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BGSU Minecraft Initiative Website

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BGSU Minecraft Initiative Website Reflection

The BGSU Minecraft Initiative is a new program that uses *Minecraft* as an interactive

teaching tool. Students at Bowling Green State University who take the class are put into groups

to create a *Minecraft* world that would help elementary students learn a concept, like geometry,

history, or math. The BGSU Minecraft Initiative uses a special version of *Minecraft* called

Minecraft: Education Version. This version has special tools for teachers to create interactive

worlds for students to visit. Some tools offer the ability to create characters that will have dialog

with students as they learn the subject of that world. Other tools help the teacher when teaching

the lesson, like the ability to freeze all the students' characters while the teacher gives

instructions.

Using video games to teach students is a relatively new topic. The BGSU Minecraft

Initiative is one of the few organizations at a university that uses *Minecraft* as a teaching tool.

One of the problems the program is currently facing is the ability to spread knowledge of itself to

anyone interested. Currently, the only way to show other teachers or universities what the BGSU

Minecraft Initiative has accomplished is to send files over email. This is very inefficient and not

scalable. While it is possible to send most of the semesters' work currently, as the program

continues to grow, there will be too much information to send over an email. My project aimed

at providing a way to share the work of the BGSU Minecraft Initiative by creating a website to

host all the work of the program and its students. The website needed to be easy to navigate and

organized in an easy to understand manner. While it did not need to be flashy or over-the-top, it

needed to follow the best practices of modern web design. The website needed to be easy to maintain and add new content over time. The website is not the main output of the BGSU Minecraft Initiative, and as such, need to be a useful tool to the program without taking up too much time.

The website was building using *Joomla!*, an open source content management system. *Joomla!* allows those unfamiliar with web design to quickly add new content to the website. It also provided a structure and organization to the content within the site. The website is focused around the content of each group. The homepage has a brief description of what the BGSU Minecraft Initiative is about, what its goals are, and what the website hosts. On the left is a menu that contains links to the students' projects organized by semester, starting with the latest semester. Each semester page also has a quick description about that semester's groups as a whole, providing some background into each groups' projects. Every group project has their own page to display their lessons. Each group was required to make a poster board for their project. The poster board is the first thing visitors will see when they visit a group's page. Often, the poster boards contain pictures of the world they created in *Minecraft*, as well as a few paragraphs explaining their work. Below the poster board is the text the students wrote to more thoroughly explain their lessons. These write-ups usually contain the teaching standards that the lesson meets. They may also include details on how to effectively use the world they created to teach students, or describe how to teach students using their lessons, like having the students complete a handout. At the end of each page are other media that go along with the project. Most groups had screenshots from the world they created. Some groups even had detailed walkthrough videos hosted on *YouTube*. The pictures and videos were gathered and posted on the page so visitors to the website can see what the students created.

Overall, I think the website accomplished most of its objectives. Unfortunately, by the end of the semester, it was not live yet. The website does not currently have a server ready to host it. Provided all goes well, it will end up on a Bowling Green State University server, possibly even under the BGSU domain. There are also a few customizations that can be made to the website, like perhaps changing the color scheme to match the university's better. It is a very interesting project to work on, and I learned a lot about making websites. I will like to continue my work next semester.