**Compare and Contrast**

I chose to evaluate two sites of orchestra programs similar to my own.  Both programs have traveling teachers that teach multiple levels of orchestra, and both programs also are contained within a small pocket of schools that are semi-rural.  It was immediately clear that, even within very similar programs, the information provided by the teacher and the user groups are starkly different in so many ways.

The two sites I evaluated were the Sikeston Junior High Orchestra (SJH) program, [https://jh.sikestonr6.org/227834\_3 (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.](https://jh.sikestonr6.org/227834_3%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) and the Jefferson Middle School Orchestra Program (JMH), [https://www.cpsk12.org/Domain/3319#calendar8721/20180830/month (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.](https://www.cpsk12.org/Domain/3319%22%20%5Cl%20%22calendar8721/20180830/month%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

Both programs are run by women very similar to my age, we all play violin, we all teach the secondary level of orchestra, and we all also studied at the same university for our undergraduate degrees.

The similarities lie in what is the most crucial information that needs to be provided to the user.  In an orchestra program, concert dates are absolutely top priority.  As both teachers instruct pre-teen and teenage students, this information needs to be given at the start of the year, so as not to overlap with sports, jobs, homework, etc.  Both pages provided a calendar that was interactive and visible without selecting a link.  Megan's page included the calendar in the left tab towards the bottom of the page. Her dates appeared to be up-to-date for the current year.  Alison's calendar was a significant amount of the home page.  However, her page had outdated information, as no concerts were listed for the school year at all.  It does appear that in both sites, the calendar application is part of their school district's web design tools.  In terms of the calendar inclusion, I liked the size and importance of Alison's page (JMS) and that it was on the main page of her site.  Megan's (SJH) calendar was all the way at the bottom of her page, and as someone who often is referring to different calendars throughout my own district, I need it to be easy, and very quick, to locate on a page.

Both pages appeared to be run through the school district, as the themes for their pages matched the overall look of the their school's main page. I don't know how much freedom they had in terms of different header types, but Megan's (SJH) decision to have the headers of the navigational tabs a different color with the white writing was striking, and drew my attention immediately.  If you were a student or parent of this program and visited this page, it is easy to understand the organization of the page very quickly, even if you didn't read any of the headers.

**Strengths of Alison's Site (JMS)**

The information on this site was very concise.  One would be able to determine quickly whether the information they need would be on the page.  The design is simple, and in many ways makes it much more user friendly.  It is pleasing to the eye and easy to understand.  The accessibility to her different pages was also easy to navigate.  Her relative links in the left margin showed all four links in a row, and highlighted the current link in a blue color.

**Weaknesses of Alison's site (JMS)**

The biggest weakness of the page was that the information provided on it is out of date.  As a music teacher, I know that a lot of the parents coming to my webpage will be looking first and foremost for my syllabus and the concert dates.  Both of these things are on her homepage, but neither are updated.  As a parent, I would see that and almost immediately contact the director for the information I need.  I also feel that within the structure of her home page, the syllabus feels a bit like an afterthought.  In my readings for IS\_LT 7361, I learned about proximity as it relates to design.  I immediately thought of that when I saw where the syllabus was linked.  Her main page has her contact information, and then about halfway down the page, off-centered, and closer to the calendar than the contact information, is the link to the syllabus.  I feel strongly that symmetry would make that particular link much easier to locate.

**Strengths of Megan's site (SJH)**

Megan's page is very organized and pleasant to look at.  The school colors are really navigating the them of her page, but she has used them in contrast in a way that is striking.  All of Megan's information is up-to-date, and even planned a fair amount ahead (although that is probably because she went on maternity leave immediately this year and had to have her plans made for her long-term sub).  Her home page is always easy to locate, as it is the top option in her relative links in the margin.  Megan appears to have a hierarchy of importance on her main page.  The first thing you'll find is links to her classes, and at the end of the list is her personal bio and photo albums of her ensemble.

**Weaknesses of Megan's site (SJH)**

From a parent's perspective, there is probably more information is necessary.  Lesson plans are laid out very clearly for the entire hour.  This is definitely beneficial to the students and teacher, but parents would have to read through a list of activities for each class where a significant amount of the information would not make much sense.  I also feel that the calendar needs to have a home much higher in that hierarchal list.  Again, as a parent and a teacher of a program very similar to this, the most important things I need from the teacher are the syllabus and concert dates.  Concerts are, after all, our assessment and end goal of orchestra.

**Use Cases**

Case #1

A high school student is looking for study materials for a piece assigned to the orchestra for our next concert.  The goal of the student is to locate the proper page that includes the links to study materials.  The student would navigate to the orchestra home page, then would select their class from the relative links listed on the side.  They will then be able to select the materials from an orchestra specific list and download them.  The materials will be files available for download and would open in a new tab so they can be downloaded individually.  The student can then use the materials provided in their practice at home.

Case #2

A parent of an elementary orchestra student needs to locate and download a bus form for their child to attend an after school orchestra program once a week.  Their goal is to find the transportation form, with pertinent information already filled in, so their child has transportation to the rehearsal.  The parent will go to the orchestra home page, select their child's orchestra, and will then be able to select the downloadable form directly from the site. They can either print or save the form as a PDF to be forwarded to the instructor, or directly to the bus company.

**Comments from Peers:**

**James Green –**

Sikeston Junior High Website:

This was definitely my favorite of the two websites. It seemed to flow much better than the other website. I liked how the background stayed in one place as the entire page moved. Using photos for the background was definitely a plus for me. I also liked the color scheme of this website, as it is visually pleasing and there really isn't a drastic change in color that causes discomfort. I liked that the links worked quickly and the tabs made sense as to why and where they would link to. I also enjoyed that there was a calendar scroller that was easily accessed so that I could check upcoming events! I really didn't see any design flaws, so that really sums up this website!

Jefferson Middle School:

I really did not like the color scheme on this page. It was visually displeasing and it did not provide the information that the other website had to offer at a click of a button. I did like that the calendar was enlarged and easy to access. The fonts were all different, which made some of them hard to read, which also brings up punctuation. I did like that the website designer information is at the bottom and easy to access, as well as the teachers information. There is also a lot of empty space which left me feeling like there could have been room to add more widgets or more content to that page.

**Danilyn Overton –**

Sikeston Junior High Website:

I appreciated the Sikeston's site a little more just because to me it is organized in a more aesthetically pleasing way. The pictures were aligned and organized in a way that lead your eye to the context. It was easy to use and easy to understand. If I were a parent or student looking for particular answers about my class schedule this website would serve its purpose.

Jefferson Middle School:

Although both the sites were extremely similar in their base setup Jefferson wasn't as welcoming. The pictures were organized in an unappealing way. My eyes had to search for the links and access points without easily knowing where to go. I do believe I would be able to easily learn to use the site with ease it just wasn't as appealing as the Sikeston site.

**Blyth Girnus –**

For this site: [https://jh.sikestonr6.org/247154\_4 (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.](https://jh.sikestonr6.org/247154_4%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

I thought the information was organized well. It was easy to find information by grade, instrument type. I thought there could have been more colors for the heading texts. I like the breakout boxes with the Christmas Concert and calendar information highlighted. For parents, having this information at top of the page in a contrasting color made it easy to find and was great for adding to calendars. The calendar icon at the top of the page would make it easy for parents to find crucial dates. The email for contact information was also easy to find.

 [https://www.cpsk12.org/Domain/3319#calendar8721/20180830/month (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.](https://www.cpsk12.org/Domain/3319%22%20%5Cl%20%22calendar8721/20180830/month%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

For this site, I thought the overall design was quite simple. I liked the little cartoon guy playing the violin, it made the site stand out to me in contrasting the two different sites and they were both text heavy and not inclusive of many images or videos. The calendar took precedence on this page and wasn't necessarily a bad thing if that is your priority in visiting the site. The left hand side listed the schedule  and i liked that her contact information was one of the firs things you see. The site is a bit lackluster, but is easy to navigate through which is great if you are a busy parent looking for quick information that isn't buried in multiple tabs.

**Samantha Hayes –**

**Jefferson Middle School**

Based on my review, the Jefferson Middle School had the least amount of resources available on their website. The layout was very simple and kind of jumbled. There were pictures of the school logo and a child playing the violin (which I think was supposed to be a GIF but the picture doesn't move...). The important documents only had one document (the syllabus) and there is a calendar linked to a customizable calendar at the bottom. As I said, the layout is very simple, which I like simple and minimalistic, but the aesthetics aren't very pleasing to the eye.

**Sikeston Junior High**

This website is also a simple design--probably even simpler than the JMS website because there are no pictures and not calendar available. The content is linked out to other resources, which is helpful for users. I feel as if for this purpose, this website is helpful for its visitors. There does not need to be a lot of pizzaz and wow-factors for the delivery of content.