

Sunday, August 31, 2008

## Teacher Resources

Write Reflections&#8482;: Do you Want your Students to Learn to Write for a Change?

Why do students experience the slightest bit of difficulty when they write? Students talk, communicate, even send "text" messages to one another. Students like to interact and associate. (In fact, many of the classroom management techniques favored by control-minded teachers seek to quell this natural urge.) Sidebar For example: Turn a district's worth of Fourth Grade students loose with E-mail accounts, and they will create so many messages that they "lock up" the mail server. But, let teachers get involved in the writing process, and student excitement, creativity and self-expression grinds to a sluggish halt.

This sorry situation seems to be the "fault" of writing instruction, and this

"hard reality" seem to result from ineffective teaching strategies. These ineffective strategies stem from an "I teach writing like I learned to write" approach&hellip; rather than an incapacity or lack of writing skills of our students.

But, is this "writing disconnect" the result of a lack of capacity of our teachers? Sidebar Of course, blaming teachers is the natural inclination of the "test our students with high-stakes writing tests every four years to see if our teachers are performing (and earning their pay)" crowd.

Of course, the "test-em experts" fail to notice that limited, or no funding is allocated for writing instruction, and that teachers' school day schedules are littered with non-essential activities (such as coaching students for the high-stakes test) that diminish the time that students have available for learning to write. Teach Reading First: Teach Writing only if we are Lucky to have a Class of Good Readers Do teachers enroll in many "writing how-to" classes in college?

Answer: The typical teacher enrolls in about as many writing classes as the typical physician takes in nutrition and exercise. (Just as a physician's course load focuses on medication and surgery, teachers' coursework focuses upon reading and math.)

Writing is relegated to one "leg" of a Language Arts "stool"&hellip;"a three-legged stool with five legs"&hellip; grammar, punctuation, spelling, reading and writing.

And, it is precisely because of the focus upon grammar, punctuation and spelling that our students learn (come to believe) that they "cannot write." It's a Good Thing that Schools Don't Teach Children to Talk If schools began early enough in the lives of our students, and if teachers used the grammar, punctuation and spelling - "catch and correct every error" approach to "teach" students to speak; we would be a nation of stutterers, and sigh-language communicators.

The problem, also noticed in foreign language instruction, is the focus upon finding and eradicating errors. Sidebar There is parsimony, a tactical elegance, to attacking errors. Errors, since fewer in number than accurate and competent responses; are easier and less work to track.

Finding errors (managing exceptions, eliminating defects, building a uniform product) also fits nicely into our Nineteenth Century Factory Model of education, i.e., quality control, reject defective products, model.

However, a focus upon errors, especially when errors are punished and deprecated; limits learning.

The issue is that "would-be writing teachers" confuse two distinct types of learning: 1.) memory and recall and 2.) performance and skill learning.

This means that unconscious processes associated with the integration of learning modalities and other processes associated with habit development must be integrated before writing performance can be perfected.

And performance is perfected through practice, relaxed attention, and fun. There is also a role for mental rehearsal in skill development.

Punishment and criticism compromise learning and represent the exact opposite from what accelerates practice (and transforms performance) into academic knowledge, trustworthy habits and outcome-based skill sets.

It is the punishment and criticism that is found by sniffing out errors and by "driving a stake through the heart of repetition and practice" that sabotages learning. And, it is persistent punishment and callous criticism that would prevent many children from learning to talk if school were their sole source for learning this skill.

Fortunately, children learn to talk before they reach school age. Unfortunately, once children arrive at school, many teachers focus inordinate effort and attention upon getting them to "stop talking" and "be quiet!"

See: Application and Performance: The "Flip Side" of Planning

Why Write Reflections&#8482;? Write Reflections&#8482; is a success-based curriculum for teaching writing skills, i.e., writing habits and writing performance.

Write Reflections&#8482; is Application and Performance (AnP) based learning that is&hellip; Systematic Sequential

Standards-Based

Success-Based The main features of Write Reflections&#8482; include: Reasonable target performance standards for

students' writing practice

Realistic improvement goals based upon mastery of prerequisite writing skills

Real-world timeframes set to developmental capacities and prior skill learning This means that the teachers who use the Write Reflections program show students exactly what to do, guide students to doable writing success, and appreciate the writing outcomes that students produce.

In short, writing becomes fun and enjoyable for both students and teachers, and

writing success prompts (no pun intended) further creative successes. Components of the Write Reflections

Curriculum The Write Reflections Curriculum contains Comprehensive lesson plans

Web and Mind Map Organizers

Editing Sheets

Samples for Each Grade Level

Step-by-Step Instructions

Assessments

Grading Rubrics

Prompts The Write Reflections program also includes instructions on how content-area teachers can use 15 different writing genres for instruction. These include: Autobiography

Biography

Cause and Effect

Compare/ Contrast

Descriptive Writing

Essay Writing

How-To

Information Writing Summary

Letters

Narrative

Oral Presentation

Persuasive Writing

Problem-Solving

Response to Literature Sidebar The Write Reflections model of focusing upon writing in all content-area subjects parallels Classroom Toolkit's philosophy of writing instruction.

It is every teacher's job to teach writing, in the same way that it is every teacher's job to teach related math.

Writing and math should be part of every lesson, both writing and math examples and

explorations should be relevant and fun. Summary Write Reflections is a writing curriculum that works.

Classroom Toolkit ordinarily avoids recommending products that are this expensive because we focus upon free and inexpensive resources for teachers.

However, it took Melinda Micalec, the developer of this program, seven years to build this curriculum. (And saving a teacher seven years of development and testing effort should be worth a lot to teachers who can afford the up front cost.)

But, though prices are steep for individual teachers, costs are competitive and

reasonable (in fact probably under priced) for a campus site licenses.

So, convince colleagues, chairpersons and school district purchasers to license this product.

Expenditures for a Write Reflections site license can pay

dividends in increased student writing scores, and a pilot program on your campus will probably result in other

campuses within the school district adopting the program once the improvement in student writing test scores

becomes apparent. Sidebar Although high-stakes test scores are essentially irrelevant for real learning, citing test score

improvement is often the (cynical) way to obtain funding for crucial products. Schools waste much more money on

useless initiatives and worthless "grabbing at straws magic solutions." So, a wise investment in the Write

Reflections product should be an easy sell.

Or, convince the local Parent-Teachers Association/Organization (PTA/PTO) to

assume the cost of this curriculum.

Parents want their children to write well. The task of convincing parents to support an effective program such as Write

Reflections should be an easy one.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Thursday, July 31, 2008

## **Teacher Resources**

Transforming Sandman-Style PowerPoint Projects into Terrific Teaching Tools

Student presentations are a stock item often attached to student projects. But, instead of stupendous effort and contagious creativity, most electronic slide shows deliver stupefying (as in stupor-inducing) rubber-stamp sameness. Yawn! Petrified Point - What's the Point? Rather than a power surge that threatens to blow fuses with high-voltage energy, many student presentations seem to hold the charge of "played-out" batteries.

But, this is only because teachers "underwent" training (indoctrination) by software-specialists instead of curriculum specialists and Master Teachers.

When real teachers mentor teachers, ideas for how to maximize instructional impact materialize. When creative folks brainstorm, think, focus upon higher-order thinking skills, share...then pipsqueak sparks become lightening bolts of excitement in student presentations.

And, a bit of creativity (and a small bit of work) put into project design templates can drive huge benefits in the improved quality of students' electronic presentations.

These template strategies can... Save the teacher a lot of work

Set standards for evaluating student presentations

Provide an antidote for "presenter's (writer's) block"

Level the playing field for Special Population students and reluctant/ recalcitrant/ dejected readers

Spark higher-level outcomes for Gifted and Talented students

Ensure uniformity of the presentations (all the requirements are included in the template) Tricks of the Trade Countless creative strategies can be developed once a teacher escapes from the traditional slide show, and typical student presentation project.

Here are some examples of exemplary tactics that transform PowerPoint projects from "ho-hum" to "humming along."

PowerPoint Sidekicks & Desktop Learning Spaces

Here is a list of items that you can find on Dr. Annette Lamb's Educape site... Book Blasts

Electronic Stories and Digital Storytelling

E-Scrapbooks

Guidebooks

Journals

Problem Solvers

Inquiry Quests

Tutorials

Virtual Field Trips

Information Formats

Information Evaluations

Information Primary Sources

Information Sequencing

Adding Audio

Adding Charts & Graphs

Adding Video

Adding Visuals

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Monday, June 30, 2008

## Teacher Resources

### Open Source Resource Switchboard

Classroom Toolkit is participating in the National Educational Computing Conference (NECC). This is in the EduBloggerCon and Open Source sections. The demonstration for low-cost Open Source tools for teachers is available Online.

Sidebar The issue of Online tools for teachers is different than the issue of "Free and Cheap" software for use in the our public schools.

See our article, The Case Against Open Source in this issue of Classroom Toolkit What does the "Demo" Demonstrate? The Open Source Resource Demonstration shows what teachers can do with Online hosting and "Free," "one-click" installation.

The application programs that are installed for this "Demo" include:

Blogs: (Blogger, Serendipity, Wordpress,)

Forum: (Simple Machine Forum,)

Content Management System (the Switchboard - Joomla!)

Learning Management System (Moodle!)

Wiki (PHPWiki)

These Online "Demo" resources took "one click" to install, and were provided without extra charge by the Web Hosting Company. Domain registration cost \$9.91 per year, or less, and Web hosting with automatic installation of application programs like these (and many more) cost as little as \$4.00 USD per month.

The Switchboard application (Open Source Content Management System - Joomla!) links and launches the other applications.

Here are the links: Open Source Resource Switchboard

Open Source Resource Blog

Open Source Resource Forum

Open Source Resource Wiki

Open Source Resource Tutorial The Real Purpose of the "Demo" Site Teachers need a demonstration of the easy, online capacity as much as they need the successor to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

What this "Demo" site is for is to deliver a workshop on what it takes to build a Technology Integration Program, and what Open Source Advocates must do in the way of "changing the tune that they sing to school district executives" about "Free and Cheap" solutions.

Our students deserve quality programs, not half-baked, minimally funded, doomed to failure schemes to save money. Financial Wisdom: "Either fund a program fully, or kill it in its tracks."

Sidebar Last year, Classroom Toolkit produced a series of articles for Open Source at NECC that focused upon marketing Open Source Solutions.

These articles comprise most of the articles posted in the Open Source Resource Blog. This year, the focus is upon finding a method for documenting the direct relationship between technology and observable, measurable student outcomes. (Yes, maybe even test scores.)

Open Source Solutions will remain stalled in our schools until school districts get the Technology Integration component functioning. Until now, Technology Integration has been: Focused upon technology, not instruction

Focused on technology specifications, not teachers' needs

Under funded

Missing the huge training and professional development funding that it needs

Missing the even more huge Back-End programming and "one-click" integration funding that it needs Null

Hypothesis Experimental design requires that we use a "Null Hypothesis" because we cannot prove that something exists.

Instead, we disprove that something does not exist.

The Classroom Toolkit presentation contains a slide show, an online presentation, a wireframe, and mind-maps.

Here are the links: Open Source Resource Switchboard

Presentation Wireframe (Graphic Overview)

Technology Integration: Fire, Aim, Ready! Slide Show

Experiencing New Technology Integration Mind Maps

Exploring Emotional, Social and Motor Learning: Technology Integration Mind Maps

Personalizing and Applying Technology Integration Mind Maps

Synthesizing and Structuring Technology Integration for Measurable Student Outcomes

Evaluating Technology Integration Mind Maps

# Blog Export: Classroom Toolkit Newsletter, <http://classroomtoolkit.net/serendipity/>

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 05:00

Saturday, May 31, 2008

## Teacher Resources

### Using Online Technologies to Create "Sparks" in Learning

Technology has become more reliable and ubiquitous. So have teacher laptops and classroom LCD projectors for their personal use. These "advancements" provide resources that can spark student interest in content-area learning, add color and content for student presentations and contribute to an "all-around" depth of understanding. But, all is not well in paradise. These online resources harbor terrors and troubles of their own. And, with any "not approved by someone higher-up" resources, teachers must preview and screen everything that passes through that laptop and projector on the way to students's bright eyes and tiny ears. Access to the Internet is like "dropping into the Wild-Woolly West, saloons, brothels, gunfights and gore. And, like the settlers guarding the wagon train at night, a lapse in vigilance can come back to bite. Teachers that fail to preview and supervise find themselves, staring at the floor in front of a desk on the other end of their supervisor's wrath. Resources to "Die For" In the old days, these technologies could have caused "tech-centric" teachers to swoon with joy and appreciation. Now, they are ho-hum, common place. So what are these technologies, and why do they take up so much of a teacher's time? Internet Audio What's Available: music and newscasts, interviews, information from other countries Technology Needed: Real Player<sup>®</sup>; or Windows Media Player<sup>®</sup>; Cost: No additional cost Comments: Podcasts require 1:1 preview time. If the Podcast is one hour, the teacher must spend one hour previewing the audio. Online Newspapers What's Available: Access to just about any major newspaper in the world Technology Needed: Computer with Internet access. Sometimes a printer is valuable. Cost: Mostly free. Some charge a membership fee. Comments: Some sites require registration with name and E-mail address. Video Conferencing What's Available: One-way and two-way broadcast of all manner of curricular information. Technology Needed: High-end system with cameras, document cameras, microphone (maybe voice activated), digital white board and codec.

Cost: Expensive. Generally out of reach for an individual classroom. Campuses are lucky to have one such system in place. Comments: The amount of use that these systems receive seldom makes up for the high initial cost. The model for use of these system is often the "lecture or seminar" format. Movies What's Available: Movies in DVD, CD, Video Tape, Online, Steaming, Flash and other formats. Technology Needed: DVD/ CD Players, VCRs, Internet Access, Desktop video capture software Cost: Video production and video use rights are very expensive. Comments: Production costs are high and production is extremely time-intensive. Preview time for pre-packaged video is 1:1 and difficult for teachers who want to perform "due diligence.\*" Note: Teachers can use almost any film resource, even rented DVDs and VCR tapes if they follow certain rules. These rules generally require a written lesson plan, targeted student activities, starting and stopping the movie and conducting focused class discussions, etc. Podcasts What's Available: Lots of audio content. Technology Needed: Computer with sound card, iPod<sup>®</sup>; Zune<sup>®</sup>; or other MP3 Player. Computer with sound card, portable sound recorders, sound editing and file Cost: Little or a lot. Some sound editing solutions such as Audacity are Open Source. Comments: You get what you pay for in regard to sound clarity and professional quality. Special microphones and mixers are required to add background music, group interviews and other audio components to podcasts. Be prepared to spend a lot of time learning the ropes to get audio production right. Be prepared to spend a lot of time previewing audio content before presenting podcasts to your students. Online Games What's Available: Tons of Online Games are available.

Technology Needed: A basic computer with an Internet connection and always updated Anti-Virus and Anti-Spyware programs Cost: The Anti-Virus software and Anti-Spyware programs have yearly subscription fees. Comments: Caution - Many of the games that students like to play are magnets for Spyware and Trojan virus-type programs. The Spyware and Trojans are hidden in the code of the game downloads. Beware! YouTube and TeacherTube Videos What's Available: Everything you can imagine, and a lot of stuff that you don't want your students to see while you are supervising them Technology Needed: Content filtering software on the school district's network to prevent the most egregious of these videos. Cost: Content Filter services are expensive, but required by the Children's' Internet Protection Act (CIPA). Sometimes, content filtering services block the entire YouTube site, and block access to TeacherTube in the process. Comments: TeacherTube is safe and focused upon instructional Translation Sites and Services What's Available: Nothing of real translation value, but lots of "down and dirty" (not in the same sense as the YouTube videos) curriculum content that can get students evaluation the quality of the materials that were translated. This engages all the higher-order thinking skills, problem-solving and decision-making resources that students can muster. Cost: Free. Never pay for a software or "machine" translation. No product is good enough, yet. Comments: Great devices for building interest in content lessons, humor and student interaction. The Entire Raft of Google<sup>®</sup>; Online Products and Services Classroom Toolkit reviewed these earlier<sup>®</sup>; Summary: Technology works for instruction and curricular outcomes if you work it. But don't think that automation will give you a "free ride down easy street." In fact, setting up and managing Technology Integration is more time consuming than not using the technology. Worse, previewing media and supervising students as they use some of these technologies creates an extensive drag on teachers' "free" time. But

if you like the technology, use it. Your students will be glad that you did.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 05:00

Wednesday, April 30, 2008

## **Teacher Resources**

Education Week: Sign Up - Keep Posted - Especially through the Summer!

Education Week offers a free newsletter service that can keep you informed about news that impacts the teaching profession. Take advantage of this offer. If you enroll:

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EdWeek Update is an alert sent each week about top K-12 education news. And, Teacher Update keeps teacher-leaders abreast of what's newsworthy. Other free e-newsletters keep you in-the-know on topics such as NCLB, curriculum, accountability, and career issues. Of course, Education Week would like nothing more than to convince you to subscribe to their "Premium Service." This runs just under \$6 USD per month, and would be useful for education graduate students studying school management, leadership and governance. (Most teachers will do just fine with the free e-newsletters.)

The Upgrade includes: All current Education Week articles, including exclusive Web Extras

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Classroom Toolkit cites an Education Week article in our News Nuggets article, Districts "Cutting Down" on Teacher Absences: Will they use an Axe, Weed Trimmer or Bulldozer? this month.

Subscribe to Education Week's free e-newsletter today!

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 05:00

Monday, March 31, 2008

## Teacher Resources

### Pacer Kids against Bullying

Bullying is a problem anytime that it rears its nasty bulk and stinking frame. But in times of stress, such as when high-stakes tests are in play, when tempers connect to short fuses when stress high voltage levels; these inner tensions often precipitate outward demonstrations of frustration.

One of those symptoms of inner frustration is bullying.

What usually goes unrecognized is that the other side of the "bullying gig" is the victim's role; also often sensitized by stress.

Let's call a student that participate on the "receiver end" of the game a "Bullee" so that we recognize that they play an active (not passive) role in the drama.

In some ways, the bully and bullee (victim?) are similar; both exhibit: Diminished self-concept

Low self-esteem

Inadequate coping skills

Low frustration tolerance

Self-limiting behavioral and interpersonal options

Behavior driven by external pressure, rather than by self-directed goals

Unresponsive social support networks

Etc. Teachers to the Rescue? It is understandable, although a flawed strategy, for teachers to step in and "rescue" the bullee from the bully.

But bailing out the victim only perpetuates the integrated drama.

Sure, it is odious, and teachers can't sit idle while children are injured, maimed, bruised or battered. And, there are potential liabilities (such as lawsuits) if children lose hair, eyes, teeth, or when bones are broken while a child is under a teacher's vigilance.

Still, a teacher "coming down hard" with aversive punishment leveled against the bully can make matters worse for the bullee. Another Approach: Teach Coping Skills to both Bullies and Bullees We ordinarily think that the bully lacks coping skills and single the bully out for "social skills training." But this strategy misses the mark. The reason: This is a negative goal; removing something from the bully's repertoire instead of adding something to the skills of both participants. The reason that "teaching the bully to stop bullying" fails to work is that the goal lacks a direction. What is needed is an approach that identifies exactly what to do. The "don't know what to do instead" approach lecturing the bully, telling bullies that they should care about the feelings of others; these are non-goals.

What to Do Instead of Bullying: The Real Teaching Opportunity Real teaching is where the prescriptions and the canned solutions fail.

Why? Because teachers never guess correctly about what is going on inside the minds and emotions of either the bully or the bullee. The only accurate strategy for determining a solution is to listen, not preach, not protect.

Prepackaged, one-size solution fit too loosely on some, squeeze the toes of others. Prepackaged approaches neglect the basics; resolving real issues.

Real issues include: Emotional impact of the dynamics of the bullying situation

Open communication with all parties and stakeholders of the bullying situation

Rapport building by the teacher or counselor with all parties

Coming to agreement, rather than capitulation and surrender by coercion Fake Students can't Help As nice as the concept of creating self-help materials is, the fact is that trained communicators that can develop honest and compassionate dialog; professionals that can maintain the role of "honest broker" are needed.

For example, Pacer Kids against Bullying offers plenty of Web sources.

"Kids Against Bullying is a Web site created for elementary school children. It is a creative and informative resource to educate students about bullying prevention and provide methods to respond to bullying situations. The site features an animated cast of characters, information, celebrity videos, Webisodes, games, animation, contest and other activities. Parents and professionals will find helpful tips, intervention strategies, and resources for use at home or school.

"Source: Kids against Bullying <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/kab/index.asp>

"PACER is creating an exciting new bullying prevention Web site for teens—and you can help. Designed to reach, teach, and empower teens, the site will feature compelling stories from students, parents, educators, and community partners across the nation when it launches this summer. Here are two ways you can make a difference and maybe even change how people across the country think about bullying. Submit a video, story, poem, artwork, or audio clip expressing your ideas on bullying prevention. It can be about what happened to you or someone else, how you feel about bullying, how you think it affects students and schools, what you have done to prevent bullying, or what can be done to prevent bullying. We want to hear from everyone—teens, parents, teachers, and others with great ideas who

want to improve the world. Source: National Center for Bullying Prevention <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/mhs/index.asp>  
The Pacer Program offers lesson plans, materials, and an interactive Web site. All useful and valuable resources for teachers.

But remember: to get to the heart of the bullying matter, the professional must speak from the heart, and hold the heart of the bully in as much regard as the heart of the bullee.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 05:00

Friday, February 29, 2008

## Teacher Resources

### PBS Teacherline

PBS Teacherline® is an expensive alternative for professional development if a teacher has to pay for the courses out of their own pocket. Of course, PBS Teacherline® courses carry course credit that most school districts accept. And, many school districts sign up for prepaid training programs to allow teachers to enroll in PBS Teacherline® courses without teachers having to shoulder the cost.

Here is a link to the PBS Teacherline® Take a free course, Free Orientation Course: Practice Learning Online with TeacherLine &hellip;Register (No Cost)

SidebarThe PBS Teacherline® courses that school districts can license (even brand with their own logos) allow school district to maintain control of courses and course facilitation.

PBS courses also import directly into delivery platforms such as Blackboard&#8482;, WebCT (now controlled by Blackboard&#8482;), Desire to Learn (D2L), and Moodle! (Note: If you don't know what these services and learning management systems (LMSs) are, don't worry, you probably don't have access to them.

Note to Note: Moodle! is an Open Source, server-based software product. Moodle! is functional, but lacks to "bells and whistles" of the expensive learning management systems. The main issues affecting Moodle! are the lack of multi-user (i.e.; team-teaching capacities and the ability to import Microsoft&#8482; Active Directory student logins)Cost of PBS Teacherline® CoursesThese PBS Teacherline® course are 10, 12, 15, 30 and 45 hour courses; and costs are related to which college or university offers graduate credit.Course Categories

Instructional Strategy

Instructional Technology

Math

Reading/Language Arts

Science

Grade Level Categories

PreK

K-2

3-5

6-8

9-12

Complete Course Catalog

Check out PBS Teacherline® if you have money to spare and need the professional development credits.

The course materials are worth your while, but you will pay a premium for the credit hours.

Some day, school districts will discover that hands-on, on-the-job performance is more important to assigning teacher pay scales than college course credit and in-service seat time.

Until that time, take course work such as PBS Teacherline® to build your on-paper skills, and work quietly to build the real skills that count, the in-class skills that increase your ability to teach students.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 05:00

Thursday, January 31, 2008

## Teacher Resources

### Flash Card Technology: A Low-Tech How-To

Drill has been discouraged for the past decade, and flash cards have lost some of their savory flavor.

But, flash cards can serve an important function in all sorts of learning that requires the memory of multiple words, phrases, formulas, functions, directions, steps, patterns, etc. And, while computer driven flash cards are possible, the on screen flash cards lack one important benefit. Portability!

The other benefit that flash cards of the 3" x 5" variety hold is economy. The note card beats the notebook computer, hands down in economy. Not your Grandmother's Flash Card! If you want to "Upgrade" your flash cards with a bit of modern technology, you can do this with a printer that accepts 3" x 5" index cards. Sidebar Some laser printers can print on 3" x 5" index cards, and some ink jet printers will also. But, be sure to use a laser printer that can print both sides at once. The reason that the laser printer must print two sides at once is that you must be careful in feeding previously copied cards of pages through a laser printer. Because a laser printer uses a hot fuser process and toner from previously printed paper can rub off and "gum up the insides" of the printer.

The same problem exists with the expensive laser printer sheets that have index cards that tear apart with "micro-perforations." Besides the expense, you should not feed these sheets through a laser printer twice. Besides, the mirror image printing doesn't work, and the heavy paper stock tends to curl as it travels through the laser printer paper path because of the rollers and the heat. And, never, ever feed photocopies through a laser printer. The toner for photocopiers fuses at much lower temperatures than the high-temperature laser printers, and the laser printer melts the photocopy's toner. But, why would you want to print the flash cards? Don't you learn the words better, faster, more quickly if you write the words out in your own handwriting?

Answer: Yes, but we are only putting lines on the flash card, making learning templates.

But, why put lines on the flash cards, aren't we just going to write a word or phrase on one side, and the information, definition, formula, or foreign vocabulary item on the other?

Answer: That is the old way. Our "upgraded method" uses more than one word on each side of the card. The lines, table cells to be exact, keep the words lined up with the correct definition.

Here are samples of what these "upgraded" flash cards look like.

The reason for the different number of spaces on the first flash card sample is provide more space to write if phrases, idioms or longer formulae are the target for learning.

### One More Trick for the Modern Flash Card

You will notice that these "Upgraded" flash cards are printed in "Portrait" style, i.e., the long side is vertical. And, this is what makes the "Upgraded" flash card superior to the "Old School" flash card that is used in Landscape mode.

She secret is in the "Flip."

Instead of flipping the card right-to-left and reading left-to-right, we flip these flash cards bottom-to-top, and read normally.

Note: If you flip these cards right-to-left, the words will appear upside-down. One Other Special Feature Notice that there is a table cell between the number and the cell for the word or definition.

That cell is included in this design because you might like to mark certain words for extra attention.

For example, if you were listing the Spanish words between 20 and 30, you might use that space to mark 22, 23 and 26 because those numbers, when spelled out, require accent marks. Or, if you were listing all the days of the week in Spanish, you would mark Wednesday and Saturday as the days whose name, when spelled out, require accent marks. So, this cell serves as a "flag" to mark the word, definition or formula for special attention.

It is also possible to color code this cell if your to-be-learned list has multi-dimensional features.

### Why the "Upgrade" in Flash Cards?

The first benefit of the "Upgraded" flash card is that you need a stack of cards that is substantially smaller. With this design, you could place 100 words on only ten cards instead of on 100 cards.

There is also the benefit of being able to keep categories of words together. For example: "Question words" could all be listed on one or two cards, and these would be easy to find since the words are clustered together. Clustering multiple words on one card makes it easy to find a certain category of words or ideas during review. (And reviews should be quick, frequent, daily.)

In addition, the bottom-to-top flip is more natural and easier to perform while holding a pack of cards in your left hand. With the flash card deck in your left hand, you can review

Of course, you must carry these cards everywhere you go, and use them during every spare moment if you are to take full advantage of this flash card technology. Further Technology Enhancements? But, couldn't these flash cards be developed and used with Personal Digital Assistants, such as the Palm OS; and Pocket PC; And, what

about creating video flash cards for Apple's iPod or Microsoft's Zune? What about flash cards for cellular telephones?

Answer: Sure, but besides being expensive, this seems like a lot of work and there doesn't seem to be many pre-built applications. The lack of pre built study applications may be because drill and practice was deprecated over the past decade or more, so software developers didn't find a market for these products.

Or it may be that these devices were too expensive for teachers and students. A Pocket PC, for example, can cost more than a new desktop computer.

But, if you want to create a learning system for one of these products, please make your product and share it with others.

One of the benefits of merging low-tech with high-tech is that repeatable processes can be duplicated. For example: A high school Spanish teacher could create flash cards and provide them for all 180 students. And, the same files would remain usable for future classes that the teacher teaches. Note: We are indebted to Barry Farber in his book, *Hot to Learn Any Language* for these ideas. Classroom Toolkit reviewed this book during our December 2007 issue.

[Link to the Classroom Toolkit Book Review](#)

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 05:00

Monday, December 31, 2007

## Teacher Resources

### Technology Skills every Teacher Needs

In the old days, before computers and the Internet, skills in basic office duplication were enough for most teachers. This is not true, now, and teachers are being "cajoled, driven, herded, forced and pushed" to build, upgrade and enhance their technology skills.

Of course, there are many technology skills, from basic word processing, to spreadsheet and database management, to HTML and Web Design, to programming in a variety of languages (dozens are popular)

Then, of course, are all the software applications including attendance, grade keeping, instructional and tutorial software, probeware, simulation software, and the ubiquitous textbook auxiliary CDS.

Besides this, hundreds of free Open Source software products, Freeware, Bannerware, and Trialware beckon, just a mouse click away.

What is the busy teacher to do?

Surely all this stuff can't be useful. How does a teacher decide what is important?

Focus on Skill (not Technology) to Make Sense of the Technology

Since there is no time to dabble in all these technology marvels, a teacher must focus upon what will improve instruction, save time, and increase measurable students' achievement. Anything else is "jogging with technology gorilla on your back" &hellip; it just weighs you down and holds down your progress.

So, focus upon usable skills, rather than the technology.

Here is a list of possible skills that you might find useful. Unfortunately, the list is excessively long. Fortunately, some of people behind these resources have done the research for you. You might need skills in &hellip; Word Processing  
Spreadsheets

Electronic Presentation

E-Mail Management

Database

Web Navigation

Anti-Virus, Password and Security

Computer, Computer Accessories, Components and Peripherals Operation

File Download and Management

Network Operation (Home Directories, Storage Locations, Virtual Private Networks)

Digital Cameras

Scanners

Personal Digital Assistants (PDA's)

Website Design

Videoconferencing

Educational Copyright Knowledge

Online Training (WebCT, Blackboard, or Moodle)

Computer Programming Unfortunately, the searching, finding and learning of all these technology marvels just takes too long for today's busy teacher.

Here are some links to the basic technology skills information

Twenty Basic Skills that Every Educator should Know (The Journal &#8482; Online)

Twenty Basic Skills (DOC format)

Twenty Basic Skills (PDF format)

What Every Teacher should Know about Technology

78 Websites Every EFL Teacher Should Know Classroom Toolkit is Different Of course, Classroom Toolkit is a site that helps teachers save time and reduce stress.

And while the list above may lead teachers to many directions and provide many avenues for additional "branching off into new skill areas," the basic Classroom Toolkit strategy is to "learn as you go" and implement only what is useful at the moment to improve your teaching and to improve your students' learning.

The "acid test, litmus test" is whether student achievement improves by your investment in time and energy.

If technology doesn't seem to do that for you, do not feel guilty. Perhaps you can learn the language and culture of your Hispanic students instead.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 05:00

Friday, November 30, 2007

## Teacher Resources

Free Camtasia Studio: Create your Own Desktop Videos

Desktop video is one area where existing Open Source software doesn't measure up to the commercial version. And, the "king" of commercial video creation software is Camtasia Studio. Sidebar Camtasia Studio is also much better than Microsoft's free Movie Maker software that is a free download for Windows Xp. Link to the Microsoft Movie Maker Download Page

Now, teachers can receive a fully functional (previous version, Version 3.1.3) of Camtasia Studio for free! There is no telling how long TechSmith, the makers of Camtasia Studio, will keep this offer online, so act fast. Sidebar Note: Classroom Toolkit is taking the unusual step of publishing this article early so that our readers can take advantage of this TechSmith offer. Our online strategy is to publish articles that are organized in a magazine-type collection once a month. However, this offer is too good for teachers to wait. TechSmith may pull this offer before the end of the month. We will also publish an article related to this free Camtasia offer in our Open Source for Education, section of the Classroom Toolkit 11-30-07 newsletter. This article explores the reason that your school district's IT Department can't take advantage of this free Camtasia offer and the reason that free Open Source software "seldom flies" in a school district network environment, either. Previous Camtasia Version: No Problem Even though this free version is an older version of the software, it is still superior to any available Open Source desktop video product.

Of course, TechSmith would like you to upgrade to the current version, Camtasia 5.0. And, TechSmith is offering an upgrade to this trial version for half-price, \$149.00 USD. Action Steps Here are the steps that you need to take to grab this offer and

1. Download Camtasia Trial Version  
Download the 30-day trial to Camtasia v. 3.1.3
2. Install the Trial software on the computer of your choice
3. Request the Registration that will allow the software to "run forever," i.e., turn the trial version into a full version  
Obtain a Registration Key (Note: You have to provide an E-mail address.)
4. Visit TechSmith's Educational Resources Page

TechSmith's Educational Video Resources  
5. Create your instructional videos  
Fantastic Offer: The software license key that TechSmith sends you turns the evaluation copy that you download for free into a fully licensed version.

At the same time, TechSmith offers you a chance to upgrade the license for a the newest version at 50% off the new version (Camtasia Suite 5.0).

Upgrade Link: \$149.00 USD

(Note: This upgrade price beats the "Education Version pricing," and provides the full commercial license to this product. Education Price: \$179.00 USD.) System Requirements It is applications such as Camtasia Studio that keep Apple and Linux from making headway in their competition with the Windows operating system. Of course, Apple provides its own free Audio and Video software, but Apple computers cost more.

Sidebar Contrary to what Apple and Linux supporters tell themselves, and would like to believe; i.e., that the education market drives the computer software industry; business and home users are really the engines of computer operating system marketing. Apple needs to provide better business applications at a lower price point, and Linux needs to be easier to use and needs to run Windows applications in a seamless way. Note: Apple computers run an application called Parallels Desktop 3.0 for Mac, that does an outstanding job of running Windows applications on the Mac. Of course, Apple computers are superior for desktop video and movie production. However, one application for Camtasia videos is to capture Windows desktop images to demonstrate how technology can be integrated into your curriculum. If your school district provides Apple computers for teacher and student use, then you don't need Camtasia Studio. Microsoft Windows XP or Windows Vista  
Microsoft DirectX 9 or later version

1.0 GHz processor minimum ~ Recommended: 2.5 GHz (for PowerPoint and camera recordings.)

500 MB RAM minimum ~ Recommended: 1.0 GB

60 MB of hard-disk space for program installation

Optional: Camtasia Studio Add-in for Power Point requires PowerPoint 2000, 2002, 2003, or 2007

Optional: Production to the Apple iPod format requires Apple QuickTime 7.1 or later

Optional: Windows-compatible sound card, microphone and speakers (recommended)

Optional: Camera video recording requires a USB Camera. Digital video (DV) cameras are not supported. USB Web camera

Benefits of Camtasia (Either Version)

- Simplifies video for distance learning
- Improves online content creation. You can post these videos on a Website or burn them to CD/ DVDs
- Enhances classroom presentations. You can create video handouts and take home multimedia lessons
- Strengthens teacher training. Workshop and Training program Follow-up procedures can be posted for online viewing or downloading
- Great for technology integration
- Super for Computer Lab demonstrations and student self-help FAQs
- Wonderful for student learning centers

Features of the Latest Version

Unless your Classroom is "High Tech" (or you are a Curriculum Specialist, Trainer or Webmaster); you won't need these latest features.

And, although there is a learning curve, it is not as steep as with many other high-end software products. (TechSmith; also provides Camtasia; video tutorials to get you "up and running" quickly.

Sidebar

Link to the TechSmith; Learning Center

Camtasia; Studio publishes videos and MP3 files for portable media players - even the iPod. It enables you to share videos with anyone, even with the use of Flash

You achieve this miracle by being able to record anything on your computer monitor screen, including narrated PowerPoint; slides and web cam video. Then, you can even edit multiple audio tracks, reduce background noise and equalize volume on these tracks.

The new version has a the ability to "AutoZoom" to investigate sections of the screen in greater detail; great for demonstrations.

There is also the ability to create interactive videos that can contain surveys and quizzes. The interactive videos can also contain "hot spots" that launch programs and Websites.

Work During the Holidays?

Creating instruct videos might be a "fun" way to spend your Winter Solstice Break (Note: Politically correct phrase for those or you who work in a school district that has outlawed the use of the term "Christmas.")

Of course, district administrators haven't figured out that celebrating a Winter Solstice (while deprecating Christmas, Hanukah, Ramadan and Kwanza), honors a Druid and Wicca (Witchcraft) religious celebration.

Perhaps, in the current politically correct climate, "Freedom of Religion" means the freedom to practice nothing unless that practice is conducted "underground."

Note of the Note: These comments are a way that you can tell that this newsletter article is not an ad for Techsmith; but a helpful message for teachers. Advertisers would never risk alienating anyone by their insightful comments, and always keep their hype inane. Here, at Classroom Toolkit, we "Tell it like it is."

And anyone that doesn't take advantage of this TechSmith; offer because of our comments loses out. So, take advantage of this offer from TechSmith; no matter what you think of our views.)

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 05:00

Monday, November 26, 2007

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Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 05:00

Wednesday, October 31, 2007

## Teacher Resources

Thanksgiving Cornucopia: Real (Primary) Source Resources

Thanksgiving (like Christmas, Easter and Columbus Day) have undergone revision, transition and change as they transformed from fact to myth. Take Christmas: What about "the night before;" the flying reindeer; the reindeer with the nose of a drunk; a dancing, talking snowman; a drummer boy; bell-ringing pan handlers (pun intended) in front of the mall; etc.?

Or, Easter: bunnies and chocolate rabbits; candy chicks; baskets of plastic grass; showing off new outfits; pictures with a giant, flop-eared plush-coated person; etc.

Or Columbus Day: moved to Monday (some years), celebrating the brave explorer who didn't know where he was, a person imprisoned for cruelty in an era when slavery was outlawed by decree (except in the case where the slave's life would be "better off" under slavery than in their former condition. Sidebar Some folks think that the cannibalism of the Caribbean was exaggerated so that the Conquistadors had justification for enslaving the people there.

Surprise! Real cannibals are too warlike, fierce and violent to be easily subjugated into slavery. End the Myth: A "Tell-it-Like-it-Was" Thanksgiving Textbook and politically correct history is boring, limp and lame. But, real history, real people, real stories are exciting. Even students can be turned on and motivated by the "stuff that history is made of." Fortunately, in our Internet Age, real history materials (even primary sources are available at the beck and call of our keyboard-tapping fingers.

Primary sources, investigation, comparing discoveries&hellip;these make history exciting. If only teachers had time to explore learning in this way.

Sidebar Unfortunately, original source materials may not be politically correct. What if children learned what really happened? Who would they trust after finding out that their parents and teacher have been telling them fabricated facts?

Their parents' and teachers' defense: They believed the myths, too, and didn't know any better. Cases in Point Look at some real evidence&hellip;Turkeys: The English-speakers sent out men as "fowlers." They brought back birds, maybe Ruffed Grouse, ducks, geese, swans, cranes, other sea birds. These settlers referred to all kinds of birds as "turkey" From the number of birds that the "fowlers" brought back, we can guess that their success occurred because they happened upon flocks of migrating birds. Otherwise, if they could have experienced this kind of hunting success all year, so many people wouldn't have starved.

Pilgrims: The settlers were not really pilgrims, i.e., travelers to a religious shrine. They were workers after land. Land that belonged to people other than the ones in England who financed the expedition

The real Thanksgiving: The first Thanksgiving is probably the celebration that took place a year after the celebration that is often referenced as the real one

Costumes: The black suits with rectangular collars and buckles were not the style of clothes that the settlers wore.

Religious Freedom: This was more of doing what they wanted. Only about half of the original settlers were Puritan. Their complaint was against King James for running the Church of England like the Roman Catholic Church. They wanted to get rid of the Catholic Church trappings, and make the church "pure."

Starvation: This was the result of stupidity and lying. These folks called their farms, "Plantations." This concept is irrelevant in the rocky, short growing season of Massachusetts. And, the crops that they could grow and ship (corn) didn't have the economic value of a product like tobacco (grown in Virginia)

These folks were supposed to earn money by fishing, but they found that they could make more money by trading with the Native Americans for furs (beaver and otter pelts). If they went fishing, they would have had food. Trading for furs gave them nothing to eat. But, trading furs was a lot easier than fishing every day

In defense of the settlers, they were not fishermen, they brought the wrong sized fish hooks, and eventually learned how to fish

The lying was a subterfuge to get the rich backers of the expedition in England to send more money. They wrote to England that the area was rich in fish, deer, crops (a paradise). But, instead of sending more money, the backers figured that the settlers didn't need as much, and sent less supplies

Pre-Winter Arrival: These folks couldn't have picked a worse time to arrive in Massachusetts, unless it was later during the "dead of winter (no pun intended). They didn't realize that the weather was more severe than in England. Leaving England on Sept. 23rd, they headed into the cold ocean currents, and the trip took over two months (66 days). They ate only cold food, and one person (a sailor) died during the voyage.

Friendliness with the Native Americans: Neither group trusted the other. Relations got so bad that the settlers even posted dying people at the gate of their fort so that the Native Americans thought that they had more guards than they really had.

King Massasoit: The colonists mistook a local tribal chief as a "king." In fact, the word "Massasoit" means leader. This was not his real name. There were other chiefs of the Wampanoag Nation that were not as friendly as group that Massasoit lead. It is surprising that the the Wampanoag were as friendly as they were. The colonists&hellip;

Arrived after an incident where 27 Wampanoag men were kidnapped by English fishing boats  
The settlers dug up (and took without permission) Wampanoag caches of corn  
The settlers just moved in on Wampanoag land without asking  
Pure Speculation - Not History, but Plausible: The invitation of the Native Americans may have been an accident. The Wampanoag heard lots of shooting (maybe the sound of the fowlers blasting away at the flocks of migratory birds) and Chief Massasoit took 90 men to investigate. (If the Wampanoag were invited, wouldn't they have brought their wives and children to the party?) But now that they "showed up" the settlers had little choice but to invite the army of Native Americans, that outnumbered them almost two to one, to stay and eat. Then, Chief Massasoit sent his men out and they shot five deer to contribute to the fiesta. (If they had been invited in the first place, they would have brought the deer with them as gifts when they arrived, wouldn't they?)  
Link to Primary Source - Hearsay Graphic Organizer  
English Colonists Cultural Chart graphic organizer  
Primary Sources 3-2-1 Chart graphic organizer  
Sources for "Myth-Busting" Information  
Plymoth Vocabulary (note the early spelling)  
What the Settlers and the Wampanoag Wore  
Plymoth Plantation and the Pilgrims  
Online Presentation  
Teacher's Guide to the Online Presentation: You are the Historian: Guide to the First Thanksgiving  
More Myth Debunking than you can possibly have time for  
The sub menus are deep and the narrative is long  
Unrelated to Myth-Busting but fun, anyway: Thanksgiving Crafts

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 05:00

Sunday, September 30, 2007

## Teacher Resources

African American Culture: Learn it Like you would a Foreign Language  
African Americans lost their demographic status as "The Minority." Now, there are more Hispanics in the US than African Americans. But, this does not decrease the importance of teachers understanding African American culture. Whether you have African American Children, or children of other minorities in your classroom, your role as a Master Teacher demands that you&hellip;  
Know the history and culture of African American communities  
Recognize that African American communities are rich, and diverse  
Understand that cultural communication requires experience and language sensitivity, even if the language used is English  
Analyze your language, and discover ways that you could communicate attitudes, beliefs and feelings in a more culturally aware (and supportive) way  
Synthesize understandings and communication skills so that your students perceive your caring and insight  
Evaluate your own positions, and those of your students  
These higher-order cultural learning challenges are also true for knowing the status of other group with a culture of their own, i.e.,&hellip;  
Muslims  
Home-schooling Conservative Christians  
Gays and Lesbians  
Children of Incarcerated Parents  
Children in Foster Care  
"Underclass" (Economic Poverty) Children of any Race, Religion or Culture  
End of "The Major Minority" Status  
African Americans may not be the largest minority, but they are people, and they are important.  
Ten out of 100 children in our schools are Hispanic, but eight out of 100 are African American. Teachers can find African American students in their classrooms, even in affluent suburbs.  
But, just as the study of language requires learning the culture of the speakers of that language; so too does the study of ethnic groups require a study and understanding of that culture.  
Teachers must speak to the hearts of all students, whatever the culture of the students, and whatever the culture of the teacher.  
Knowledge, the Secret, Not! Intellectual knowledge, the ability to recite facts, even the ability to intellectualize compassion and at-a-distance caring for a cultural group is only a small step toward sensitivity and a working relationship to a culture.  
Seeing the shoes that members of that culture have walked in is different than slipping your feet into the tight-fitting, "holes in the bottom blocked with newspaper walk in their shoes" kind of "reality-understanding" that is needed.  
Resources for African American Cultural Awareness  
For background information, and resources that are "wide, deep and broad," check out the Smithsonian's new National Museum of African American History and Culture. The National Museum of African American History and Culture has an online exhibit.  
Link to the exhibit&hellip;  
Sidebar  
Even better, the National Museum of African American History and Culture site uses a dynamic Mind Map similar to the one that the Visual Thesaurus uses.  
For information about getting a copy of Visual Thesaurus, visit&hellip;  
Visual Thesaurus Information&hellip;  
The museum also is opening its first "go there and see it" physical exhibit on October 19 at the National Portrait Gallery. This exhibit tracks 150 years of photographs of scholars, abolitionists, artists and athletes who  
The exhibit is entitled, Let Your Motto Be Resistance  
African American culture is just as important as it always was, even if there are now more Hispanic students in our schools.  
Be sensitive to all cultures, races, and ethnic groups.  
Diverse perspectives enrich our own, broaden our insights, and provide additional options and choices for problem-solving and decision-making.  
Cultural understanding means wider and deeper thinking than simple higher-order thinking. It is as though higher-order thinking is two dimensional, while cultural sensitivity adds another dimension. Even better, cultural thinking adds melodies, harmonies, shades, textures and colors (no pun intended, really) to our thoughts and concepts.  
We are richer and our lives are better because of our positive communication, interaction and sharing with multiple cultures.  
Sidebar  
The best analogy that I ever encountered concerning the crossroads of ideas, and the stagnant nature of isolation came from a Public Radio program, quite a few years ago. The commentator pointed out that, "There is no concept or experience of building boats in Tibet."  
The entire culture of Tibet is devoid of knowledge, integration, and need for boats, and this gap is reflected in the absence of words that relate to boats.  
Make sure that your language and concepts contain the accumulated knowledge and wisdom that can be acquired by communication with other cultures, including the African American culture.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 05:00

Friday, August 31, 2007

## Teacher Resources

Nation Master .Com and State Master .Com Every teacher needs an up-to-date resource about the history, geography, politics and other information about the countries of our world. NationMaster.com is like the CIA World Fact Book on steroids. Link to the sites: NationMaster.com, StateMaster.com. Wide, Deep and Broad in Scope: NationMaster.com and StateMaster.com can provide the standard fare, i.e.: Flags

Maps

Statistics

Country Profiles

FAQs

News

Site Search

Free Lesson Plans The sites also has a forum. Uses of Geography In a country where many students can't identify the country of Iraq on a map, even though our country has been at war there for the majority of their lives, geography is important.

Geography is one area where our students are being "left behind."

The power of sites such as NationMaster.com and StateMaster.com is that teachers don't have to remain the sole expert about country and state information.

With Internet access, students can search for the facts and figures that fascinate them. Then, it is up to the teacher to tell stories, and weave this information into concepts and higher-order thoughts. A Resource for (Almost) Every Subject, Even Math Classroom Toolkit advocates teaching math at every opportunity in every subject. The same recommendation goes for geography, history and news (current events).

Background information is the natural segue into every lesson, because: If stories were written, they were written in a country (maybe a state, province or political division within that country)

If stories have settings, these may be in countries, regions or cities within those countries

If science discoveries were made, these discoveries were made within countries, by scientists that were either citizens of that country, or by scientists that were born elsewhere

If food is being prepared, that food came from somewhere

If sports are being played, they are also played in other states and other countries. And many sports heroes (and national icons) come from other countries

Etc. On and on: You get the idea Not only are children interested in other countries, but they often communicate with students from around the world.

How?

Children play online video games with others at home.

A Nation of Immigrants

With the recent rancorous debate and divisive public opinion our country's immigration laws, our students need to become conversant of the issues.

In some schools and in some communities, there could be one or more "illegal immigrant" children sitting at the desks of its classrooms.

Students could suffer distress to learn that some folks in our country, politicians among them, might consider their friends to be "criminals and unsavory elements" in our society.

Do the math. Not every one of the estimated 12 million "undocumented aliens" is a maid, migrant farm worker, construction worker or custodian. A bunch of them are children. Sidebar The existence of these children in our school has to gall certain politicians among us.

Not only do these children consume resources, but these children are primarily of the "wrong religion," and they consume public school resources that could be used to send children of the "right religion" (i.e., their rabid constituents children), to church schools at government expense. Too bad that this is illegal. Of course, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is designed to fix this by making our public schools (and our teachers) look bad; and provide an excuse to give government money to pay for church school tuition for these children.

Hopefully, this brand of bigotry (both the politicians of this ilk and NCLB) are on the way out. The next election will tell.

But, teachers are "child-centered" and politically neutral in public. In private, NCLB is enough to turn the vote of many teachers away from the party that "rammed it down the gullets" of our schools. Mature Resources "Mature resources" does not mean that these two sites are for adults, but that they have deep and well developed content.

Of course, StateMaster.com is the newer of the two online resources, so its content isn't quite as expansive. (We're sure that it will get to this level in short order.)

In addition, the close integration with Wikipedia.com seems to be a plus, even though the validity of the information

in Wikipedia&#8482; is sometimes of less than first quality.

In summary, NationMaster&#8482; and StateMaster&#8482; are resources that can help almost all teacher to integrate geography, history and current events into all subjects.

Children respond to this holistic approach to "human interest-type" knowledge with excitement and curiosity, a welcome "breath of fresh air" that can spruce up and spice up the bland taste of our "politically correct" textbooks.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Tuesday, July 31, 2007

## Teacher Resources

eBooks: Inexpensive, Available Content&hellip;Why use Textbooks?

eBooks are available, inexpensive or free, and more interesting to students than the canned, static, ossified content known as "textbooks." But, teachers use textbooks to drive instruction because textbooks&hellip;Are there Come with Teacher Editions

Contain a lot of material focused upon central topics

Contain safe, antiseptic content

Provide an "It's not my decision to use this book" excuse when parents complain about the content that is being taught  
Provide lots of associated learning aids, even test-building software  
So, what's the problem? One-Third of Student don't Graduate from High School in Some Places  
Has anyone stopped to assess just what role textbooks have in this "dropout rate" Answer: Yes. But, we keep using textbooks, anyway.

What are the "downsides" of using textbooks? Textbooks are&hellip;Boring, dull and lifeless

Conservative

Uncontroversial

Academic and aseptic

Written by committee and consensus

Built with controlled reading levels and vocabulary

Written to sell to large states such as California and Texas

Outdated before they are printed

Generally mediocre their in portrayal of minorities and minority issues, i.e., "whitewashing the issues (no pun intended)  
With all these strikes against textbooks, it is a wonder that textbooks even make it to the ballpark.  
eBooks Available Everywhere  
A search on Google&#8482; revealed that there were about 1,700,000 results for the search term, "free ebooks."  
Link to the search for "free eBooks"...  
And, Project Gutenberg&#8482; lists 17,000 eBooks in their collection. Plus the Project Gutenberg&#8482; has eBooks in a bunch of languages.

Link to the Project Gutenberg&#8482; Online Catalog  
Probably many teachers could teach using only Project Gutenberg&#8482; text and Internet research instead of textbooks.

A check on eBay&#8482; revealed that about 14,000 eBooks were for sale, page after page at a cost of \$0.01 USD.  
Link to eBay&#8482;  
The Upsides and Downside of eBooks  
The upsides and downsides of eBooks are really "flip sides" of the same issues. for example&hellip;  
All of Project Gutenberg&#8482;'s materials are out of copyright. This means that they are really old, or that they are Government Documents.  
Old documents can be primary source documents, great if you are teaching history, romantic literature, and such

Government documents can be primary sources, too. But you have to be a scholar to know which information is accurate.  
Previewing is a pain. With textbook "pabulum" a teacher is safe not to preview. With "raw meat" sources, teachers need to "bone up" on the contents of assignments before handing them out

Using eBooks with a strategy where every student reads the same passages and responds in the same way makes learning "equal but unfair" and boring. But, this strategy makes grading uniform, and diminishes challenges to the grades (by students and their parents). Assigning every student to read the same material defeats the advantages of using eBooks, so, if you are going to require every student read the same content, stick to textbooks

eBook reading level is all over the place. Finding easy enough content, especially for lower level readers takes a lot of teacher time. But, over time, teachers can build a library of these materials. Why not have students read segments of these eBooks to each other and score the passages based on the number of errors. This could build a classification system in a school year

Canned textbook questions are boring, but at least the answers are available with a key. Create your own questions, and you have to also check the answers. Maybe this takes too much thought and concentration. Create your own answers, and you have to justify your choice of questions under the challenge of students who guessed another answer.

On second thought, this might be a positive approach to stimulation students to think

It takes time to find high quality eBooks that are usable for instruction, but the ones that are useful interest students and have real-world information that benefits students

The content of eBooks can be current, practical and useful; or the content can be outdated, goofy and detrimental to anyone who applies the eBook's suggestions. Sorting out the differences is real-world learning

Students could pass around eBooks that they like. Imagine, students reading stuff that wasn't assigned to them "on the sly." This happens so infrequently with textbooks that&euro;Students would be ashamed to admit it

Reporting the occurrence could make the newspapers with human interest, similar to a "Man bites dog" story  
The Classroom Toolkit Resources  
Classroom Toolkit advocates building a library of Graphic Organizers, Templates, generic assignment for "Mix-and-Match" flexibility.

Link to the Classroom Toolkit Graphic Organizers section&hellip;Link to the Classroom Toolkit Graphic Organizers Starter Kit&hellip;

This strategy is a natural for stirring student interest, for keeping content and instructional delivery fresh, for drumming up debate and for teaching real-world information and skills.

This strategy is also a perfect match for project-based group assignments, for rubric scoring, and for building competent citizens.

How many times have you been asked a question that you could quote a textbook answer? Maybe none unless you are "teaching from a textbook."

Great Selection&hellip;The Price is Right

With choices from modern day how-tos to the classics, the

Another catch, who pays for printing out all these eBooks?

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Saturday, June 30, 2007

## **Teacher Resources**

Learning Sites&#8482; A Resource (Even if you don't Teach Archeology)

Learning Sites.Com offers some unique resources for teachers, even those teachers who don't teach archeology.Link to LearningSites.com

The site provides stunning virtual graphics of archeology sites, lots of virtual places, lots of views, and lots of scientific information.What the Site Offers

Help teacher and students become curious and creative

Help teachers and students visualize and imagine

Help teachers and students empathize with the restraints, customs and realities of ancient people

Classroom Toolkit also focuses on these goals.What a Way to Spend a SummerThis summer is a perfect time to visit sites such as Learning Sites&#8482; and enjoy wandering through the technology thrills. And, this is "free" professional development that you may be able to re-purpose for many classroom activities.

SidebarThe resources on this site remind me of the opportunity that I had when teaching Special Education Resource classes several years ago.The campus had purchased "Laser Disk Players" for about half the classrooms to pilot a science program, i.e., Windows on Science.Unfortunately, many teachers were "more comfortable employing out-of-adoption" textbooks instead of the adopted Laser Disk science curriculum.Fortunately, I found a rejected Laser Disk player and some of the science curriculum materials.And even though I didn't teach science, these disks were outstanding for teaching English/ Language Arts, Math and Reading.

In fact, outstanding is too diminutive a word to describe the flexibility and usability of this resource.

Guess what! Today we have the Internet, and the Internet's capacity, functionality, serviceability and usability for instruction surpasses the Laser Disk players of yesteryear in about the same way as the hare surpasses the tortoise.

So, check out what Learning Sites&#8482; has to offer and determine for yourself if they are "The Leader in Reliable Archaeological Visualizations for Interactive Education and Research" that they claim to be.

And they must might be&hellip;for today.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Thursday, May 31, 2007

## Teacher Resources

Edutopia's Professional Development

We recommend that you visit (or revisit) Edutopia's. The reason? Edutopia's continues to challenge education to help students become all that they can become

Help teachers become all that they can become

Reform the educational system so that it begins to support #1 and #2

Prompt the political system to change the educational system to a system that is more effective Classroom Toolkit also focuses on these goals. Visit Edutopia's; This summer is a perfect time to revisit Edutopia's and participate in their "free" professional development. Of course, nothing is really "free." Professional development "costs" your time.

Professional development also "costs" whatever it costs when the time spent in professional development takes away from other benefits. (This is called, "Opportunity cost.") During the summer, you could be drawn away from family time, restful activities, and leisure-time pursuits. The ideal is for the time that is spent in professional development to at least "pay back" more than it costs (in both time and money). Even better, is a "leveraged" payoff. If you engage in the right kind of professional development (strategic, focused on streamlined procedures that maximize results, i.e., improved student performance outcomes), then you get back more (multiples of time savings, multiples of effectiveness) than you invest. It is amazing that school district administrators and executive decision-makers fail to comprehend this simple concept.

What Edutopia's Offers The free professional development resources offered by Edutopia's include: Articles What's Working in K-12 Schools Interviews Professional Development Actions that You can Take Links to Professional Development Options Student-Centered Education Edutopia's targets education exactly where school district administrator, politicians, and "the general public" should be focusing their efforts.

The editors at Edutopia's demonstrate a knowledge that the energy and creativity of our students motivates achievement if we facilitate students' own interests and if we expand students' life experiences.

There is nothing fake or artificial about the dynamic relationship between teachers and students when students are engaged, when students are working on projects that the students perceive to be real-world, beneficial, crucial to the people that live on our planet.

What a far cry from the sterile, stagnant, antiseptic environment that a focus upon high-stakes tests creates. The Choice is Clear: Focus upon Students or Focus upon Tests So, during your summer, take advantage of the free professional development resources at Edutopia's;

Next year, both you and your students will be glad that you did.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Monday, April 30, 2007

## Teacher Resources

Teacher Tube: A Great Resource, If you Contribute Online video is popular, and some videos become popular. Video sites such as YouTube are the current rage. Unfortunately, YouTube contains material that is unacceptable for use in school (although students devour this questionable content at home). School district's content filters (required by federal law) generally block YouTube; TeacherTube: A Safe, Unblocked Alternative What good is building a lesson around a wonderful video that perfectly captures your lesson's theme, only to have the item blocked by your district's content filter.

And, storing the YouTube video, even if you have the technology to capture it is... Time Consuming A "Memory Hog"

Cumbersome to Transport from Home to School But, TeacherTube is safe, video content is checked by humans, and users just have to complain to remove a questionable video.

Uploading content to the site is easy.

And, the company is even selling its technology to school districts so that each school district can build and keep instructional videos inside its own network! The Site's Shortcoming With all this "Too Good to be True" news, you know that there has to be a catch.

The catch is that there isn't much video on the site, at least not yet.

But, you could create instructional video and submit it to TeacherTube.

Just remember that you may have to obtain school district approval to submit the video, especially if you use district equipment in any way to create the video product. In almost all cases, any video that you create with district equipment belongs to the district. And school districts are notoriously stingy about sharing. Maybe the school district didn't attend kindergarten. Or, maybe there is something about the arrested development of some school district leaders that is involved. In any rate, check first to stay out of trouble.)

Another issue is obtaining parent permission either for... Capturing and publishing images of children Posting students' work (Children's Work is automatically copyrighted, but their parents control it while the children are minors) Some really greedy school districts have policies that state (erroneously) that any student's work that is created with school district equipment has joint copyright ownership with the school district being able to use that material for as long as the district wants.

Sidebar within a Sidebar This seems to be a violation of students' rights, and a court case where a student creates a really valuable piece of intellectual property will, I predict, decide in the favor of the student. I met Jason and Jodi Smith, the developers of TeacherTube at the Region 20 Tech Fiesta in San Antonio, Texas this past week.

Jason and Jodi told me about an interview that they had scheduled that evening with Miguel Guhlin, Technology Director for one of the local school districts. I didn't know that Jason was a school district superintendent, and I wonder what comments I may have dropped that revealed my attitude about our bureaucrats needing to empower and support teachers. Bottom Line If you have instructional video that you can legally and ethically post on TeacherTube, feel free to share. A video that you post on TeacherTube will reach children, unlike a posting on YouTube that will be filtered and blocked.

Out children deserve the great content that you can provide. Make that content open and free for all of them.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Saturday, March 31, 2007

## Teacher Resources

### Free Microsoft® Clip Art and Media

Besides the free tutorials that we described in the last issue of Classroom Toolkit, Microsoft® offers lots of "clip art and media." Link to the previous Microsoft® free eLearning article; In fact, the Microsoft® site states that there are 150,000 items available for download!

Link to the Microsoft® Clip Art and Media Download page;

The resource library contains;

Pictures

Sounds

Animations  
The download process is better, faster, cheaper than just finding images through a search engine, then trying to determine if you can legally use the images. If you have a copy of Microsoft® Office, you can use these resources.

Even better, you can search page after page of images and other resources, simply click a "check box" to add the images to a "shopping cart," and download a huge selection of these files, all at once. Tips on Using Clip Art Microsoft® also provides online help on how to make the best use of this media resource.

Link to the "Tips on Using Clip Art" page;

The one problem with downloading a lot of images at one time is that the images will have names such as, "j0402101.jpg" or "jo4ii781.jpg". But, this is how they download from digital cameras, too.

You have to rename the images to make them usable. Just remember to keep the correct "three letter extension" when renaming the resource files. What's the Catch? This is Microsoft®, and Microsoft® wants to promote their products.

This means that free comes with a catch. What is the catch?

In order to download the pictures in a time-saving, easy to use manner, you have to use Microsoft®'s "Clips Manager."

This "Clips Manager" is found only with licensed copies of Microsoft® Office

The good news is that; You probably have the "Clips Manager" installed on a computer at home or at school. You can just select a large number of images, sounds, anything else; place these in a shopping cart; and download the entire collection

The collection will then be found in the "My Documents/My Pictures/ Microsoft Clips Organizer" folder (directory)

Once you have the picture in the Clips Organizer Directory, you can search on a topic and all the pictures that are located on your computer will be available.

(Note: This is the reason for keeping the files with their "strange names" in this folder (directory), and simply moving a copy to another location and naming it with a meaningful name.)

(Note #2: If you use the images on your Web pages, and you want to add extra relevance in Search Engine analysis of your page, you will name your images to coincide with your page content.)  
Sidebar If you have an older version of Microsoft® installed on your computer(s), you may find that the folder names are slightly different. Also, for multiple computers, it would be quite a chore to keep all computers updated with the same clip art and media. There are a lot of possibilities for using these resources, i.e., burning a collection to a CD, storing a collection on a USB drive, saving the collection to a shared volume on the network, having students save the images that they use to their home directories or portfolios, etc.

Delving into all of these possibilities is beyond the scope of this article. Consult with your school district's IT Department for the strategy that best suits your situation. The bad news is; If you use an Open Source browser, such as Firefox®, the Microsoft® site starts to get suspicious, and starts asking you questions to make sure that you can legally use the Clip Art. Microsoft® and Open Source

Microsoft® is recognizing the value of the Open Source Movement by developing business alliances with Open Source vendors.

But, while these images, sounds and other resources are free (for MS Office® users), they are not Open Source. In fact, Classroom Toolkit received criticism for our article last month because we identified a free, Microsoft® professional development resource.

The criticism went something like this, "How can you claim to be an Open Source Movement, and share information about Microsoft®?"

Of course the answer is easy; Classroom Toolkit is a movement for providing "Instructional Materials for Teachers"

We promote free and low-cost options for teachers, and are unbiased about where teachers find resources

Our focus is on saving time for teachers, reducing stress, and helping teachers understand that they are not the cause

of the mess that modern education finds itself mired in

Teachers want resources that they can use, today, without complexity. Teachers do not care to enter a debate on Open Source "purity," nor, do teachers want to tinker with the technology. Teachers just don't have the time to experiment to get another computer platform configured and running

The fact is that most Open Source software provides a Windows version, and promoting Windows makes the most sense

Our focus is on empowering teachers, and eliminating the negative side effects when outsiders (whether politicians, judges, or Linux server IT specialists) try to dictate what is "best for education" (Note: It doesn't matter if these outsiders are "well meaning" or not. [Although in the case of politicians meddling with education, the odds are that their "murky" agendas are automatically suspect.] So, check out all the free resources that Microsoft provides.

These resources are easy to use, and that is the message that Open Source advocates need to learn. (It's the old Apple Computer mantra.

Teachers focus on instruction, and any layer of difficulty in applying technology distracts from that focus. The reason that some Open Source products just won't be used is that those products are too much trouble to use. Products that are not "one-click" easy just are not ready for prime time, real-world, teaching.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Wednesday, February 28, 2007

## Teacher Resources

Microsoft Offers Free eLearning Content

Some advocates of the Open Source movement criticize any mention of Microsoft(TM), but more Open Source software that is useful to teachers runs on Windows than any other platform.

And, although few school districts will roll out Microsoft's updates and new products anytime soon, Microsoft has free online learning available for the next 90 days. Take advantage of this offer. After long delays, Microsoft is releasing a stable of new products. And, Microsoft is offering free online courses associated with these new products for three months. These courses will eventually cost \$29.99 each, but for now, you can study them without paying.

So, check out all the free course offerings that Microsoft is providing as it launches its updates and new products. And, send your students to these courses as well. What are the Courses and How do I Access Them? Here are the links located at Microsoft's Website:

Link to the Free eLearning Course Portal (i.e., Link Page) Learn about the new user interface and customization tools, and discover how to improve the way that you do everyday tasks. Course 4697: Introduction to the New Microsoft Office User Interface Discover how to create and populate an Office Access 2007 database, and learn about the great new tools available to analyze your data. Course 4622: What's New in Microsoft Office Access 2007 Determine how Office Excel 2007 can help you organize and analyze information. Put new features, such as conditional formatting and enhanced business intelligence analysis tools, to work for you.

Course 4623: What's New in Microsoft Office Excel 2007

Learn how to convert your existing Microsoft Word and Excel forms into Office InfoPath 2007 forms. Course 4624:

What's New in Microsoft Office InfoPath 2007 Use Office OneNote 2007 to manage your text, voice, and Tablet

PC-based notes in one place. See how to share your notes with others to create a collaborative work environment. Course 4625: What's New in Microsoft Office OneNote 2007 Strengthen your e-mail communications, calendar, and task management expertise by taking advantage of the new user interface for messages and appointments. Course 4626: What's New in Microsoft Office Outlook 2007 Discover the latest features for creating

dynamic and engaging presentations. Course 4627: What's New in Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2007 Prepare to use

the new, intuitive interface and navigation tools of Office Word 2007. Course 4628: What's New in Microsoft Office Word 2007 Use the latest features of this business and technical diagramming program to quickly create flowcharts, process diagrams, and organizational charts. Learn what Pivot Diagrams can do for you. Course 4629: What's New in Microsoft Office Visio 2007 Discover how to create and manage Office Groove 2007 workspaces for sharing files and project information. You'll also learn how to support effective team communication and how to collect information using forms. Course 4698: What's New in Microsoft Office Groove 2007 You have to register at the Microsoft site to

be able to access these courses. Free eBook from Microsoft, too. Microsoft is also offering a free electronic book (eBook) at the same site. Link to the free eBook: Why Keep "Up to Date" about Microsoft

Products Even though your school district may not update your computers with Microsoft's latest product until the Summer of 2007, if at all, teachers need to follow the evolution of productivity software.

The reason that teachers need software such as Microsoft's Windows software and Office Productivity software is because these software programs have become "standards." Because the programs are "standards", other program developers create connections to these programs. Other vendors integrate their products into standard products. For Example: For example, a mind mapping program might be able to export mind maps as a word processing outline file, a slide show or a project plan. This saves lots of "cutting and pasting" work. Another example would be a program that converts Office Productivity files to the PDF format. These programs can change the menu items of standard software programs so that you do not need to load a separate program to save your work in both formats. Another Reason to Keep Informed: Know What to Request from Your District's IT Department The reason that you might not have access to new Microsoft software at work is that; It takes time to roll out new software

New software should be tested thoroughly to ensure that the new product is compatible with all other products

Classes are ongoing, and you and your students are in the way of a change over of your PC

The IT Department staff wants to protect your files because, during the update process, all existing data is "wiped out"

No budget exists for purchasing new software Note: There is a subscription fee process (something like an insurance policy, in fact, it is called "Software Assurance" where all updates can be installed when they are released; but your

district may not have paid for this subscription The computer in your classroom is a "piece of junk" that lacks the memory, speed or other resources that are required to run the new software Sidebar See our article in this issue of Classroom Toolkit The Role of Technology in Technology Integration: It's not what "They Think"

Wednesday, January 31, 2007

## Teacher Resources

Two Low-Cost, Hands-On "Our District should buy this stuff but won't" Resources

If you are going to open your wallet and purchase classroom supplies and materials, you might as well get more for your money. Here are two places where you can spend your disposable cash, and obtain value, if you are careful.

But be warned, you can spend a lot of money, even if the individual items are "cheap." Oriental Trading Company; Some people would say that the Oriental Trading Company; is just a purvey of "dollar store junk."

But their catalog offers just the kind of colorful stuff that brings a gleam to the eyes of young children.

And the parents of young children treasure these items when their kids bring them. Some parents will have these items on display 20, 30 or more years later. Others will keep them in cupboards, trunks and suitcases.

Here is a link to the Oriental Trading Company; site, [handsonfun.com](http://handsonfun.com). Bits and Pieces; Bits and Pieces;, on the other hand, offers quality and selection of unique puzzles and gifts that teachers would like to give and receive for themselves.

These are teacher's desk items, if you dare bring them to school.

When Bits and Pieces; claims that their products are unique, they mean it.

Check these out for yourself. I bet that you'll be fascinated.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Sunday, December 31, 2006

## Teacher Resources

### Free Fractal Creation Software

Did you ever want to create colorful designs that you could use without cost? Well, here is an Open Source (free) program that will create beautiful designs for all your needs.

The name of this software is "Apophysis". Source for this Software Here are the links for the Apophysis software;

Download the Apophysis Software

Link to the Apophysis Online Tutorials

Read the Apophysis Online FAQ's What can you Do with this Software? Imagine rich, colorful designs that you can use to spice up/ spruce up your Presentations

Web Pages

Certificates

Student Rewards You can also reward students by letting them run this program. Everyone will marvel at the designs that they create. What can you Design? The Apophysis program allows you to transform the images, called "flames" in a number of ways. These are Linear

Sinusoidal

Spherical

Swirl

Horseshoe

Polar

Bent

Handkerchief

Heart

Disk

Spiral

Hyperbolic

Diamond

Ex

Julia

Waves

Fisheye

Popcorn There is also a random "flame" generator. Flame Samples Here are samples that were captured with the Snagit screen capture utility, then optimized for use on the Web with Photoshop. Of course, you could use any image rendering program including The GIMP, an Open Source graphics editing program.

Here are some sample banners;

And some images;

Of course, the on-screen images are brighter than the images that are compressed for Web viewing.

The biggest problem with this free software? You can squander a lot of time creating images. But, it will be relaxing, fun time.

Try the Apophysis program and see for yourself.

Let us know if you think of any other uses for this gem of a free program.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Thursday, November 30, 2006

## **Teacher Resources**

Tons of Free Professional (Trade) Publications: Print or E-mail -- Your Choice

Many teachers can use free technical publications, even if they receive only one copy.

Sometimes a printed copy is better, other times an electronic copy is more useful. What if you could receive free copies in one format, or the other, or both? Many trade publications are available to teachers, free for the asking&hellip;requiring only a few minutes work in filling out the online forms. What kind of Publications are Available? Here is a list (and links) to a summary of the types of publications that teachers may find useful&hellip;

<http://techrepublic.tradepub.com/>

Agriculture

Automotive

Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals

Computers

Construction

Education

Engineering

Executive & Management

Finance

Food & Beverage

Government

Healthcare

Human Resources

Industrial & Manufacturing

Internet

Information Technology

IT - Data Management

IT - Security

IT - Software & Development

IT - Storage

Insurance

Mechanical / Machine

Meetings & Travel

Multimedia

Network / Communications

Purchasing & Procurement

Retail

Sales & Marketing

Small & Medium Business

Telecom & Wireless

Trade/Professional Services

Transportation & Logistics

Utility & Energy Uses for Printed Copies of Trade Journals Uses for printed copies of trade journals are limited only by your imagination. Some options include:

Learning Centers

Classroom Library

Classroom Career Center

Classroom "Science and Technology" Resource Library

Rip issues apart for reports and presentations

File and catalog clipping file resource database

Etc. Uses for Electronic Copies of Trade Journals Uses for electronic content are limited only by "Fair Use" copyright considerations. (Note: Students have more leeway in the use of copyrighted material for their assignments than teachers have in classroom instruction.)

When in doubt, obtain permission to use the material. Use only a small portion of the material, and make sure that instruction "surrounds" the use of the material. One use that is generally safe is satire.

Another strategy is to site all sources, something that you should model for your students, anyway.

And remember the "tongue in cheek" difference between research and plagiarism, i.e., "If you copy from one source it is

plagiarism, but if you copy from three sources it is research."

You are generally safe if you compare quotes from three "authors/ experts" and ask students any of the higher order questions concerning the different viewpoints, vantage points, talking points and "hidden agendas" of each author. For a discussion of higher-order thinking skills, see our Classroom Toolkit Higher-Order Thinking page&hellip;Free ResourcesEven if you only develop a library of the printed publications and allow students to read them during "spare or sponge activity" moments, you don't know when reading about a career, technology of industry will influence a student to pursue a new course of study and a better life.

Widening the horizons of students pays off in amazing ways, ways that we may not discover until years later&hellip;or ways that we may never discover.

Part of the joy of teaching is realizing that our service to students reaches beyond our need to know about or take credit for the benefits that our students receive.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Tuesday, October 31, 2006

## Teacher Resources

Give Kids Good Schools: A Site for this Election Season

"Give Kids Good Schools" is a political and "Advocative" (A Classroom Toolkit Coined Word: Meaning: Advocate and Provocative) resource. The Give Kids Good Schools organization held a "Give Kids Good Schools Week" earlier this month, and they are already gearing up for the same event next year.

But, with the midterm election barreling down upon us, a week away from "Halloween Trick or Treat" (the timing seems quite appropriate and fitting this year), the Give Kids Good Schools site offers a great political current events resource. A Streamlined "Elected Officials" Contact System Give Kids Good Schools offers E-mail and other contact information so that you can take action and communicate your concerns at about the only time of the year that elected officials really field your communication efforts.

But, use E-mail instead of calling by their offices by telephone since most of these "public servants" are tying up their telephone lines with those dunning, outgoing campaign calls that interrupt your family's dinner and wake you up just as you fall asleep. Sidebar (Actually, this can't be true (Halloween Trick!), since no public servant would do such a blatantly illegal thing such as use your tax dollars to feather their own nest for another term of office, would they? (I'll have to check with congressional ethics consultant, Jack Abramoff on that one, as soon as he gets out of jail.)

The Give Kids Good Schools Site

Link to the Give Kids Good Schools .Org site

Link to the Give Kids Good Schools Week Campaign

Link to the Give Kids Good Schools "Find and Contact your Elected Officials" Resource

Link to the Give Kids Good Schools "Ten Questions to Ask Elected Officials" Resource

Link to the Give Kids Good Schools "Sign the Pledge" Page

Check up on your school or district with the School Matters .Com site (Courtesy of Standard and Poor's) [Answer: Standards are Poor (No pun intended)] Ready for Next Year? Give Kids Good Schools is already gearing up for Give Kids Good Schools Week 2007.

Why don't you, your students, and your students' parents join them?

And, while you're at it, why don't you all ask your elected officials "Why walking the talk support for education" is so very difficult once they win an election. Extra Credit! Here are some math problems and Web Quests that are appropriate for this "Trick and Treat/ Election Season"

Math How many jailed congressmen were also lawyers or judges? Create a Venn diagram to show the relationship.

A congressman takes \$100,000 from a lobbyist for allowing the clear cutting of a National Forest, and \$50,000 from another lobbyist for allowing cattle to graze for free on grass land that used to be a National Forest. Which lobbyist bought a vote? Which lobbyist got the best value for his money? Formula Writing A freshman congressman is invited to 700 swank parties a year. Two parties were scheduled last night. Write an apology letter from the congressman to the lobbyist holding the party that was not attended, explaining all the reasons that the lobbyists should still "contribute" the money.

Write a complaint letter to the president stating that his request for a 50% cut of the gate receipts for the "\$1,000 a plate dinner" is too high. Document why even a 25% share is too much money for the value of the service the president renders in bringing rich influence brokers to the table.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Saturday, September 30, 2006

## Teacher Resources

Free E-mail for your School (Or your Classroom) Do you want to put up with some advertising so you can have a safe, kid-friendly E-mail system for your entire classroom? Then, register for the free service at [Gaggle.Net](http://Gaggle.Net);

Unfortunately, your school has to register for this service, but with over 12,000 schools registered, the process cannot be that difficult to get approved. Why Kid-Safe E-Mail Students like E-mail and they will use E-mail to communicate. And, there are many learning tasks and classroom projects that you can assign. Easy E-mail options include: Daily media projects E-mail mentoring Electronic Pen Pals (ePals) Subscriptions to electronic newsletters and magazines Kid-safe chat rooms Creative roll playing with students taking on online personas

Your students can even use their "Kid Safe" accounts from home. What does "Kid Safe" Mean? [Gaggle.Net](http://Gaggle.Net) provides a number of "Kid Safe" benefits, even for the free subscription. These include: Pornography Protection Virus Protection Spam Protection E-mail and Text Filtering Teacher Controlled Chat Rooms Monitored Message Boards Access from Any Internet-Connected Computer Spell Checking Filtered Digital File Storage Basic Web Hosting and Classroom Profile Pages School and Classroom Calendars

And, don't worry about the advertising. As well as being age appropriate, students respond to it much like they respond to monotone teacher lectures, they tune most of it out. Is it Really Free? [Gaggle.Net](http://Gaggle.Net) offers three subscription versions, including a truly free (of cost) service. Of course, the free service is what subjects your students to online advertising.

If your school wants to avoid the advertising, your school can pay for the upgraded service and remove the ads. Your school district can also apply for discounts for this service through the e-Rate program. (See your district's Technology Director concerning district eligibility for this discount. But, don't hold your breath. The federal e-Rate program route will take almost a year before you see benefits. So, you could expect discounts as early as the 2007-08 school year.) For More Information... [Link to what other teacher have to say about the service.](#)

[Link to the Gaggle.Net flyer](#)

Here is a link to the features that [Gaggle.Net](http://Gaggle.Net) offers.

[Link to the Gaggle.Net sign up page.](#)

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Thursday, August 31, 2006

## **Teacher Resources**

### **National Atlas.Gov: Maps your Way**

The National Atlas is another site where your tax dollars really are working

Since the site is taxpayer supported, and teachers pay what seems like an extraordinary amount of their pay as taxes, it makes sense for teachers in all classes to use this site whenever they can. What can you do on the National Atlas site? You can customize maps and print them, adding layers of information. You can also play with interactive maps, download data for a GIS, and order large maps for your classroom or office.

Link to the National Atlas site.

You can spend hours playing with these interactive maps, but why not let your students explore the maps, develop hypothesis, test their assumptions, and share their conclusions.

### **Creative Teaching**

The possibilities seem endless for using a tool like this for all kinds of content area subjects on all sorts of levels.

If a teacher can spend hours pondering the "What ifs" generated by the layers and combinations of these interactive maps, so can students.

This resource can be used for all manner of creative teaching, with all sorts of graphic organizers to structure the inquiry, with all sizes of student-project groups, in learning centers, and even for lab assignments and homework.

You might create daily oral language, math and vocabulary activities around these layered maps. You might even create homework assignments around these maps.

And, just think, for every use that you devise, your students can come up with at least 20 more...if you encourage them and empower them.

Check our Website for other creative and time-saving ideas. Link to the Classroom Toolkit Website.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Monday, July 31, 2006

## **Teacher Resources**

C-SPAN Classroom: Free Resources for Teaching Civics & U.S. Government

Teacher who teach history or government, current events...and even math and science...can find lots of free material at the C-SPAN site. Descriptions from the C-SPAN site: [Link to sign up for a free membership.](#)

Educators can enroll in the C-SPAN Free Membership Service for ideas, information and resources for teaching U.S. government and civics with C-SPAN's television programming and web sites.

[Link to enrollment form.](#)

Learn more through C-SPAN's [FAQ's page](#)

[Membership Benefits](#)

Classroom resources linked to national standards in U.S. government and civics-a comprehensive archive of video clips with discussion questions, student activities, graphic organizers, worksheets, quizzes created by fellow educators

Periodic special offers, such as free classroom posters

E-mail updates about C-SPAN programs and C-SPAN Classroom web resources relevant to your subject area and grade level

For daily updates of C-SPAN programming, sign up for an additional service,

C-SPAN Alert!)

Unrestricted taping and viewing rights on C-SPAN-produced programming for use in the classroom

Eligibility for our Teacher Fellowship and other contests and opportunities

Eligibility to apply for a C-SPAN Archives Grant to obtain video from the C-SPAN Archives at no cost

The Archives offer a searchable database and research assistance as well as compilation tapes of C-SPAN programs

Access to the C-SPAN Educators' Hotline, at 1-800-523-7586. Call with questions about teaching with C-SPAN

C-SPAN's coverage may not agree with your brand of political ideology, but their extensive coverage seems balanced.

If you want to get involved in the political process by letting your Congressional Delegates hear your opinions, type your Zip Code in the form below, and follow up in contacting the politicians that "work for you."

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Friday, June 30, 2006

## **Teacher Resources**

Want to Build a Unit on Protecting the Environment?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers a site dedicated to teaching about protecting the environment.

Who is this Site for?

This site is educators who wish to teach about the environment.

What does the site offer?

This site offers background information, lesson plans, and activities. There is also information about workshops, conferences, grants, awards and a other topics.

The information can be used by teachers in traditional classrooms, in an outdoor settings, in community centers or in the home.

What specific resources does this site offer?

The EPA Teaching Site offers

Information you can use when you teach

Teaching resources - Lesson plans and activities from the EPA - Grouped by topic

EPA publications - Free materials for teachers and students

EPA Quick Guide - Overview of how the EPA works

Help and Recognition

Awards - Programs for teachers and students

Grants - Links to connect good ideas with the financial resources

Workshops & Conferences - Training opportunities in many local areas

Students Involvement Projects

Community Service Projects - Students apply what they learn in the classroom to real life

Student Jobs and Scholarships - Research environmental careers, internships and jobs

Specific Environmental Areas for Teaching

The EPA site focuses upon these specific environmental areas:

Air

Conservation

Ecosystems

Health

In Your Neighborhood

Waste

Water

Other Resources

Environmental Kids Club - A site for elementary age students

Environmental Kids Club

Student Center - A site for middle school age students

Student Center

High School Environmental Center - Age appropriate site for high school students

High School Environmental Center

Environmental Education Center - An source of adult-oriented environmental information

Environmental Education Center

Environmental issues connect with so many content areas; e.g., health, PE, mathematics, science (biology, chemistry, geology, physics) and social studies (geography, history, sociology, psychology) that just about every teacher can make

## Blog Export: Classroom Toolkit Newsletter, <http://classroomtoolkit.net/serendipity/>

creative use of the resources on this EPA Teaching Center educational site.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Wednesday, May 31, 2006

### **Teacher Resources**

Mind Tools -- A Career Resource Site

We have found a career development site that has many resources that parallel Classroom Toolkit's strategies for improving teachers' lives.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Sunday, April 30, 2006

### **Teacher Resources**

Food Tales

<http://www.soupsong.com/ifoodta.html>Soup Songs

<http://www.soupsong.com>

This is an odd Website, but worth visiting for loads of unique background materials for your lessons, and for your students' stories and writing.

Stories, fables, legends, and recipes. There looks like enough here for a "Soup of the Day" for an entire school year.

Everyone eats, although some children (and infants, and adults) eat too much of the wrong foods.

(See our last newsletter Newsletter Vol. 2, No. 4

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Friday, March 31, 2006

## **Teacher Resources**

Teacher Resources: <http://www.free-ed.net>

<http://www.free-ed.net> is becoming harder and more tedious to find sources for this section of our Newsletter. Finding this selection took about 3 1/2 or 4 hours.

But, I'm sure that you will find this gem of a site worth your while.  
Here is what the site offers:

Free education on the Internet  
No books to buy, no hidden fees  
Courses, tutorials, and skill-building activities

Some of the courses offer entire, free, online books.  
Here is a selection of course categories (from the site catalog):

GED & College Prep

Prepare for your GED and get ready for a successful college career.

Health Care

Anatomy and physiology, medical terminology, dental assisting, nursing...

Information Technology

Computer programming, databases, office applications...

Business, Marketing, and Economics

Management, entrepreneurship, sales, economics...

Building & Construction

Building construction, plumbing, electrical, masonry...

Electronics

Basic DC/AC electronics, digital, Endless Examples and Exercises™ ...

Mathematics

It's all here, from basic arithmetic through calculus and differential equations.

Science

Astronomy, physics, earth sciences...

Check this site out in your spare time.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00