Web authoring is a 21st century skill that involves publishing text, images and other material on the World Wide Web instead of in a more traditional paper format. Some advantages are that it can be free of charge, instantaneous, editable, portable, paper-free, and interactive therefore providing the perfect tool for a foreign language class, such as German. Some disadvantage are vulnerability of data protection and abuse—true concerns that mandate caution and a careful set-up as well as monitoring by teachers, administrators and/or parents.

Today’s students use the web daily; many have accounts on Face book or on similar sites. While that can be a positive way to explore current technology students activities are rarely focused on expanding their horizons by exploring the web in a constructive way and voicing their opinion on other than consumer related issues. A foreign language teacher could funnel students’ love of displaying their opinion on a global level into something more productive and conducive to content area learning. One way to achieve this goal would be to get school and parent approval to set up a class website on which students are able to showcase their learning. The teacher could set up a section that offers information, such as an expanded syllabus, a students’ resource page with links to website that support classroom instruction, optional pages for review, and games for students to practice what they have learned. Even quizzes could be offered online with an option to e-mail the results to the teacher.

Students could either set up their own websites or they could be asked to create web pages on the class website. They could create a learning log style page divided into different sections, such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax and culture. In those sections they could demonstrate what they have learned, say, on the German states, and then showcase one state of their choice as a project. The same could be done for German holidays, Swiss cantons, famous Austrians and similar cultural themes. The web page students create would be a paper-free way for students to demonstrate their knowledge while contributing to worldwide information. Unlike the creation of PowerPoint presentations, computer-created brochures or cardboard posters, the website has the advantage that there is no need to physically transfer any documents by either physically handing them to the teacher or via e-mail. The teacher would be able to monitor progress and check on students submitting assignments by specified deadlines without the need to check physical or virtual inboxes.

Students could set up links to schools in German speaking countries to compare school systems and schedules. They could set up links to government sites to compare political systems.

The teacher could set up discussion boards where students from a school in another German –speaking country could discuss current issues such as technology classes, integration of non-native speakers or disabled students in the classroom, school lunches, the importance of school sports, or out-of-school activities.

Parents would be able to monitor their children’s progress and have a better understanding of their children’s work compared to others’. Communications with the teacher could be more direct and instantaneous by adding a contact option to the website.

Students would be more likely to take ownership of their learning because it is more similar to their out-of-school way of communication and because of the constant monitoring that teachers and parents can exercise over their learning due to the fact that it is more visible and public. Students and parents would also appreciate having an e-portfolio of their progress.

In conclusion it can be said that with the right group of students, proper authorization. a carefully planned set-up, and careful monitoring web authoring can be a powerful tool to implement technology that students are already using in their free time and funnel it into a positive productive activity that is conducive to content area learning. Foreign language classes are prime candidates for such an undertaking due to their naturally global character.