Section II:

Teacher Tips

- Accessing Authentic Oral and Written Texts
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Teacher’s Tips for Using the Computer Without a Lot of Hassle
- Tips and Criteria for Selecting and Evaluating Materials
Accessing Authentic Oral and Written Texts

Value of Using Authentic Texts

The value of using authentic texts in the foreign language class has been well documented over the years. Authentic texts increase student motivation, they help dispel stereotypes associated with special cultural groups, and they bring a sense of reality to language learning. However, the selection of appropriate authentic texts for use in the foreign language class can present a great challenge to teachers. Vicki Galloway, in *Pathway to Proficiency*, recommends the following criteria for guiding the selection of authentic texts:

- Topic should be accessible to the learner.
- Length of the text should not be intimidating to beginning readers.
- Linguistic level should be slightly above the reader’s own level (Krashen i + 1 theory) unless the tasks are closely structured to involve focused listening/reading.
- Clues to meaning should be abundant - contextual, verbal, pictorial, linguistic, etc.

Language Gap

When students attempt to listen or read authentic materials, they find that there is a large gap between the complexity of the material they hear or read and their own level of language proficiency. They often see or hear the text as a series of words, each having to be deciphered prior to going to the next one, and as a result, they feel frustrated by the experience and do not automatically resort to the strategies they use in their native language. “Students may fail to transfer their native language listening skills to foreign language listening situations simply because these strategies operate on an unconscious level” (Joiner, 1997). For this reason, teachers may help them make sense of the text by modeling successful strategies and by helping students identify those which work best for them.
### Definition of Strategies

Oxford describes strategies as “the often-conscious steps or behaviors used by language learners to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and use of information” (Rigney, 1978; Oxford, 1990). These strategies can greatly facilitate the acquisition of language by making of students active learners who organize, synthesize, and relate new information to their previous existing knowledge.

### Kinds of Strategies

Language strategies vary from “metacognitive techniques for organizing, focusing, and evaluating one’s own learning; affective strategies for handling emotions and attitudes; social strategies for cooperating with others in the learning process; cognitive strategies for linking new information with existing schemata and for analyzing and classifying it…” (Oxford, 1990).

Chamot and O’Malley in the CALLA Handbook note that students who “use strategic approaches to learning will comprehend spoken and written language more effectively, learn new information with greater facility, and be able to retain and use their second language better than students who do not use learning strategies.”

### Suggested Strategies

Following are a series of suggested strategies to be used with or by students during the different stages of engagement with a text.

### I. Pre-, During, and Post Activities

#### Purpose of Strategies

The purpose of pre-listening, pre-viewing, and pre-reading activities is to activate the schema or background knowledge (what the students already know about the topic to be viewed or heard). At this stage, the teacher tries to focus the students’ attention on relevant aspects of a text as they prepare to listen or to read a selection.

> The teacher can conduct an in-class pre-listening activity to prepare students for listening on their own. Such an activity could be designed to promote both top-down processing by activating background knowledge and bottom-up by presenting key vocabulary and structures (Joiner, p. 100).

#### Strategies

This preparation can be conducted in a variety of ways involving different strategies such as brainstorming, skimming, looking at illustrations, classifying, completing K-W-L charts, drawing, taking part in discussions, webbing, semantic mapping,
predicting, reviewing and/or pre-teaching of vocabulary and grammatical structures needed for comprehension. In addition, familiarity with the different kinds of text (newscasts, newspapers, ads, TV guides, weather reports, etc.) and the components of each is instrumental in facilitating student comprehension of a text.

Advance Organizers

Advance organizers are also effective in helping direct the students’ attention to the task. An advance organizer can consist of pictures. Pictorial representations and visual aids are especially effective in facilitating comprehension of a passage as they provide “visual information,” “facilitate contextualization,” and help build background knowledge (Martínez-Lage, 143).

Advance organizers may also be composed of questions or statements. For example, prior to reading or listening to a selection, the teacher can help students anticipate the content of the text by asking questions whose answers are found in the text. Ironically, questions are usually listed at the end of a text and are asked upon completion of the reading/listening selection. The teacher can also summarize what is to be viewed/heard in three brief sentences to give students a frame for understanding the information.

Organizers may also take the shape of graphics which help students organize the information visually.

Graphic organizers can be used by students to record their prior knowledge as they encounter new information. When students are listening or reading for information, they can write down the main ideas on a graphic organizer. When completed, the graphic organizer becomes an integrated summary or the content presented in the lesson, and can be used as a study guide.

(Chamot, and O’Malley, 1994).

The following items show specific examples of graphic organizers to be used at the pre-listening stage.
**Activating the schemata**

K-W-L charts are used to help elaborate on what students already know about a particular topic. The K and W can be completed as part of the pre-viewing or pre-listening activity while the L section would come at the completion of the activity (or the task).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K (Know)</th>
<th>W (Want to Know)</th>
<th>L (Learned)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Predicting

Prediction charts provide a format for how to use the context to make good guesses about what is to come next.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your predictions</th>
<th>The story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. Listening, Viewing, or Reading Activities

Purpose of Strategies
When viewing a film, video, or multimedia presentation or when reading a posting on the Internet, students are active participants who interact directly with the text. The strategies suggested below help the students make sense of the text as they encounter unfamiliar material.

Strategies
Some useful strategies to help them access the text involve scanning for key words or types of information; skimming for main idea; determining what is relevant from what is not relevant (students are not confident to select relevant information and may often be distracted by irrelevant bits of information); asking questions to monitor one’s own understanding; visualizing what is read/heard; completing graphic organizers, outlines, timelines, story grammars, story skeletons; making inferences; predicting and checking predictions; summarizing for oneself; rereading to clarify confusing parts; and reading/listening for what is known (familiar words, cognates, etc.). Some students viewing a video segment also resort to watching the segment with the sound off in order to get an overall idea of the viewing selection.

The following items show a variety of graphic organizers and suggestions to help students identify and/or organize information they hear or read.
Looking for information and/or details.

This process can be facilitated through the use of a graphic organizer which can focus the students on the needed information. The following chart can be used while students listen to a text containing many numbers.

As you listen to the text, complete the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number Dictation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does it pertain to?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is the temperature like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nantes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamonix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lille</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strasbourg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biarritz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart can be used with students listening to a weather report. It can be modified to ask “What is the weather like in each city?” Students can write a brief statement or can draw the symbols matching the weather forecast. Another option is to list the temperature (or the weather condition) and to ask students to write in the name of the corresponding city.

Technology: The Common Language, 1999
Extracting the main idea

Students often experience difficulty when they are asked to select the main idea. This is especially true if the main idea is not stated explicitly. Activities which focus on identification of the main idea of a story or a paragraph and which ask them to select key words or sentences will help them become better readers and/or listeners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Key sentence:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main idea (First paragraph)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key sentence:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main idea (Second paragraph)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key sentence:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main idea (Third paragraph)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key sentence:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main idea of entire passage:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Claudia Bay, ATFL-SAA, DLI, Presidio of Monterey, CA 93944
Taking Notes

Taking notes involves writing down key words and concepts in abbreviated verbal, graphic, or numerical form during a listening or a reading activity. Notes can be taken in a double entry format, with information and questions or personal responses.

Information | Questions or Personal Response

Reading Strategies: Helping students to Prepare for the Reading Competency Test

| Topic      | Notes | Short Report |

Birgitta Geltrich-Ludgate, Defense Language Institute, 1997
In the following example, a pad is used to help the students focus on the information needed. As students hear the message, they write down the requested information.

**WHILE YOU WERE OUT**

DATE: 

TIME: 

TO: 

FROM: 

WITH: 

PHONE: 

PLEASE CALL 

NEED TO SEE YOU 

RETURNED CALL 

CAME BY OFFICE 

URGENT 

WILL CALL AGAIN 

MESSAGE: 


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*Figuring out vocabulary in context*

Students need to understand that the meaning of a paragraph is not dependent on understanding every word in the selection. Teachers can help students realize that there are many decisions they can make as they come across an unfamiliar word or expression. Some examples are as follows:

- Skipping the word and reading to the end of the sentence.
- Categorizing the word as a noun, verb, adjective.
- Looking at prefix, suffix, and root to guess the meaning of the word.
- Guessing the meaning of the word according to the context.
- Using filler words such as “something,” “does something,” etc.
- Reading on and making no decision or reading on and later returning to what was unfamiliar if it is crucial to the understanding of the text.
- Looking at cognates.
- Using resource materials such as dictionaries, textbooks, information from another student.
Inferring

Using information in the text to guess meanings of new items, predict outcomes, or complete missing parts.

III. Post Listening, Viewing, Post Reading Activities

Strategies The following strategies can be included to aid student comprehension of the text: verifying predictions, comparing and contrasting, supplying different endings, summarizing, elaborating, transferring (relating the new information to the known information), writing an outline, reenacting a text, dramatizing interviews or scenes. In addition to the above strategies, graphic organizers can be used to facilitate learning.

Verifying what was learned

The K and W can be completed as part of the pre-viewing or pre-listening activity while the L section would come at the completion of the activity (or the task).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K (Know)</th>
<th>W (Want to Know)</th>
<th>L (Learned)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Verifying predictions

How to use the context to make good guesses about what is to come next. Use a prediction chart such as the following one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your predictions</th>
<th>The story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Summarizing

Making a mental or written summary of information gained through listening or reading.
Question 1: How can I use computers when there is only one computer available in my classroom?

Not many classrooms are equipped with enough computers for all students in the room. In some cases there is a computer lab available to teachers and their classes on a sign-up basis; however, the dilemma of what to do when there is only one computer for the entire class is a real one facing many foreign language teachers in our state. The following suggestions address this challenge.

Centers

One of the suggestions to address the scarcity of computers is to set up the class in centers so that one center is organized around the computer use, while the other centers incorporate a variety of other media with a specific task to be accomplished at each.

Some possibilities include a listening center with a tape player, a viewing center with a TV and VCR, a recording center with a tape recorder, a reading center with newspapers, magazines, and brochures from the target language, and a writing center where students prepare brochures, advertisements, cards, invitations, etc.

A Spanish teacher (name unknown) on the FL TEACH listserv in May 1997 makes the following suggestions:

- **Listening Center** - Tape recorder, headphones (if needed) and listening activities from the text book or supplementary recorded materials. This could also include a cloze activity with a popular or traditional song. The teacher can also tape instructions for students to perform either through drawing or by creating something. In addition, the teacher can record announcements or radio news and have students answer questions.
♦ **Technology Center** - Have a structured activity with the one computer in the classroom. It can be exploring a CD-ROM, doing a drill-and-practice software unit, e-mailing key pals, web searching for pictures and/or information in the target language, page layout or word-processing activities (include framed paragraphs or structured completion activities, creative writing, story starters, writing answers for an advice column, creating advertisements, Mad Libs) or developing a section of a class presentation on *HyperStudio* or *KidPix*. Four to a group in pairs for half the class and combine with another shorter activity (perhaps an information gap speaking activity).

♦ **Realia Center** - Develop comprehension and activity sheets to go with various realia for which the teacher has only two copies. Depending on the unit topic, consider using museum floor plans, city maps, country maps, road maps, posters, newspaper pages, phone books, trade books, etc.

♦ **Composition Center** - Have an area with dictionaries available. Give structured compositions, picture compositions, group compositions, comic strips with blank bubbles, journal entries. Make poetry using structured poetry (cinquain poems). Use magnetic way or flannel board pictures for compositions. Create and write picture postcards, letters, etc.

♦ **Creativity Center** - Have students develop reader's theater, puppet shows, skits or illustrated stories in pairs, groups or individually. These can be rehearsed for later presentation or videotaped at another center. (This would give two days total for this center with no group on the video.)

♦ **Speaking Center** - Students can do pair-speaking tasks, prepare, practice, and present their dialogue for the teacher before the end of class. Students could narrate a story into a tape according to a sequence of pictures (AP style), or develop their own sequence of pictures to narrate a story (this is especially effective with past tenses). Students can develop radio and/or TV commercials. These activities can often be a follow-up to something which was introduced in the realia center.

♦ **Culture Center** - Students can examine artifacts (coins, stamps, money, pictures, prints, photos, post cards, menus, etc.) and make inferences, comparisons and contrasts between the
target and the native culture. Art prints can be examined along with reading material. Filmstrips or videos can be viewed in a small group, and students can answer comprehension questions. Commercials, TV excerpts, travelogues, all can include personal reaction questions along with the comprehension questions. Poems and brief literary passages can be studied. Students can make maps or timelines, develop travel itineraries or brochures. They can follow directions to make some cultural products (Ojo de Dios, Piñatas, Mardi-Gras masques, etc.).

♦ **Games Center** - Drill and practice vocabulary, grammar, phrases or cultural knowledge with commercial or teacher-made games. These games can include Concentration, Trivial Pursuit, Pictionary, Scattergories, Scrabble, Win-Lose-or Draw, Cluedo, dice games. Include a Scavenger Hunt to be conducted throughout the building.

♦ **Reading Center** - Use longer readings from magazines, newspapers, or Internet resources. Have students read aloud and underline important parts. Ask some comprehension check questions. Ask them to display the information they read graphically.

♦ **Textbook Activities Center** - Although the teacher will use many of these in the initial teaching days, some of the more open-ended text activities or ancillary materials will make great center activities.

♦ **Library/Research Center** - Use target language encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, or the textbook for various research activities or scavenger hunts.

Students or groups of students are assigned to a specific center for a given amount of time (either a day or less depending on the task) and students eventually have to rotate through all the centers by a given date. A sign-up sheet and assignments at each center verify that each center was visited and the task completed. Some teachers recommend using a timer to announce the changing of centers, while others let the students rotate at their own pace provided that they visit and complete the assignments at a certain number of centers and that they go only to a center which has an empty seat.
When implementing a center approach within the classroom, organization is of primary importance.

√ Include an instruction card and any other items needed to complete the activity with each center. Make sure to give students detailed instruction and to divide clearly the role of the group members to prevent wasted time.

√ Get colorful boxes for materials. Store on accessible shelf. Color code by level. Laminate and tape station number on each box.

√ Tape up the sides of file folders to use as pockets for worksheets. These can be reused again and again. They can be put in the station box or stapled to the bulletin board. Station numbers are taped to these folders.

√ Keep the keys to all the activities in a three-ring binder so that they are always with you and you can control their use.

√ Make some activities self-correcting (when finished students come to ask you for the key or the key is left at each center in a specially identified file folder).

√ Develop or have students develop rubrics to assess their work at each center.

√ Set a timer if the students’ time at individual centers is limited. Some teachers ask their students to move clockwise when the timer rings.

√ Think of a strategy to group students if more than one student is to be at the center.

√ Assign a “secretary” for each group. This person will be responsible for ensuring that instructions are returned to the proper file folders which are kept either at each station or at a centrally located place.
TV Monitor

Another possibility when working on projects which require Internet access includes connecting the computer to a TV monitor so that the entire class sees the same screen. To do this an adapter must be used. Costs are reasonable ($150.00 to $500.00). Adapters which are commonly found in the classroom are TV-ator (cross platform), the AVERKEY 3 for the PC, or the Presenter 3 for the Mac. An RF modulator can be purchased inexpensively ($50.00) from such place as Radio Shack. All these devices convert the computer video to the TV screen.

Projection Devices

If the computer or the television screen is too little for viewing by a large group, teachers can use a high resolution LCD panel with an overhead projector to project on large screen or wall, dimming the classroom lights. The high resolution LCD projector gives a better picture but is also more expensive.

Presentation Tool

When there is only one computer in the classroom, the teacher, groups of students, or individual students can use it to present information. Such presentational programs as HyperStudio, PowerPoint, KidPix for children are especially effective with this set up.

Question 2: What if there is only one Internet hook-up?

Run Off Hard Copies

Teachers or students (at school or at home) can download Internet resources and print hard (paper) copies for classroom use. Go to “print” to get a copy of the page, then make copies or transparencies to give to students. Teachers, however, should be respectful of copyrighted materials (see copyright information in the Appendix) and be aware that some web pages may be larger than one might think.

Connect to TV Monitor

Another option involves connecting the computer to a TV monitor so that the entire class sees the same screen. To do this an RF modulator costing around $50.00 can be purchased from such places as Radio Shack. Also, an adapter can be used. Costs are reasonable ($150.00 to $500.00). See previous information on connecting to a TV monitor.
A FLTEACH participant suggests purchasing a video card ($150 or less) which has an RCA-type connection and can be plugged into the video IN connection in the back of a VCR or some TV sets. An RCA-type cable ($10) is needed. There is special software which comes with the card. The card is the ATI-3D Pro Turbo PC2TV which comes in either 4 megs video upgradable to 8 or an 8 meg card.

Cache It/Whack It

Whacking a Web site means that the Internet site from the server (wherever it is) is copied, downloaded, and stored on local storage (hard drive or local server). To whack a site, permission must be obtained to copy the site and to store it, but educational sites grant permission routinely. In addition, whacking a site requires that the needed software (usually under $50.00) be installed.

Software can be obtained from a variety of sources such as:


- *WebWhacker* from the ForeFront Group Inc. <http://www.ffg.com> or *Web Buddy* from Data Viz <http://www/dataviz.com>. These tools allow “you to download a complete Web site for local storage and quicker access, pointing your browser to the local files rather than the actual URL” (Lafford & Lafford, p. 215).

Whacking websites offers several advantages:

- The sites do not disappear.

- Students’ access to the Internet is limited to these sites, thus focusing them on the task and preventing them from looking up undesirable sites.

Learning Center

Teachers can set up the computer in a learning station as described previously.
Question 3: What if the students are more computer-literate than I am?

Foreign language teachers have received very little training in the use of technology in the classroom. Many are feeling unsure and self-conscious about using it in front of students who are often more knowledgeable than they are. However, there are some steps which can ease the teachers’ anxiety.

Previewing

One way to address this challenge is to ensure that teachers are familiar with the program to be shown. It is always in the teachers’ best interest to preview a program before its use to determine its content validity and its absence of errors. By doing so teachers can troubleshoot potential difficulties and verify that the program is user-friendly and appropriate to the age and language level of the users.

Students as Assistants

Additionally, teachers may use some of their most resourceful students as assistants to help with the instructions, to facilitate the running of the program, and/or to resolve potential difficulties.

Question 4: Where can I learn more about technology?

Computer Coordinator

When assistance is needed, teachers may contact the computer coordinator at their schools or at the central office. Teachers can make the supervisors aware of their needs for training and see if they will set up professional development activities to meet those needs.

Professional Organizations

Another option is to join the professional organizations because those organizations seek to be responsive to their members’ needs. Technology conferences such as those sponsored by NCETC and NCAECT offer many sessions focusing on technology.
Colleague: When venturing in new areas of technology, teachers may also want to seek advice and pair with a fellow teacher who is willing to share his/her knowledge.

College Courses: In addition, several community colleges and universities offer courses which are of value to the teachers seeking to further their skills.

Other Options: Additional resources involve accessing the NC DPI Website and/or contacting the NC Teacher Academy for Technology.

**Question 5: How do I keep students from looking up undesirable sites on the Internet?**

Parents and teachers may be worried that their children will access sites where drug, racism, explicit sexuality, or violence are illustrated. The following suggestions may be helpful to teachers when confronted with this situation.

**Supervision:** Close supervision and assignment of specific tasks versus random Internet use help keep students focused and may prevent them from looking up undesirable sites.

**Acceptable Use Policy:** Ask students to sign a contract stating their own responsibilities when using the Internet. Many school systems in North Carolina are asking students and their parents to sign an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) which outlines the students' role and responsibility in accessing the Internet. (See Appendix for AUP samples.)

**Blocking Programs:** Use programs which allow the blocking of certain sites. Some examples are CYBERsitter, NET Nanny, Surf-Watch or CyberPatrol.

**Bookmarking Sites:** Bookmark the sites to be used on a project. This solution helps students stay more focused on their projects, and at the same time, it ensures that they will not get into undesirable sites.

**Cache it or Whack it:** Cache it on the hard drive or whack it (WebWhacker). See previous description for whacking websites and the benefits of whacking websites.
A Teacher's Tips for Using the Computer Without a Lot of Hassle
J. Michelle Burnette, Henderson County

1. Be sure that all the students understand what is expected of them and how to run the program before you send them alone to the computer.

2. Be sure that at least one student in each class knows the ropes and can assist the other students so that your lessons are not interrupted.

3. Allow the students to be independent users of the computer, encourage them to try on their own before coming to you or the student assistant for help. (Do not be afraid to let students take responsibility and ownership and to involve them in the selection of materials.)

4. Tape an index card with some reminders and tips for the program to the side of the monitor.

5. Carry a notebook with class rosters and check (or better yet, have a student keep up with the students' turn on the computer). Good record-keeping is very important.

6. Use every computer available. (My students are able to use the Mac in their classroom and the two Macs in the media center. Three computers are in use at all times.) Try to schedule Spanish in the computer lab occasionally if possible for whole class activities.

7. Have the students gather around the computer for instruction, sit on the floor, whatever (it is not ideal but it works) if you do not have a whole class presentation system.

8. Remember our goal is to teach a foreign language. Don't get caught up in the technology for the sake of technology. Ask yourself, "Are the students using the language enough in this activity?" or "Is the activity simple and brief enough so that all the students are getting a turn on a fairly regular basis?"
Tips and Criteria for Selecting and Evaluating Audiovisual Materials, Computer Software, CD-ROMs, and Web Sites

I. Selecting Materials

When teachers choose technology materials designed to improve foreign language instruction, Hoffman recommends basing the selections on the following needs:

- to bring materials with cultural authenticity and linguistic value into the classroom;
- to expose students to more than one person who speaks the target language;
- to see current events that make the target culture (including geography, history, political organizations) and the target language more real;
- to provide materials from diverse sources for a rich variety of vocabulary, social contexts, and culturally enriched settings;
- to provide students with a complete multisensory experience of language in a cultural context, so that students are able to hear and see the language used by real people in real-life situations (e.g., expressions, body language, nuances of conversational gestures, different voices, rates of speech, and kinds of speech - formal, informal, slang);
- to evaluate more effectively students' foreign language skills via the technology medium used to teach them;
- to present a variety of models to show language/culture functioning in different ways for different purposes (e.g., to inform, to entertain, to persuade); and
- to integrate foreign languages with other disciplines in order to create a holistic, natural approach to foreign language acquisition.

Hoffman, E. R. "Technology Proficiency for Foreign Language Teachers." PEALS, Fall, 1993, pp. 16-17.
II. Evaluating Materials

There are many programs on the market which look glitzy but which do very little to advance the students’ language skills. To guide teachers in their decisions to purchase technology resources, Evalutech <http://www.sret.sreb.org> or <http://www/evalutech.sreb.org> has developed a list of criteria used in:

1. evaluating audiovisual materials
2. evaluating computer software
3. evaluating CD-ROM
4. evaluating web sites

The following is reprinted with permission from ITES/NCDPI <www.sret.sreb.org>
Criteria for Evaluating Audiovisual Materials

Content

Accuracy:

- Error-free information
- Current information
- Objective, balanced presentation of information
- Bias-free viewpoints and images
- Balanced representations of cultural, ethnic, and racial groups
- Correct use of grammar, spelling, and sentence structure

 Appropriateness:

- Concepts and vocabulary relevant to students’ abilities
- Information relevant to North Carolina K-12 curriculum
- Presentation compatible with the intellectual maturity of intended audience
- Suitable length
- Appropriate emphasis
- Medium appropriate to the message

Scope:

- Information of sufficient scope to adequately cover the topic for the intended audience
- Logical progression of topics
- Components are easily identifiable

Technical Aspects

Narration:

- Clear and easy-on-the-ear
- Free from cultural bias
- Vocabulary appropriate for intended audience
- Pacing appropriate to audience and content
- Consistency and appropriateness of quality and volume of sound
Visuals:

- Characterized by variety without repetition
- Enhance interpretation of narrative
- Appropriate and relevant
- Objectivity
- Lack of bias (sexual, ethnic, religious, etc.)
- Color where needed
- Captions or subtitles
- Labels on graphs, charts, and diagrams
- Illustrations of sufficient frequency and number
- Illustrations and graphics legible and appropriate in size

Sound:

- Music enhances without distracting
- Clear and consistent volume
- Adds to aesthetics of presentation

Documentation

Teacher’s Guide:

- Supplementary or background information provided
- Summary of contents
- Script
- Vocabulary lists
- Suggestions for classroom use, lesson plans, related activities
- Stated objectives
- Answer key
- Information about related items (e.g., series, other media)

Potential InstructionalUses:

- Supplement or support lessons
- Whole-class, cooperative groups, centers, or independent study
- Gifted and talented
- Remedial
- Introduction or review
- Reference
- Enrichment
- Leisure reading
- At-risk

Reasonable price in comparison to similar items.
Criteria for Evaluating Computer Software

Content

Accuracy:

- Error-free information
- Current information
- Objective, balanced presentation of information
- Bias-free viewpoints and images
- Balanced representations of cultural, ethnic, and racial groups
- Correct use of grammar, spelling, and sentence structure

 Appropriateness:

- Concepts and vocabulary relevant to students’ abilities
- Information relevant to North Carolina K-12 curriculum
- Interaction compatible with the physical and intellectual maturity of intended audience

Scope:

- Information of sufficient scope to adequately cover the topic for the intended audience
- Logical progression of topics
- Variety of activities, with options for increasing complexity

Technical Aspects

Navigation:

- Rapid retrieval of information and screen transitions
- Intuitive icons, menus, and directional symbols that foster independent use
- Controllable pace, including options for stop/pause/exit
- Controllable sound

Save/Record-Keeping Features:

- Options for printing/downloading text
- Save option for games or activities in progress
- Note-taking feature, when appropriate
- Record-keeping feature to monitor student progress
Presentation:

- Information presented in a manner to stimulate imagination and curiosity
- Activities that provide opportunities for creative problem solving
- Use of appropriate and supportive feedback
- Options for help, tutorial segments
- Uncluttered screen displays
- Captions, labels, or legends for visuals
- Legible text and print size that are appropriate for the intended audience

Quality:

- Visuals relevant to the content
- Sound that is clearly understandable and consistent in quality and volume
- Sound and music that are relevant to screen display

Documentation

Technical Information:

- Descriptions of specific hardware requirements for operating the application
- Instructions for installation and operation
- Toll free technical support telephone number

Teacher’s Guide:

- Description of target audience
- Summary of the contents of the application
- Instructional and/or behavioral objectives
- Suggestions for classroom use, lesson plans, related activities
- Ancillary materials for student use, such as camera-ready worksheets and activity pages

Reasonable price in comparison to similar items.
Criteria for Evaluating CD-ROM

Content

Accuracy:

- Error-free information
- Current information
- Objective, balanced presentation of information
- Bias-free viewpoints and images
- Balanced representations of cultural, ethnic, and racial groups
- Correct use of grammar, spelling, and sentence structure

Appropriateness:

- Concepts and vocabulary relevant to students' abilities
- Information relevant to North Carolina K-12 curriculum
- Interaction compatible with the physical and intellectual maturity of intended audience

Scope:

- Information of sufficient scope to adequately cover the topic for the intended audience
- Logical progression of topics
- Variety of activities, with options for increasing complexity

Technical Aspects

Navigation:

- Rapid retrieval of information and screen transitions
- Intuitive icons, menus, and directional symbols that foster independent use
- Controllable pace, including options for stop/pause/exit
- Controllable sound and narration that can be turned off separately
- Search paths for return to previous screens viewed
- Easy access to cross references, additional information
- Two levels of searching (including Boolean strategy), when appropriate
- Bookmark and highlighting features, when appropriate

Save/Record-Keeping Features:

- Logical options for printing/downloading all or selected text, and graphics
- Save feature for search results, when appropriate
• Save option for games or activities in progress
• Note-taking feature, when appropriate
• Record-keeping feature to monitor student progress

Presentation:

• Information presented through text, motion, still images (slides, diagrams, paintings, sound, etc.)
• Information presented in a manner to stimulate imagination and curiosity
• Activities that provide opportunities for creative problem solving
• Use of appropriate and supportive feedback
• Options for help, tutorial segments
• Uncluttered screen displays
• Captions, labels, or legends for visuals
• Legible text and print size that are appropriate for the intended audience

Quality:

• High quality visuals relevant to the content
• High quality audio and video consistent with state-of-the-art reproduction capabilities
• Sound that is clearly understandable and consistent in quality and volume
• Sound and music that are relevant to screen display

Documentation

Technical Information:

• Descriptions of specific hardware requirements for operating the application
• Instructions for installation and operation
• Instructions for search and help features
• Toll free technical support telephone number

Teacher's Guide:

• Description of target audience
• Summary of the contents of the application
• Instructional and/or behavioral objectives
• Suggestions for classroom use, lesson plans, related activities
• Ancillary materials for student use, such as camera-ready worksheets and activity pages

Reasonable price in comparison to similar items.
Criteria for Evaluating Web Sites

Content

Accuracy:

- Error-free information
- Current information
- Update frequently
- Recent "last" update
- Objective, balanced presentation of information
- Bias-free viewpoints and images
- Correct use of grammar, spelling, and sentence structure
- Primary outlink (link that takes you to additional site) content is relevant, authentic, and appropriate
- Authority
- Expertise/reputation of author/designer
- Contact information for author/designer
- Expertise/reputation of host site

Appropriateness:

- Concepts and vocabulary relevant to students' abilities
- Information relevant to North Carolina K-12 curriculum
- Interaction compatible with the physical and intellectual maturity of intended audience

Scope:

- Information of sufficient scope to adequately cover the topic for the intended audience
- Logical progression of topics with original site (site being evaluated) and primary links
- Information offered not easily available in other sources

Technical Aspects

Navigation:

- Ready access to site; site not overloaded
- Images load within reasonable timeframe
- Intuitive icons, menus, and directional symbols that foster independent use
- Inlinks (links that take you to locations within the original site) that allow easy navigation throughout the site
• Standard multimedia formats
• Logical options for printing/downloading all or selected text and graphics

Presentation:

• Captions, labels, or legends for all visuals
• Legible text and print size that are appropriate for the intended audience
• Graphics and art functional, not merely decorative
• Information presented through text, motion, still images and sound
• Information presented in a manner to stimulate imagination and curiosity
• Product advertising not intrusive

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