useful to children exploring the subject.	There are no links pages for the children or teacher pages. The parent section is really a page with links to the web site for the Family Education Network. All links take you there. The links on the FEN site however were valuable and numerous

	in quantity. Some did lead to companies selling products such as insurance.
6. The site's design should be appropriate for the intended audience.	The design is very appropriate for younger children. I'm not sure it would hold the attention of pre-teens and teens.
7. A game or recreational site should have a clear interface and playing instructions.	Playing instructions were clear in all games I tried.
8. The page should load in a reasonable amount of time.	My page loaded a little slowly. My connection at home is a little slower than at school, and the graphics took awhile to load.
9. The page should be consistently available and load without problems; stability is important.	I had no problems bringing the home page up or being able to access any links. One game was under construction. The site was very reliable.
10. Required "plugins" or other helper applications should be clearly identified.	I didn't come across any instances where "plugins" were required.
11. The design elements and features on the site, such as searchable databases, animations, graphics, sound files, introductory and transitional pages, etc. should enhance and not hinder the accessibility and enjoyment of the site.	Graphics made the site visually pleasing. I did not play any games where the graphics were required to perform the game tasks except Tic Tac Toe. However, accessibility was not jeopardized by the graphics. The site is well designed. In the spelling game, a downloaded WAV file pronounced the word. This was helpful and did not take a lot of time or distract from play.
12. The interactive features should be explained clearly.	Interactive features were easy to use. Directions were clear. With younger children, some explanation of directions may have to take place.
13. A user should not need to pay a fee or type in personal information (such as his/her name or e-mail address) before using the site.	There are no fees. You do not have to logon. Teachers must enter their name, school information, and email addresses to use the Quiz Lab. Child email addresses are optional in the Current Events game. In the privacy policy it is stated that email is used to notify teachers about student scores and to provide updates about the site. Personal information is not shared with third parties. Cookies are only used to track which games are most popular and to help users remember passwords.

D. Content: A Great Site Shares Meaningful and Useful Content that Educates, Informs, or Entertains.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. The title of a site should be appropriate to its purpose.	The title is appropriate.
2. A site's content should be easy to read	In a few cases I wondered about reading level for

and understand by its intended audience.	smaller children. Again, I think the text should be larger for small children.
3. There should be enough information to make visiting the site worthwhile.	The site has two basic purposes, games for children and a place for teachers to compose quizzes for student use or to use quizzes already composed. The number of games and quizzes provided is considerable.
4. If there are large amounts of information on the site, some kind of search function should be provided. There should be at least an outline of topics covered, allowing the users to find topics and move among them easily.	There are many ways to navigate the site and find games. There is a Game Finder in the parent section to search for games by subject or title. I thought it was very helpful.
5. Spelling and grammar always should be correct.	I found no spelling or grammar errors.
6. The information should be current and accurate, and if the topic of the site is one that changes, it should be updated regularly. A “last updated” date is a plus.	There was no “last updated” date and no indication of the amount of time games had been online. Teachers and parents would have to view each game for accurate and timely information.
7. Links to more information on the topic should be provided.	There are no links for kids or teachers. All links on the parent page go to the Family Educational Network. From there parents can link to additional information.
8. Graphics on the site should be relevant and appropriate to the content.	They are not necessarily always necessary or relevant. I played only one game that actually used a graphic as part of play. They do however add to the visual quality and interest level of the games.
9. The subject matter should be relevant to and appropriate for the intended audience.	I thought this was ok.
10. The viewpoint presented should be comprehensible to the intended audience.	The site really did not present a viewpoint. It involved educational games.
11. The skills required to use the site’s features and structure should be appropriate or appropriately challenging for its intended audience.	The game levels were easily adjusted for degree of difficulty. Although sometimes the “harder” choice just took away clues from the same questions as found in the “easier” choice.
12. In informational sites, especially those used to support school assignments, quality of content should be most important. Appealing sites for general audiences that are accessible to young people sometimes provide the highest-quality.	The games in the site were mostly drill and practice or identifying or recognizing facts. Many required similar skills. In the majority of games, little problem solving, higher level thinking or processing of information was required. I think this could be improved especially in games geared for older children.

13. Some sites, such as health and life-education sites, may include mature content. Such material should be developmentally appropriate to the information needs of youth.	I found no inappropriate content.
---	-----------------------------------

As I evaluated this site, it seemed to me that some of the questions in our evaluation criteria overlapped. Therefore, some of the answers for D may have been answered in part C etc.....

Site: <http://www.funbrain.com/index.html>

Evaluation site: <http://www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/criteria.html>

How to Tell if You Are Looking at a Great Web Site

A. Authorship/Sponsorship: Who Put up the Site?

There is a link at the bottom of the homepage "about us". At that link viewers may read about where the site was created. "FunBrain was founded in May 1997 by associates of PMpublishing. They consider themselves the number1 educational site for K-8 kids and teachers." There is a link for general questions and a line of e mail addresses for contact information. There is also a phone number or web site to contact for more information. At the bottom there is a FunBrain.com copyright date=LLC 1997-2000

B. Purpose:Every Site Has a Reason for Being There

FunBrain.com is an interactive learning and edutainment web site that links children, parents and teachers. It develops technology for kids and teachers which includes on line games and teaching tools to promote children's education and development. I think the site is excellent for drill and practice but it would be nice to see it geared more to the MAP with more problem solving.

C. Design and Stability: A Great Site Has Personality and Strength of Character

This site is very eye-catching to me. Content seems easy to follow at least for the 7 year olds and up. Of course, we parents need to be with our preschooler for guidance. There is a lot of information available on this site. I think the graphics are appropriate. One could spend numerous hours working activities and getting to know this site. This site is updated weekly for activity quiz bowl but that is all. I assume that since answers for questions are given at the end of the week that the questions are changed. The site is accessible to preschool ages on up. You can choose the appropriate age and then an activity suitable for the age. Loading seems quick on my machine. I like how it is divided into 3 sections: children, parents and teachers. Each section offers activities and some parent/teacher information. Each page links to the home page. You can click on the side or bottom to get home. The only time to enter e mail, name etc... is to play the quiz bowl or for teachers to get into the paperless quiz section. This may give them some feedback as to how many people visit their site.

D. Content

The title is quite appropriate since one works the brain using fun activities. I especially liked the quizzes and the baseball game. This site keeps ones interest for a long period of

time because there is always something new to do. The site uses good mechanics. I think the paperless quiz and the quiz bowl make good teaching tools for classroom assignments. I plan to use this site daily in my classroom. It has a lot of practice and challenge activities for people of all ages. It would be nice to see more links for the parents and teachers too. It would be nice to see informational articles from math journals for teachers/parents. Maybe even some sample math lesson plans.

I am far from being a web expert. I know I could never create such a web site. Maybe someday.... but not at this point. I enjoy using the site.

These are some possible suggestions for improving the web site. #6.

It would be nice to have an update. We know that it was created in May of 1997. But when was it last updated? However, I saw it was updated weekly with the quiz part. The answers are given at the end of each quiz week. I assume that the questions are changed weekly. But....the rest of the site needs an update listing. Updating could mean creating more problem solving and higher level thinking. It would be nice if this site could help with providing sample MAP questions that schools are responsible for teaching. Actually, this would be a good area for parents to have also. The site needs to have questions that are more clearly understood by the viewer about violating copyright. Violation of copyright could take place easily because their standards are not clearly stated. The site has linking pages in the parent section but could use more in the kids and teacher section. But then again, kids aren't interested in computers when they have to spend time reading off of it. Games are the fun part. It would be nice if they update it regularly (maybe monthly or weekly with information meaningful for teachers and parents. As a teacher, it would be nice to visit a section that has articles pertaining to education. It would be nice to see another site like this for the older audience such as high school. But for younger kids it can be quite challenging and a lot of fun. They need to change the title to FunBrain, the Internet's #1 educational site for kids, teachers and parents. (Good suggestion) The print could stand to be enlarged for the younger audience.

If I missed anything please add to it.

#5 The evaluation tool used:

SELECTION CRITERIA

How to Tell if You Are Looking at a Great Web Site

The Web is a lot like a flea market: there is a vast selection of sites to choose from but not a lot of order to it. Some sites are offered by reputable dealers and some from individuals who want to show off their personal favorite items. Sometimes its hard to tell what is a hidden treasure, what is worth taking a look at, and what is a waste of time.

It is not hard to find sites if you use a search engine like Hotbot, or a subject directory

like Yahoo (or Yahoooligans for kids). But how can you tell if a site you find is worthwhile?

Sometimes what is in a Web site's address can indicate the nature of the site. Sites from commercial businesses usually include .com; federal government sites end in .gov, K-12 school sites often include k12 in the address, and college and university sites often include .edu. Sites from non-profit organizations often include .org. A site with a tilde (~) in the address usually indicates that this page is maintained or created by an individual, rather than representing an organization, a business, or a school.

Children's librarians evaluate books, magazines, tapes, and software for children to find the best of all. Web sites are no exception. On this page, we have collected some excellent sites for young people. We will share with you what we look for in a great Web site.

Notes:

1. Every site does not need to meet every one of these criteria to be a great site, but the more of them a site does meet, the more likely it is to be a worthwhile place to spend time.

2. The content on the Web changes faster than anything we have ever seen in our culture. Therefore, in any recommended list of Web sites, the recommendations apply only to the primary sites that are listed, not to every site linked from the primary sites.

A. Authorship/Sponsorship: Who Put up the Site?

1. The name of the individual or group creating the site should be clearly stated.
2. The creator should give a source for information in the site where necessary.
3. The Web site author or manager should provide a way for users to make comments or ask questions.
4. The Web site author or manager should be responsive to any questions regarding copyright, trademark, or ownership of all material on the site. Sites that knowingly violate copyright statutes or other laws should not be linked, listed, or recommended.

B. Purpose: Every Site Has a Reason for Being There.

1. A site's purpose should be clear and its content should reflect its purpose, be it to entertain, persuade, educate, or sell.
2. Advertising should not overshadow the content.
3. A good site should enrich the user's experience and expand the imagination. Sites promoting social biases (gender, racial, religious, or other types) rather than enlarging the views of the child should not be considered worthwhile sites.

C. Design and Stability: A Great Site Has Personality and Strength of Character.

1. The information on the site should be easy to find and easy to use.
2. The site design should be appealing to its intended audience.
3. The text should be easy to read, and not cluttered with distracting graphics, fonts, and backgrounds.
4. Users should be able to get around the site easily.
5. Pages consisting mainly of links should be well-organized and appealing to young people, and the collected links should be well-chosen and useful to children exploring the subject.
6. The site's design should be appropriate for the intended audience.
7. A game or recreational site should have a clear interface and playing instructions.
8. The page should load in a reasonable amount of time.
9. The page should be consistently available and load without problems; stability is important.
10. Required "plug-ins" or other helper applications should be clearly identified.
11. The design elements and features on the site, such as searchable databases, animations, graphics, sound files, introductory and transitional pages, etc., should enhance and not hinder the accessibility and enjoyment of the site.
12. The interactive features should be explained clearly.
13. A user should not need to pay a fee or type in personal information (such as his/her name or e-mail address) before using the site.

D. Content: A Great Site Shares Meaningful and Useful Content that Educates, Informs, or Entertains.

1. The title of a site should be appropriate to its purpose.
2. A site's content should be easy to read and understand by its intended audience.
3. There should be enough information to make visiting the site worthwhile.
4. If there are large amounts of information on the site, some kind of search function should be provided. There should be at least an outline of topics covered, allowing the users to find topics and move among them easily.
5. Spelling and grammar always should be correct.
6. The information should be current and accurate, and if the topic of the site is one that changes, it should be updated regularly. A last updated date is a plus.
7. Links to more information on the topic should be provided.
8. Graphics on the site should be relevant and appropriate to the content.
9. The subject matter should be relevant to and appropriate for the intended audience.
10. The viewpoint presented should be comprehensible to the intended audience.
11. The skills required to use the site's features and structure should be appropriate or appropriately challenging for its intended audience.
12. In informational sites, especially those used to support school assignments,

quality of content should be most important. Appealing sites for general audiences that are accessible to young people sometimes provide the highest-quality content.

13. Some sites, such as health and life-education sites, may include mature content. Such material should be developmentally appropriate to the information needs of youth.

ALSC Children and Technology Committee

Site Evaluated: FunBrain.com URL: <http://www.funbrain.com>
 Evaluation performed by: Caryn Boeschen Date: 07/08/00

A. Authorship/Sponsorship: Who Put up the Site?

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Comments</i>
The name of the individual or group creating the site should be clearly stated.	There is an "About Us" button at the end of the home page. It states that a Chicago based software Co. founded the web site, but is now a family of the Family Education Network. It also states that it is sponsored by State Farm Insurance.
The creator should give a source for information in the site where necessary.	In the "Parents" section on the home page, the source for information is given. It states that Funbrain.com has joined the Family Education Network. These are the people that built the number one site for parents.
The Web site author or manager should provide a way for users to make comments or ask questions.	At the bottom of the home page, there is a "Write Us a Message" button. There you can enter your information. They also have a "Frequently Asked Questions" section for you to view.
The Web site author or manager should be responsive to any questions regarding copyright, trademark, or ownership of all material on the site. Sites that knowingly violate copyright statutes or other laws should not be linked, listed, or recommended.	On the bottom of the home page, the copyright information is provided. Any questions regarding copyright can be asked via the message button.

B. Purpose: Every Site Has a Reason for Being There

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. A site's purpose should be clear and its content should reflect its purpose, be it to entertain, persuade, educate, or sell.	The site's purpose is located within the "About Us" section. It is stated that the purpose is to focus solely on providing teachers, parents and kids with the tools they need to succeed. The content does reflect its' purpose.
2. Advertising should not overshadow the content.	Advertising doe not overshadow the content. However there is advertising within the site and it is basically done by providing links to different sites. State Farm Insurance also get some advertisement by placing their logo on the home page indicating that they sponsor the site.
3. A good site should enrich the user's experience and expand the imagination. Sites promoting social biases (gender, racial, religious, or other types) rather	The funbrain site did not promote social biases. Nor were social biases provided in any of the links provided through funbrain.

than enlarging the views of the child should not be considered worthwhile sites.	
--	--

C. Design and Stability: A Great Site Has Personality and Strength of Character.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. The information on the site should be easy to find and easy to use.	The information on the site is very easy to find and easy to use. All subjects are divided (kids, teachers, parents) as well as appropriate age levels.
3. The text should be easy to read, and not cluttered with distracting graphics, fonts, and backgrounds.	The text is very easy to read. The text is blocked away from the graphics, and the background is plain which does not interfere with the text.
4. Users should be able to get around the site easily.	I was able to get around the site very easily.
5. Pages consisting mainly of links should be well-organized and appealing to young people, and the collected links should be well-chosen and useful to children exploring the subject.	The pages with links were only under the parents and teachers sections of the web site. The links were mainly to sites such as schoolcash.com (under the parent and teachers' section), harcourt reading center, familyeducation.com. Some of the links under familyeducation.com were unrelated to the education of children such as links to Honda and AOL. Although the links were well organized, not all were related to education and there were not any provided in the children section.
6. The site's design should be appropriate for the intended audience.	The site's design was specifically broken down into sections for parents, teachers and kids. It was very colorful which conveyed energy, and seems appropriate for the intended audience. As indicated on the home page, it is the number one site for K-8, parents and teachers. Some modifications may need to be made to make the site more appealing for students beyond the 8 th grade level.
7. A game or recreational site should have a clear interface and playing instructions.	The game section was a major portion of this web site. There were numerous games for various age levels. Each game I chose to play such as math baseball, vocabulary and make change were very basic, but the instructions were clear and easy to understand.
8. The page should load in a reasonable amount of time.	The page loaded quickly. I loaded several other pages, which ranged from 6 seconds to 23

	seconds. The funbrain page was much more complicated that some of the other pages and loaded in only 3 seconds.
9. The page should be consistently available and load without problems; stability is important.	The page did load consistently without problems. I loaded the page numerous times including week days, weekends, during the day and during the evening.
10. Required “plugins” or other helper applications should be clearly identified.	I could not find any areas throughout the funbrain site that required “plugins”
11. The design elements and features on the site, such as searchable databases, animations, graphics, sound files, introductory and transitional pages, etc. should enhance and not hinder the accessibility and enjoyment of the site.	Graphics did enhance the enjoyment of the site, especially within the games. The graphics were not the main focus for some of the games, however, they did add to the effectiveness of the game. For instance, when playing math baseball, when the user answered a question correctly, a base runner would advance around the bases. In other games the graphics played a major part such as with tic, tac, toe and turtle word search. In these particular games, the graphics were enjoyable, but did slow the pace of the game down a bit while they were loading.
12. The interactive features should be explained clearly.	The interactive features such as the games were explained very clearly through good instructions.
13. A user should not need to pay a fee or type in personal information (such as his/her name or e-mail address) before using the site.	The user is not required to pay a fee or type in personal information before using the site. However, there are portions of the site where a user account (requires name, school name, email address) must be set up before using the specific portion of the site. For example the quiz section requires a teacher or student to have an account before utilizing this portion of the site.

D. Content: A Great Site Shares Meaningful and Useful Content that Educates, Informs, or Entertains.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. The title of a site should be appropriate to its purpose.	The title of this site seems very appropriate. The title funbrain indicates that the site is fun while requiring the user to think. This is especially true of the kid section.
2. A site’s content should be easy to read and understand by its intended audience.	This site’s content was very easy to read and understand by its intended audience. This is emphasized by the fact that the site is the number one site for K-8, parents and teachers.
3. There should be enough information	There was an abundance of information which

<p>to make visiting the site worthwhile.</p>	<p>made visiting the site worthwhile. This was especially true for the kids section where there were numerous games for various age levels. In addition, there was enough information in the parents and teacher sections, which made the site worthwhile for these individuals respectively.</p>
<p>4. If there are large amounts of information on the site, some kind of search function should be provided. There should be at least an outline of topics covered, allowing the users to find topics and move among them easily.</p>	<p>There is a search function within the main page to search for games by subject area. In addition there is an outline of topics provided at the top and bottom of the home page. There is not a search function to search the whole site for something other than games.</p>
<p>5. Spelling and grammar always should be correct.</p>	<p>In reviewing the site, I did not find any spelling or grammar mistakes.</p>
<p>6. The information should be current and accurate, and if the topic of the site is one that changes, it should be updated regularly. A “last updated” date is a plus.</p>	<p>I could not locate a “last updated” within the site. However “new” was placed next to sections that were considered new, but it was unclear what the criteria was to be considered new. I was unable to determine how current the information was on the site.</p>
<p>7. Links to more information on the topic should be provided.</p>	<p>Some of the links in the parent section seemed inappropriate to the site’s content (i.e. Honda, AOL). However there were some instances where appropriate links were provided such as teachervision.com in the teacher section. This is an area that could be improved upon within the site.</p>
<p>8. Graphics on the site should be relevant and appropriate to the content.</p>	<p>The graphics on the site are relevant and appropriate to the content for the most part. For example, there is a graphic of an owl next to the teacher section. The owl of course representing that teachers are wise. However, the graphics seem to lean more toward the younger kids.</p>
<p>9. The subject matter should be relevant to and appropriate for the intended audience.</p>	<p>I found the subject matter in most areas of the site to be relevant and appropriate for the intended audience.</p>
<p>10. The viewpoint presented should be comprehensible to the intended audience.</p>	<p>The viewpoint in being consistent with the purpose of the site is to provide tools to provide students, teachers and parents with the tools they need to succeed. The games help students enhance their knowledge. There are also subjects within the parents and teacher sections, which promote this viewpoint. The kids section could be expanded in</p>

	the future to include more than just games.
11. The skills required to use the site's features and structure should be appropriate or appropriately challenging for its intended audience.	The skills required to utilize the site's features and structure seemed appropriate for the intended audience. However, children at lower age levels (i.e. Kindergarten, 1 st grade) would probably need assistance from their parents.
12. In informational sites, especially those used to support school assignments, quality of content should be most important. Appealing sites for general audiences that are accessible to young people sometimes provide the highest-quality.	The quality of content was strong especially in the games area for kids. One improvement may be to separate the games for the higher age levels (13 and up) into a separate section. Maybe label young adults.
13. Some sites, such as health and life-education sites, may include mature content. Such material should be developmentally appropriate to the information needs of youth.	I did not find any inappropriate or mature content within this site.

I-hua Chang (Eric) 7/8/2000

Selection Criteria

<http://www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/criteria.html>

URL: <http://www.funbrain.com>

A. Authorship/Sponsorship: Who puts up the Site?

1. The name of the individual or group creating the site should be clearly stated.

The about us icon clearly indicates that FunBrain.com is now a member of the Family Education Network. Associates of PM Publishing, a Chicago-based software company, founded FunBrain.com in May 1997. Fun Brain .com develops innovative technology for kids and teachers, including online learning games and teaching tools, and has quickly become a leading education site for k-8 kids and teachers. In early 1999, Fun Brain.com became its own entity in order to focus solely on providing teachers, parents, and kids with the tools they need to succeed.

2. The creator should give a source for information in the site where necessary.

This site offers a source of information before kids, teachers and parents get starting to use the site. For example, the rules descriptions for playing games, and the explanations for visiting the quiz lab, and finding the right game for children to play are listed in the site.

3. The Web site author or manager should provide a way for users to make comments or ask questions.

The about us icon and write us a message icon indicate that if visitors have a general question, they can email comments or suggestions about “FunBrain.com” to the company. The privacy icon also offers an email address for contacting the company. Moreover, users could use the contact information to ask more about Content and Business Development, Curriculum, Marketing and Advertising and Employment opportunities.

4. The Web site author or manager should be responsive to any questions regarding copyright, trademark, or ownership of all material on the site. Sites that knowingly violate copyright statutes or other laws should not be linked, listed, or recommended.

It seems to me that the author did not mention any question regarding copyright, trademark, or ownership of all material on the site. However, in the icon of how to link to Fun Brain, the author told us that “please feel free to use any of the following banners on the your web page to link to FunBrain.com”. This statement mentioned above will mislead the intended audience that they can copy all the materials in this site. I think the author should clearly state the questions regarding the copyright, trademark and so on to remind the intended audience to avoid violating the copyright.

B. Purpose: Every Site Has a Reason for Being There.

1. A site's purpose should be clear and its content should reflect its purpose, be it to entertain, persuade, educate, or sell.

The site mixes the purposes of education, entertains and sells. For example, regarding the education, the site illustrates that 1) the site will be adding powerful new tools that will allow parents to see even more fully engaged in their children's education; 2) to teachers, the purpose of this site is to give paperless quizzes to their classes; 3) to parents, the purpose of this site is to participate in their children's education, find the perfect game for their children to play, and allow parents to be more fully engaged in their children's Education; 4) in addition the Quiz Lab, FunBrain .com has educational games designed for learners of all ages; 5) a percentage of every purchase you make through schoolcash.com will be donated to the school of your choice. Please let your students and their parents know about this great fundraising opportunity, and 6) sponsored by an insurance company.

2. Advertising should not overshadow the content.

Although the advertising does not overshadow the content, the commercial stuff of schoolcash.com appears everywhere. For example, the slogans of the schoolcash.com include your school receives generous rebates when do your shopping at SchoolCash.com, and a percentage of every purchase you make through schoolcash.com will be donated to the school, PDA, OR educational organization of your choice. We have hundreds of brand-name merchants for you to choose from. And there is never a mark-up. So start using schoolcash.com now! It's fast, easy and free!

3. A good site should enrich the user's experience and expand the imagination. Sites promoting social biases (gender, racial, religious, or other types) rather than enlarging the views of the child should not be considered worthwhile sites.

This site uses many animals' graphics such as rabbits, dragons, and bears. The author also uses male graphics (line jumper, fresh baked fractions, guess the number, who is that) and female graphics (math baseball). But the male's graphics are greater than female's graphics. I guess the gender bias exists in this site. Moreover, in the change maker, the author just uses 5 countries' changes. I assume that the racial bias also exists in this site.

C. Design and Stability: A Great Site Has Personality and Strength of Character.

1. The information on the site should be easy to find and easy to use.

The site consists of kids, free games, parents, teachers, quiz lab and find games. Except the smarter chat is under construction. Others are easy to find and easy to use. Take the Math Baseball for example. Kids are easy to know the rules and easy to choose the level. The interactive designing makes the game much interesting.

2. The site design should be appealing to its intended audience.

The site has different designing to meet kids, parents, and teachers' needs. The interactive games are very appealing to kids. The quiz lab is appealing to teachers thanks to offering paperless quizzes and automatically grading the quizzes for teachers. The parents' place is appealing to parents due to offering much educational information for parents.

3. The text should be easy to read, and not cluttered with distracting graphics, fonts, and backgrounds.

The text is easy to read. For example, in the line jumper game, the text and the graphics are separated, not cluttered with graphics.

4. Users should be able to get around the site easily.

The bar consists of kids, games, parents, teachers, quiz lab, about us, awards we have won, write us a message, how to link to fun brain and privacy in the bottom linking all the pages easily. However, some pages in the Parents Place cannot be linked to the Home page. Put it simply, users have to use back tool for returning to the main page.

5. Pages consisting mainly of links should be well organized and appealing to young people, and the collected links should be well chosen and useful to children exploring the subject.

But there are not linking pages for teachers and kids. But the schoocash.com commercial stuff is the mainly linking page existed in the site, and there are many commercial stuffs in schoolcash.com site. There are many linking pages in Parents Places such as family education .com, ages and grades, et al.

6. The site's design should be appropriate for the intended audience.

The interactive games are very appealing to kids. The quiz lab is appealing to teachers thanks to offering paperless quizzes and automatically grading the quizzes for teachers. The parents' place is appealing to parents due to offering much information for parents. There are appropriate for the intended audience such as kids, teachers, and parents. However, this site is appropriate for the k-6 kids instead of k-8 since some games are too easy for the teenagers.

7. A game or recreational site should have a clear interface and playing instructions.

The games in this site have clearly playing instruction. For example, in the game of the Grammar Gorillas, the rules are described clearly. However, the icons of kids and free game on the top are overlapped with the game icons of the left side in the main page.

8. The page should load in a reasonable amount of time.

It depends on the location of users. Sometimes it is very quick at school computer lab (University of Missouri at Columbia), but sometime the loading speed is slow at school. But the connection speed is very slow all the time in my home. But the links (Age: 6& under 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17&up) in the main page are extremely slow.

9. The page should be consistently available and load without problems; stability is important.

Basically, there is no any problem in loading the page, and the stability is very reliable. But sometime it takes much time to load the games, for example, the Stay Afloat.

10. Required "plug-ins" or other helper applications should be clearly identified.

It is easy to surf this site. Even though I log in the quiz lab and print the quiz, I did not need any "plugins" or other applications.

11. The design elements and features on the site, such as searchable databases, animations, graphics, sound files, introductory and transitional pages, etc., should enhance and not hinder the accessibility and enjoyment of the site.

I play some games in this site. The graphics in these games enhance the accessibility and enjoyment of the site. For example, the interactive graphics of the stay afloat and word turtle enhance the enjoyment.

12. The interactive features should be explained clearly.

The games in the sites have clearly explanations about the interactive features. For example, the games of the Spellaroo and Spell check gave the players feedback quickly. They enhanced the enjoyment of playing the games.

13. A user should not need to pay a fee or type in personal information (such as his/her name or e-mail address) before using the site.

Users need not to pay the fee before using the site. But this site links to the schoolcash.com site, which needs to pay fee if you buy their merchandise. But teachers have to type in their personal information such as name, email address, school names. school city and so on before they visit the quiz lab. Users need to type their email address if they would like to subscribe to the FunBrain Newsletter.

D. Content: A Great Site Shares Meaningful and Useful Content that Educates, Informs, or Entertains.

1. The title of a site should be appropriate to its purpose.

The title of this site is FunBrain, the Internet's # 1 education site for k-8 teachers and kids. Basically it is appropriate for its purpose of education. But the site's intended audiences also include the parents. It will be better if the title adds parents.

2. A site's content should be easy to read and understand by its intended audience.

Most of the games' contents are easy to read and understand. To the kindergarten kids and lower grade students, they need parents or teachers' explanations before they play the games. To the higher-grade student or teenagers, there is no any problem to play the games.

3. There should be enough information to make visiting the site worthwhile.

In the main page of this site, enough information offers to teachers and parents. But the enough information will show up till users play the specific game.

4. If there are large amounts of information on the site, some kind of search function should be provided. There should be at least an outline of topics covered, allowing the users to find topics and move among them easily.

To teachers, the quiz lab is to give paperless quizzes to your class. Quiz Lab automatically grades the quizzes and emails the results to you. Access thousands of assessment quizzes written by teachers like you. To parents, the purpose of the site is to participate in your child's education, and find the perfect game for your child to play. These outlines allow the users to find and move among them easily.

5. Spelling and grammar always should be correct.

From an international student's perspective, it's perfect.

6. The information should be current and accurate, and if the topic of the site is one that changes, it should be updated regularly. A "last updated" date is a plus.

This is the biggest weak of this site since I cannot find the last updated date even though I tried to see this site's source and codes. Teachers and parents should check the information carefully for accurate before they offer this site to their students or children.

7. Links to more information on the topic should be provided.

Just like the previously mention, kids and parents cannot get another link for more information in this site. Just only the parents can get more information from the family education.com. It is another weak of the site. However, the commercial link, schoolcash.com can be linked anywhere.

8. Graphics on the site should be relevant and appropriate to the content.

Animal's graphics are the main graphics in this site. They are well organized and appropriate to the content. This site is for the students from k-8. But the games also work for the 15 or upper students. I assume the graphics are too immature for the teenagers.

9. The subject matter should be relevant to and appropriate for the intended audience.

The subject matters of the games are appropriate for the targeted audience from k-8 kids. But they are inappropriate for the 9 or upper kids.

10. The viewpoint presented should be comprehensible to the intended audience.

The games in the site are well organized by the subjects such as math, language arts, science, history, music, geography and art. They are comprehensible to the targeted kids.

11. The skills required to use the site's features and structure should be appropriate or appropriately challenging for its intended audience.

In this site, games have different levels choices for the users. For example, the math game has four levels such as easy, medium, hard, and super brain. The levels could meet the intended audience's needs.

12. In informational sites, especially those used to support school assignments, quality of content should be most important. Appealing sites for general audiences that are accessible to young people sometimes provide the highest-quality content.

In the statements of taking a tour of quiz lab are as follows: 1) access thousands of quizzes designed by teachers world-wide; 2) create your own quizzes with Quiz Lab's easy-to-use authoring tool; 3) allow students to take quizzes over the Internet in the classroom, in the library, or at home, and 4) get quiz results automatically via e-mail. Quiz Lab grades them for you. Clearly, this site works for teachers to support school assignment. Regarding the quality of content, this site should add the function statements of each game. For example, upgrade students' problems-resolving abilities, critical thinking, higher order thinking and so on. It is another weak of this site.

13. Some sites, such as health and life-education sites, may include mature content. Such material should be developmentally appropriate to the information needs of youth.

The contents of all subjects work for the k-8 kids. But they may be inappropriate for kids of 9th grade or upper grades.