

Ocean Literacy: Understanding the Importance of Sharks in Marine Ecosystems

by

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PROJECT SUMMARY

This capstone project, *Teachers4Sharks*, is an educational blog that aims to share information and resources with elementary teachers and specialists.

(<https://teachers4sharks.blog/blog-posts-2/>) It was created as a bilingual blog in English and Portuguese to serve Portuguese schools, international schools, and communities in Portugal. This interactive blog provides one of the solutions to the research question: *How can ocean literacy enable elementary students and teachers to better understand sharks and their role within marine ecosystems?* It aims to promote ocean literacy and increase awareness of the need for shark awareness and conservation within the Lisbon district's public and private Portuguese elementary schools and international schools. Sharks Educational Institute (SEI), a Non-Governmental Organization that promotes ocean literacy and shark conservation in schools, has generously agreed to host the blog on their bilingual website. In exchange, SEI's shark conservation and ocean literacy campaigns will increase visibility and attract more members. The long-term goal of the *Teachers4Sharks* blog is to create a national and, later, international network of elementary and secondary teachers interested in teaching ocean literacy with an additional prime focus on the conservation of sharks worldwide.

As technology has grown in recent years, the presentation of information has also changed. For example, blogs, formerly simple online journals, have become regular and credible information sources for a wider audience, including educators. The presentation of academic materials in schools has already seen a significant shift from papers and books to online lessons and materials in the classroom. This move has allowed educational blogging to arise and support teachers, students, and the parent community

within schools (Emerson, 2021). Research has also shown that uniquely designed blogs can increase and encourage creativity among teachers and students (Wheeler, 2011). In addition, creating and presenting information via blogging can help build and promote self-confidence by allowing students and teachers to find their niche. As the levels of confidence increase, so do the levels of communication and interaction (Emerson, 2021).

The format of the *Teachers4Sharks* blog proposes to not only share information and be interactive but also be user-friendly with easy access. The blog template uses WordPress software, which bloggers widely use. It is visually appealing and is already widely used by other bloggers. The blog page will permit the posting of interactive information more easily. Studies about guidelines for educational web designers and using feedback from teachers state that conveying information through effective communication and an aesthetically appealing site is essential to attract target users to explore the website. For example, data results show that color is considered the most critical design factor in developing an educational website, followed by graphics and fonts (Ng, 2014).

The *Teachers4Sharks* blog's design and writing also follow some of the information from the *Hamline Web Design Tips* article provided by the course and consider the audience's sense of diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, the blog's selection and use of colors consider color-blind people who see colors, especially green and red, less brightly and need more contrast. A simple font, serif, is used for readability, and dark or black text on a white background to make this blog a more accessible experience. The chosen images try to allow representation and messaging as much as

possible. In the second phase, the blog will also provide audio access to the articles for those with visual impairments.

This blog's template structure is a collection of four essential features: on the top of the left-hand side of the page displays the logo of the *Teacher4Sharks* blog, and underneath a logo text: "Protecting sharks through ocean literacy" (see Appendix A). The header photo chosen depicts an ocean wave rolling on the beach to highlight the home of all marine biodiversity- including sharks. Below the header are the archive links of all blogs by month. The animated shark in a Graphics Interchange Format (GIF) intends to welcome visitors to this shark-friendly blog (see Appendix B). The main page lists all blog posts with a title, photo, and dates in descending order. On the right-hand side of the page is a search section where viewers can type a keyword to search for specific information within that blog (see Appendix C).

The blog contents are all linked to the following categories: Shark News, Shark Fact File, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #14, The Blue Library, Shark and Ocean Literacy and Resources. A "Comments" box, a slide show of a recent workshop for elementary students, and a video link of relaxing ocean waves music are posted at the foot of the page. Finally, there is a short credit to WordPress, the blog design software. The objective is to allow teachers to become better informed about sharks' critical role as apex predators in maintaining a balanced marine ecosystem and shark conservation. Elementary teachers and specialists such as world languages, art, and music may join and make shark awareness a truly interdisciplinary subject, raising awareness about shark science and conservation and changing behaviors at all levels.

References

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Appendix A

Customized blog logo and header



Teachers4Sharks

Protecting sharks through ocean literacy



Appendix B

Graphic Interchange Format (GIF) and Search Engine Results Page (SERP) on main blog page



Appendix C

Samples of blog entries



Shark Documentaries: Deep Insights into the Underwater World

August 4, 2024



Silky Shark Conservation: Longest Recorded Migration Study Revealed

August 2, 2024



Shark Awareness Workshop at Regeneration Festival: Inspiring Students for Shark Conservation



Shark Quiz: Test Your Knowledge on Anatomy, Senses, and Conservation