Lesson Shortcomings

While we have created an excellent lesson for students to critically analyze web pages, there are some possible shortcomings that we have discussed.  One possible issue that students might face while participating in this lesson includes reading problems.  In a fourth grade classroom, there are many students who may be reading below grade level.  They may have trouble comprehending what the websites are saying and what they are reading.  With this in mind, in future years, it would be important for the teacher to group students heterogeneously so that there are students of all abilities that can support each other.  Also, it may be beneficial to look into using a text-to-talk tool, such as Kurzweil or a web-based site, to support students in the classroom with this lesson.

We have also discussed lack of technology and websites that are available on our networks.  Since we have not been able to try opening the websites at our schools, it may be possible that some of the websites are blocked on the networks.  It would be very important to try going to the sites using a student account to make sure that the questionable websites are not blocked.  Looking at the sites that we have chosen, the bog site may be blocked from Anne Arundel County, Howard County, and other public schools.  The restrictions on what sites students can get on have gotten stricter through the years and we may need to re-evaluate the sites that we are sharing with students.

There also may be an issue with students being able to type and manipulate the computers.  If students are not comfortable using the technology and have not had practice before, they may be held up by the technology. Not all students have access to computers and have used them frequently before.  We are asking students to be responsible with their computer use, but without practice, they may not be capable of it.

Students in fourth grade are not finished developing yet.  Their brains and critical thinking skills need a lot of time to grow and develop.  Younger students often take things that they read at face value and are not looking deeply.  Critical thinking is a hard skill to teach and students may need a lot of practice and time to be successful. More lessons and activities are recommended and should be integrated across the content areas to help develop students into dialectical readers.

As a follow-up project, students will be asked to research and evaluate websites for their own project.  They will be responsible for choosing websites that are valid and reliable for their research project.  Students will not only need to find and evaluate the resources, but write a description of why they choose their sites.  It is important to make sure that they have critically evaluated the websites and understand the process of making sure that they have valid and reliable sites.