

Parent / Guardian Documents

What is Weebly?

Weebly is a site that allows users to use templates to build creative personal websites to fit their own needs and style for free. Some key features are the easy drag and drop addition of numerous kinds of multimedia files, the fact that use of the website and hosting services are free of cost to students, the fact that there are no advertisements on the page (which can be a benefit to potentially impressionable young students) and also that it will allow them to quickly and easily blog and comment on each other's work. Weebly for education is hosted on company servers in the U.S. so there is the added concern of privacy issues that students and parents will need to be made aware of.

Why am I using Weebly?

Online activities can be exciting and engaging learning opportunities for students. Many students today already have access to technology at home and are eager to incorporate the use of laptops, computers and mobile devices into their learning environment. Because of their familiarity with technology they can quickly 'pick up' how to work within programs or apps to complete assignments and activities. The use of technology in the classroom allows for individualized learning and encourages students to be creative when providing evidence of their learning. This, in turn, results in deeper, more lasting understandings of the world around them.

There is, however, a risk involved in working online, specifically in sharing information and in having online activities tracked (whether for marketing purposes or other, more questionable reasons) and students and parents must be made aware of any risks the student might encounter during their time working online. In addition, students need to learn about privacy issues and copyright concerns in order to safely and ethically participate in a variety of activities online.

www.education.weebly.com will be used in our classroom this year for a variety of purposes. Students will build and maintain personal websites that will act as both a storage place for exemplars of their work (ePortfolio) as well as a place for them to journal or 'blog' about their learning experiences. They will also have the opportunity to comment on other students blogs as part of our peer review process. These educational sites are able to be viewed only by those who have the class password and are not available for public viewing online unless you have a password (our password is: xxxxx). We will be able to use Weebly free of charge and the easy drag and drop feature to import data and multimedia files make it a user-friendly and easy to learn tool. In addition, students should not have to worry about advertisements on the page on which they are working that could be inappropriate or cause distraction.

Alternate activities will be provided for students who do not receive parental consent for use of online resources. These activities will complement work being completed by other students online and will be marked using the same guidelines for content and creativity.

Adapted from original document created by K. Sward. Changes may occur; this document is current as of terms of service on October 15, 2014. Check with your own school to make sure it meets your school's privacy policy. Review completed by Breanne Quist.

In the event that there is a breach in privacy controls or any information becomes accessible to any user of the website, or in the event that inappropriate content is posted on student websites access to the sites will be locked immediately, the principal and parents will be advised of the issue accordingly and the inappropriate content or use will be contained and removed. Additional class discussions will be held in order to help students understand the issue, the concern and the proper way to rectify the situation without providing specific details or identifying information.

Risks that could arise

The determination of risk vs. benefit for each tool, application or website is reviewed and assessed by the classroom teacher prior to embarking on any learning activity with students, however parents and students should also have a voice in determining suitable and safe activities for use in the classroom. As our class will be using a variety of online tools and resources in our learning this year, it is important that you are aware of the risks involved in using each tool, understand the privacy practices of companies whose tools or websites we will be working with and are then able to make an educated choice as to whether you wish your child to participate in such known activities online or not.

Please review the attached permission form and privacy policy for education.weebly.com (the website that we will be using in our upcoming class activities) and if you agree that the benefits outweigh the risks, please complete and sign the permission form allowing your child to participate. If you do not want your child to have an online 'identity', participate in online activities, or if you would like your child to participate using an alternate name to protect their privacy, all are viable options and you simply need to indicate your wishes in the space provided on the permission form.

Your child's safety in our learning environment, whether virtual or real, is of the utmost concern for us and we want to make every learning experience safe and enjoyable for every student. In order to do so we outline some 'best practices' in working online in class and review proper 'netiquette' on a regular basis. Please see the attached outline of specific privacy and safety rules we follow whenever we use technology in class. These rules outline proper posting practices, problem solving for unknown situations students may find themselves in as well as appropriate and inappropriate information for students to post online.

Information added to a site using Weebly for Education is stored and hosted on company servers which are located in the U.S. This means that any information added to student sites is potentially viewable and trackable under the jurisdiction of the US Patriot Act (2011). This adds privacy concerns to our work and students will be learning about appropriate and inappropriate content for their websites. Student sites will be password protected and in order to maintain the privacy of our classroom websites it is imperative that students do not share the password with anyone other than their parent, and that parents not share the password with others, thus making the sites openly accessible.

What's 'personal information'?

“People have different standards of what they consider ‘personal’ information. Sharing over social media has done a fair bit to reset our expectation. Regardless of personal definition, if the information, data, or content could be used to identify you, it’s ‘personal information’ – though professional or business contact information may be treated separately.” 1(Hengstler, 2013). A student’s personal information could include: name, date of birth, address, telephone number, email address, educational information, and anything that identifies an individual, including photographs. If any information, data or content could be used to identify you it is then qualified as “personal information”.

For the purposes of this project, students will be given a generic login that will identify them using their first name only. Information such as age, gender, grade, school information, home address or telephone number or other contact information WILL NOT be required nor shared. Students have also been advised to not post pictures of themselves or other students in our class or school and not to include email addresses or usernames for other sites or apps on their personal webpages.

Why is BC so sensitive to privacy laws regarding data?

“Shortly after the 9/11 attacks on the US in 2001, the American government enacted the United States Patriot Act that allowed the United States government to search private and public data housed on servers on United States soil. At the time, The British Columbia Medical Services Plan was hosting our provincial medical records in the United States. Unions in British Columbia expressed concern over the ability of the American government to search through British Columbian’s personal medical records and histories. Ultimately, the rule is: if you transfer or authorize the transfer of your personal information outside of Canada, that data is subject to the laws and practices of the country where it sits – be it the United States, China, or India. (Remember that minors, under the legal care of an adult, cannot authorize such a transfer.) Not all locations have similar notions about your right to privacy. Since cloud computing is a relatively new technology, the laws and best practices governing it are still changing and there is a need to stay current.” 1(Hengstler, 2013)

Why is a consent form necessary?

Various provinces in Canada – and other jurisdictions across the world – have enacted laws to protect personal privacy. In BC, the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) covers all independent schools. It is one of the most defined privacy protection frameworks in Canada. PIPA states that ‘private bodies’ such as independent schools have defined legal requirements for handling your personal information when it is within their ‘custody’ and ‘control’. Generally, private bodies must make sure that your personal information cannot be stored or accessed outside of Canada without your expressed permission – ‘consent’ (Note: there are certain expectations in the law like data covered by treaties, etc.). PIPA states that your consent must be in writing, state to whom your personal information may be disclosed, and how your information will be used. Also, if you post personal information about others, their permission must also be secured.

What if I don't want to consent?

You have the right as a parent/guardian to withhold consent to your child using Weebly. Alternate activities will be provided to students in the event that parents/caregivers choose to withhold consent and that selection of an alternate activity will not affect a student's grade.

While no internet-based experience can ever be 100% risk-free, know that I will take every reasonable measure to manage expected risks.

^[1] Julia Hengstler is the Educational Technologist with the Faculty of Education at Vancouver Island University & an Instructor in Educational Technology. Please visit this site for more background information about her:

http://www.viu.ca/education/faculty/profiles/hengstler_j.asp