

The KUAPress Project

Digital publishing for the KUA Community

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BSMIS Fall 2010

Strategic Initiative – KUAPress

Executive Summary:

The Strategic Initiative document examines how the KUAPress project aligns with the mission, vision and values of Kimball Union Academy. It discusses how student web publishing can be used as a way to strengthen the school community and augment classroom learning. The KUAPress initiative can also be used as a marketing tool for the school.

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Any strategic initiative must be aligned with the mission and core values of Kimball Union Academy.

Mission -

Mastery, Creativity, Responsibility and Leadership

Core community values

- Respect for oneself and others
- Commitment and honesty and the highest ethical standards
- Concern for the environment

Using a TOWS (Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Strengths) matrix to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the organization in relation to the threats and opportunities affecting it, show that a strategic initiative involving an easy to use web publishing platform like KUAPress can be of great advantage to Kimball Union Academy and to the students that it serves in many different ways.

For the school community, it can be a way of becoming more involved with the students as individuals as the community visits and comments on student sites.

For faculty it can be a way of keeping class conversations going outside of class time and on breaks. It can facilitate conversations with adults from anywhere in the world who are versed in the field being studied through guest contributions and comments.

For students it can be a way of finding a voice, learning to present themselves in a professional way online and learning to manage their online identity as well as getting a head start on using a tool in use now at many of the universities they will be attending.

For the administration, it can be a marketing tool and a way of distinguishing the school from its competitors. The KUAPress publishing platform can be used to showcase student talent give students an edge in the college application process and as a draw to prospective students and their parents.

Mastery, creativity, responsibility and leadership must all, in today's world and the world of the future, necessarily involve communication technology of some kind. In whatever capacity our students find themselves working, when they graduate they will be using online communication tools to do that work. They will be working cooperatively online and they must know how to do that effectively and professionally.

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Most immediately, at college they will be using online tools to communicate for classes. Many universities now use blogs and similar publishing tools in their courses.

After college they will need to know how to present themselves online if they hope to have working lives of value. A resume is no longer enough. Employers will be looking for professional portfolios of work and they won't want paper copies.

If they are artists or musicians they will need to know how to present and market their work online. If they are business people they will be using a web presence to market products, using online discussion tools to communicate with other members of the company in distant locations. If they are activists they will be using the web to organize. If they are scholars they will be using the web to publish. In any profession, any capacity, they will be publishing to the web.

The tools available to any K-12 student in today's world are so advanced as to be almost frightening to those of us who grew up without the Internet as a presence in our lives. Communication through video clips on YouTube and other sharing sites, communication through social networks and yes, blogs reach a global audience, instantly.

We must prepare our students to communicate through these tools and the tools that have yet to be developed, the tools that may be just a few months away, in a responsible, creative way. If they do not have mastery of these tools, if they do not understand how to use them, our students are at a great disadvantage.

In the last paragraph of KUA's Statement of Inclusion I find reference to connections with the global community, which the initiative that I propose speaks to directly.

Celebrating Individuality, Community, and Global Awareness

Kimball Union Academy is dedicated to providing a welcoming and safe environment in which all community members value and respect each other's unique qualities and contributions.

We are committed to nurturing a learning environment where the principles of dignity, equity, and justice are an essential part of our culture and daily life.

We encourage the exploration of independence and interdependence as we affirm our promise to honor individuality, celebrate our differences, and embrace our connections with each other and the global community.

Blogs, through posts and comments, invite conversation. Because they are online and available to a worldwide audience they embrace connections with the global community in an immediate and personal way.

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Implementation:

Planning

Involve College Counseling, Academic departments in the initiative by presenting to them the benefits to students. Involve the Communication and Development departments by presenting to them the benefits to the institution.

Budgeting

WordPress is open-source software. The hardware platform is already in place and in use. The only cost is in time.

Deliverables

Student owned, designed and populated sites that are a credit to the student and the institution.

Measuring success:

The number of student sites, both portfolios of their schoolwork and personal interest sites, will measure quantitative success.

Impact on the organization:

Structurally I anticipate no impact on the organization. The impact on faculty will be felt as students seek guidance on their sites. This may take the form of proofreading or technical help as more faculty become comfortable using the web to publish material themselves. The impact on IT will be not much more significant than it is now. I support the platform for faculty presently using it and provide technical help and training to them. Training in the form of screencasts and online support materials may even reduce the impact on the IT department.

Conclusion:

KUA is a college preparatory school. It prepares students for college. Yet beyond preparing our students for more school, KUA also strives to prepare them for life, to give them a foundation of values to build their lives upon. As any good school does, KUA attempts to help each student find his or her own voice, talent and passion. The KUAPress strategic initiative can be of great value in this effort