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Instructional Design Plan

<u>Proposal</u>

The following proposal is an instructional design plan for teaching middle school
students how to evaluate online news.

<u>Needs Assessment</u>

*Year 9 students at an International School in Switzerland need to be taught how to judge
the credibility of online news sources to achieve their academic potential and to fulfill their civic
responsibilities. No formal information literacy instruction currently exists at the school. The
school librarian will utilize existing materials, supplemented by a new instructional design plan
that is created for and geared toward this specific learner group.*

The learners of this instructional unit are the 34 students in the Year 9 class at the
International School in Switzerland, ranging in age from 13 to 14 years. The student body is
composed of families of approximately 52 nationalities. The learning language is English, all
students study French at varying levels, and many speak at least one additional language. The
majority of Year 9 students have attended schools in at least one country other than Switzerland.
It is possible that some students may have acquired information literacy skills at a former school,
but none have received information literacy instruction at the school. It is assumed that all
learners already have the skills to read, summarize, and identify the key points of a news article
written in English.

A November 2016 study by Stanford History Education Group (SHEG) assessed the
ability of nearly 8,000 middle school to university students to judge the credibility of online

information. The results of the study indicated that "overall, young people's ability to reason about the information on the Internet can be summed up in one word: *bleak*" (SHEG, 2016, p. 4). It can be surmised that Year 9 students at the school share characteristics with the sample group in the SHEG study. Therefore, this learner group would benefit from learning how to evaluate online news.

The instructional unit will be a 6-session component of newly created, weekly, 45-minute information literacy classes. Instruction will take place in the school's computer lab, where each student has internet access on a desktop computer. Extant materials include YouTube video tutorials and external websites. I will design the instructional plan, due to my familiarity with the topic, existing materials, and standardized information literacy objectives. As the librarian at the International School employed to carry out all the various functions involving library programs, services, and materials, I will also teach the material.

Instructional Goal

Students will learn how to evaluate online news articles so that they will be able to choose appropriate information sources that support school work and provide a strong basis for informed choices, opinions, and actions.

Year 9 students must choose valid and reliable resources to support claims in class assignments and when forming and debating opinions. On a broader scope, the ability to base choices on reliable information is a civic duty and a moral imperative for participants in a democratic society. Consequently, it is essential to be able to distinguish reliable, responsible news reporting from biased, unsubstantiated, satirical, or fake news articles.

Consensus for the instructional goals will be obtained by the school principal, the academic dean, and the librarian in a face-to-face meeting and subsequent emails. All parties will agree on goals before implementation of the instructional plan.

Goals are measurable by comparing entry evaluations to results of final assessments. Final assessments will measure students' ability to determine the reliability of online news items, and to explain the reasoning behind their conclusions.

Entry Behavior and Learner Characteristics

Several prerequisite skills and knowledge will help students to benefit from this instructional unit. A discussion with the school's academic dean and the class IT teacher will ascertain the likelihood that these skills have already been learned by this group. It is assumed that students will already:

- be familiar with the concepts of satire and propaganda,

- know how to locate and navigate within an online news website and article,

- locate and provide the URL of a web page, and

- be able to summarize a news article and identify its key points.

Before instruction begins, the prerequisite knowledge and skills will be evaluated. An introductory lesson will include a guided discussion that will encourage students to recall the concepts of satire and propaganda. The concept of fake news will be defined and differentiated from satire and propaganda, and will be enhanced with examples. The class will be divided into groups for an exercise that will require them to choose a news item from a list, find the item on the internet, identify the URL, summarize the key points of the news article, and present their findings to the class. Students will discuss the credibility of each news item, followed by an explanation by the teacher. This exercise will evaluate and reinforce the prerequisite skills. It will

also help the teacher to fine tune the instruction. Class size is limited to 18 students, as per school requirements.

Learning Outcomes and Motivating Learners

On completion of the instructional unit on evaluating news sources, students will be able to:

- Define fake news, satire, and propaganda

- Explain factors that motivate creators of fake news, satirical pieces, and propaganda

- List at least three negative consequences of fake news

- Identify features of a news item for further analysis (domain name, author, about page, date, altered images, advertisements, existence or absence of references, etc.)

- Apply evaluation strategies to ascertain the credibility of a given news item

- Differentiate between a credible news item and a suspicious news item

- Explain why a news item is or is not credible

Students will be motivated by their desire not to appear naive or foolish, to understand nuanced material, and to debunk irresponsible digital media. Through class discussions and activities, students will understand that their own credibility and their own digital footprint will be shaped and judged by the news they choose to believe, comment on, and share. Students will also be motivated by their need to choose appropriate resources for school assignments, which will lead to better work and higher grades.

Information Presentation

This unit of instruction is broken down into specific skills and concepts to be taught. The information necessary for students to learn these skills and concepts will be strategically presented throughout the unit of instruction. Mastery of each step will form the basis for more

advanced skills. A systematic progression through the plan below will lead to the achievement of the desired learning outcomes.

1. Define fake news, satire, and propaganda

2. Provide examples of fake news, satire, and propaganda

3. Explore motivations of creators of fake news, satire, and propaganda

4. Compare the process involved in writing a substantial and credible news article with the process involved in creating a fake news article

5. Establish consequences of fake news

6. Describe evaluation strategies for investigating the credibility of a news item

7. Guide individual practice in analyzing the credibility of news articles

8. Supervise student group assessments of news items using evaluation strategies

9. Discuss student findings and provide feedback

The above information presentation plan reflects the instructional analysis. The order in which information is presented to students is key to developing an effective instructional design. As students progress from step to step, they will build on previous knowledge and arrive at new skills and concepts by interacting with the information presented.

Learner Participation

Learners will have the opportunity to interact with and participate in the instruction. A variety of activities will give students multiple possibilities to learn new concepts and strategies. During the course of this unit of instruction, students will:

- Listen to lectures;

- Watch YouTube video tutorials;

- Read web-based materials;

- Discuss opinions, experiences, and ideas;

- Walk through demonstrations of analyses of online news items;

- Apply evaluation strategies in individual teacher-guided learning activities;

- Collaborate with other students to complete group learning activities;

- Present findings to the class;

- React to feedback from teacher and other students; and

- Reflect about how new knowledge affects the understanding of online news sources.

This unit of instruction will offer students a rich and dynamic environment that provides a range of possibilities to participate in learning. A varied approach will appeal to students with different learning styles and preferences, and help them to internalize new skills and concepts through hands-on experiences.

Testing/Assessment

Assessments will measure the success or failure in achieving the goals and objectives of this instructional unit. Students' success in obtaining the learning goals and objectives will be measured by a group learning activity at the end of the unit of instruction, rather than by individual testing. Although this method of assessment is subjective and imprecise, it allows for richer and deeper insights into how students think critically about online news sources, how they work together to arrive at conclusions, and how they apply new concepts outside the parameters and stress of a formal test. Also, the conditions of the group learning activity replicate real-life situations better than formal testing conditions.

The final learning activity will reflect the pre-instructional activity. The class will be divided into groups for an exercise that will require them to choose a news item from a list, find the item on the internet, identify the URL, summarize the key points of the news article, and

determine the credibility of the news item. Groups will present their findings to the class, followed by a discussion and feedback from the teacher and the other students.

The success of the unit of instruction will be evaluated by comparing the students' evaluation skills demonstrated in the pre-instructional activity to the same evaluation skills in the final learning activity. The instructor will assess learner success or failure in the final learning activity by noting the strategies students use to arrive at their conclusions, and their ability to defend their conclusions in a class discussion.

Follow-through Activities

Strategies taught in this instructional unit for evaluating the credibility of online news items must become ingrained and habitual, and must be continually practiced outside the library instructional setting. Follow-through activities will verify that the learning that took place in this unit of instruction transfers to the classroom. The librarian will collaborate with class teachers to design learning activities that incorporate the skills learned in this instructional unit into relevant class work. Focusing on topics chosen by the class teacher, students will evaluate the credibility of news items that support class assignments. The class teacher will assess the students' success in achieving the learning objectives defined in this instructional unit. The teacher will fill out a form describing student performance, and forward it to the librarian. Findings will inform future information literacy instruction.

Implementing the instructional design

Specific materials/learning objects to be used

This unit of instruction for middle school students requires several instructional tools and materials. Instruction will take place in-person at school, either in the library or in the computer lab. For several of the planned learning activities, students will need internet access and a

desktop, laptop, or tablet. Google Classroom will be used to share resources and assignments, and for class communication, grading and feedback. Google Classroom is an educational app that provides a convenient platform to create and share resources and materials such as hyperlinks, PDFs, and YouTube videos. Quick exit tickets and polling functionalities allow teachers to gauge students' understanding, guide discussions, and get student feedback on the instruction. This app is user-friendly, free, and practical. A new Google class will be created by the librarian, and students will join the class with an automatically generated code.

After guided discussions, key points will be outlined on PDF text documents, and made available to students on Google Classroom. Definitions of fake news, satire, and propaganda; motivations of satirists, propagandists, and fake news perpetrators; and potential consequences of fake news are all topics that will be covered in PDF text documents. Examples of fake news items and a graphic representation of the various elements of a website will also be available in PDF format. Each of these learning materials will be created in advance and uploaded to Google Classroom. These documents will be displayed on the wall projector during instruction. Students will be able to access these documents at any time, and view them online or print a paper copy.

Web-based activities include an initial group assignment and a final group assignment, which will be similar. Each group will choose a news item from a list, find the item on the internet, identify the URL, summarize the key points of the news article, and determine the credibility of the news item. Groups will present their findings to the class, followed by a discussion and feedback from the teacher and the other students. This activity requires a document posted to Google Classroom containing the assignment instructions and a list of news articles to choose from.

Instruction will be supported with the use of two pre-existing multi-media objects. Students will watch a YouTube video about fake news. This video, created by TED-Ed, describes how opinions, facts, and "alternative facts" get into the news, and how to tell them apart. Before beginning an infographics assignment, students will watch a YouTube video tutorial about getting started with Easel.ly. This video is made by Easel.ly, and appears on their landing page. Students will watch these videos during instruction as a group. They can also access them at any time subsequently.

Students will use Easel.ly, a Web-based app, to create a graphic representation about evaluating online news. This assignment will be explained by the teacher during instruction. A PDF text document containing the requirements of the assignment and a link to Easel.ly will be uploaded to Google Classroom. Easel.ly is a user-friendly web-based infographics application that is simple enough for beginners to use effectively. The class will view a 3-minute tutorial to get started. A series of further video tutorials are available for students who wish to get the most from Easel.ly. Complexity, creativity, and originality of project results depend on the time, ability, experience, and interest levels of each student.

Easel.ly functionalities allow for creating, integrating, and editing graphic files. Users may choose a pre-designed template or start a project from scratch with an empty file. Colors, shapes, icons, charts and text can be added and edited. Stock photos are searchable, and YouTube videos can be embedded. Various types of files can be uploaded and integrated into the project. An infinite amount of modifications can be applied and saved. Students are free to explore aspects of the instructional topic that are of personal interest, and they can be as creative as they like in expressing their understanding.

This infographic learning activity is an ideal way to for students to internalize the instructional material by interacting with it. The creative process will also provide an opportunity for students to express and share new knowledge using modern technologies. Students will share their final infographics project with the class by providing a link, or by downloading their work from Easel.ly and uploading it to Google Classroom. The Easel.ly student projects will provide a way for the teacher to assess student understanding of the concepts being taught.

Below is a breakdown and schedule of how the instruction will be implemented:

Class Session	Instruction	Activities
1	Definitions, examples, motivations, creation, and consequences of fake news	Entry exercise, lecture, discussion, examples, video
2	Evaluation strategies	Lecture, reading, demonstration, examples, individual practice
3	Group analyses	Group project research
4	Group project	Video, group project with Esel.ly
5	Group presentations	Presentations, discussions, feedback
6	Group presentations	Presentations, discussions, feedback, reflections, survey

Formative and summative evaluation

Formative evaluation plan

Formative evaluation will be conducted throughout this instructional unit. The content and quality of class discussions will be analyzed on an ongoing basis to pinpoint problem areas. An abundance of questions, confusion, or misunderstandings will indicate areas where instruction is ineffective. The instructor will focus efforts on addressing these areas of concern. Student progress toward the learning objectives will also be monitored through assessment of the completed learning activities. An analysis of the assessments will identify strengths and

weaknesses of the instruction. Poor student performance in the learning activities will indicate the need for additional instruction, alternative learning objects, or varied teaching techniques. Adjustments will be made during the instructional unit to address these issues, and the instructional design plan will be altered for future courses to focus on areas where students did not demonstrate mastery.

Summative evaluation plan

A summative evaluation of this instructional unit will take place after the instruction is completed to assess the overall effectiveness of the instruction. Students will be asked to complete a printed feedback form at the end of the instructional unit. Students will answer a short series of questions pertaining to the effectiveness and usefulness of the instruction. Questions for the learner feedback survey are:

1. Did you find the course interesting?

2. Have you learned something you find valuable?

3. Did you understand the teacher's explanations?

4. What did you like best about this course?

5. What would you like to change about this course?

An assessment of the student feedback forms will help to identify areas that were effective and areas that need improvement in future iterations of this instruction. The instructional design will be altered in response to student feedback.

The overall effectiveness of the unit of instruction will be assessed by a follow-through activity in a regular classroom setting. Students will complete a class assignment using skills learned in this instructional unit. The class teacher will test the students' ability to evaluate an online news item within the context of a class assignment. Success in achieving the learning

objectives defined in this instructional unit will be measured. These findings will help to
determine the effectiveness of this unit of instruction. The instructional design plan will be
improved to address areas of weakness identified by the follow-through classroom activity.

Reference

Stanford History Education Group (2016, November). *Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone
of Civic Online Reasoning*. Retrieved from

https://sheg.stanford.edu/upload/V3LessonPlans/Executive Summary 11.21.16.pdf

Link to Presentation on Prezi.com

http://prezi.com/q9s4diu9aie9/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share