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Computer Users in Learning

MACUL

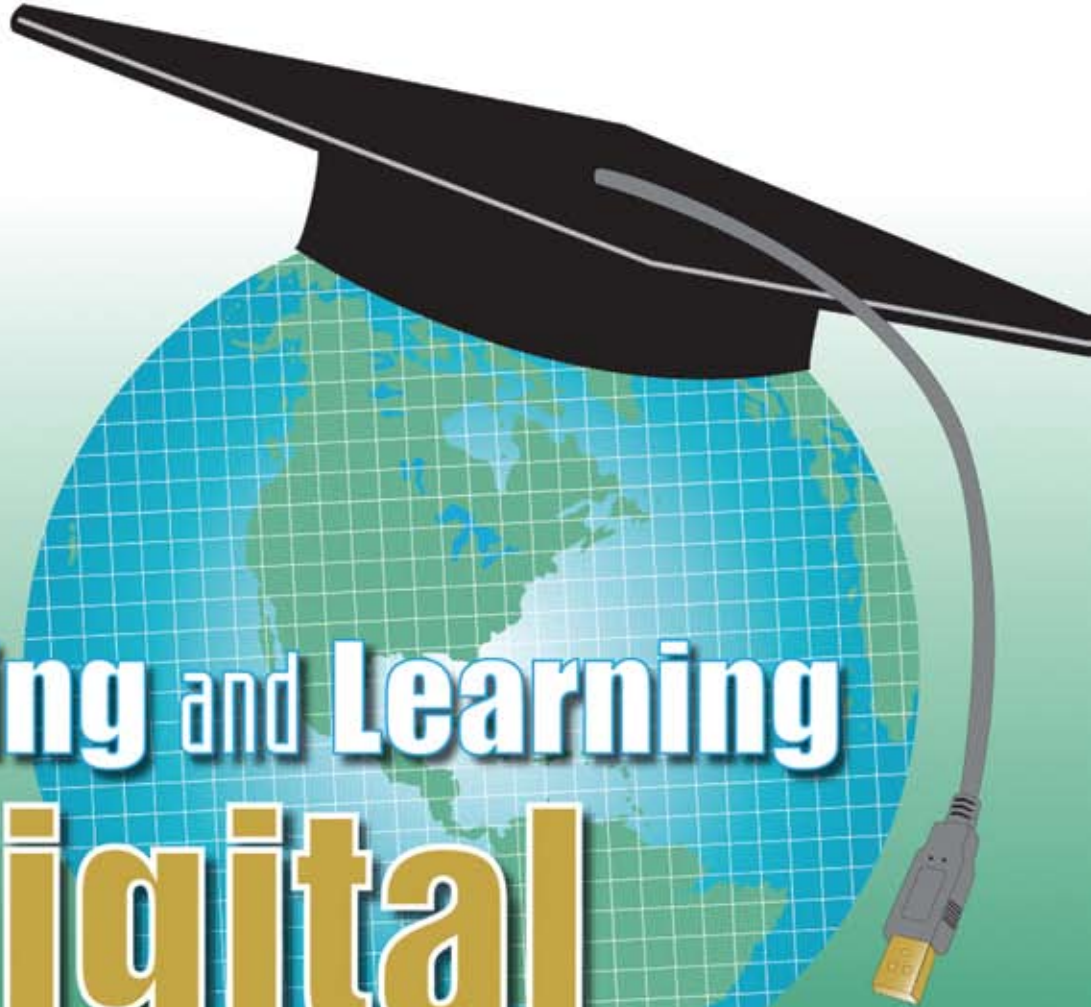
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FOCUS: Collaboration
Through Technology



2009 MACUL Conference



Teaching and Learning

In a **Digital**

World: Best Practices

March 18-20, 2009

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Michigan Association for
Computer Users in Learning

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An organizational member of
The International Society
for Technology in Education

MACUL is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit
organization that exists to:

- provide a state association for educators involved with, or seeking knowledge of, computer-related technology in learning
- provide for the sharing and exchanging of ideas, techniques, materials, and procedures for the use of computer-related technology through conferences, publications and support services
- promote and encourage effective, ethical and equitable use of computer-related technology in learning
- encourage and support research relating to the use of computer-related technology in learning.

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August 2008

August 25: Articles due for *MACUL Journal* Winter Issue: The New Literacy

September 2008

September 16: MACUL Board and SIG Officers meeting, Lansing

October 2008

October 8: Technology and Curriculum Director's Meeting, Holiday Inn South, Lansing

October 21: MACUL Board and SIG Officers meeting, Lansing

November 2008

November 3: Articles due for *MACUL Journal* Conference Issue: Teaching & Learning in a Digital World: Best Practices

November 12: AT&T / MACUL Student Technology Showcase, Michigan Capitol Building in Lansing

November 18: MACUL Board meeting, Lansing

December 2008

December 8: Collaborative Tools for Learning: Web 2.0 Conference, Ottawa ISD, Holland

December 16: MACUL Board meeting, Lansing

January 2009

January 20: MACUL Board and SIG Officers meeting, Lansing

February 2009

February 17: MACUL Board meeting, Lansing

March 2009

March 18-20: 2009 MACUL Conference—Teaching & Learning in a Digital World: Best Practices, Cobo Conference Center, Detroit.

Visit www.macul.org for calendar updates!

The MACUL Calendar is updated in each issue of the Journal.

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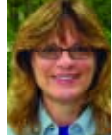
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Easy access to website links published in the *MACUL Journal*:

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- Navigate website resources found in articles and advertisements by clicking on the linked addresses.

Visit **www.macul.org**

Creating, Collaborating, and Communicating

Showcase Your Student Technology

From the President
By Diane Zoellmer



For those of us working in schools, we've just returned from summer vacation. Until the last few years, summer vacation had meant lack of contact with most of our classmates and colleagues. Recently, the tools

of Web 2.0 have dramatically changed our ability to connect and collaborate. We are no longer dependent on the walls of a classroom or school to bring us together. Blogs, wikis, and social networking sites such as MACUL Space provide a virtual environment in which we can easily communicate anytime, anywhere.

Whether you are an administrator or teacher, Web 2.0 tools offer an opportunity to increase efficiency and personal productivity. Administrators are able to schedule meetings using Meeting Wizard or Doodle, collaborate on a document with a group using Google docs, and communicate with the entire school community (or the world for that matter) using blogs, podcasts, or vodcasts. Teachers use these tools for professional productivity as well but can also encourage collaboration, creativity, and communication by students using web-based programs including Picasa Web Albums, Flickr, Voicethread, Google

Docs, and videoconferencing. It needs to be pointed out that online collaboration and communication tools aren't just for middle and high school students. There are some great examples of Michigan educators using student-created wikis and blogs. Read the article by 3rd grade teacher Julie Myrmel in this journal on how her students use wikis. Teachers of elementary students can not only have the value of the student using the tool but also the opportunity to teach students how to use online tools safely, correctly, and ethically. Finally, teachers have the ability to monitor the project, keeping the intended audience as large or small as they need or want, and as public or private.

As Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams point out in their book *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, "Collaboration, publication, peer review, and exchange of pre-competitive information are now becoming keys to success in the knowledge-based economy." The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has recognized the importance of students having the ability to effectively communicate and collaborate by including those very terms in the new National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) for Students.

This year, as you consider new

From the President
continued on page 15

From the Executive Director
By Ric Wiltse



For the eighth consecutive year, MACUL and AT&T are offering an opportunity to showcase student technology projects to the Michigan legislature and the general public. Registration is now open to participate in the AT&T / MACUL Student Technology Showcase

to be held on Wednesday, November 12 at the Michigan Capitol Building in Lansing.

Last year over 50 schools demonstrated technology-rich projects to legislators to help raise their awareness about how students learn in the 21st century. Last year's displays included local history projects, robotics, student broadcasting, computer repair and support, digital storytelling, scientific classroom technology, and much, much more.

Some comments from last year's participants:

"During the two hour ride home after the event, my students did not stop talking about every part of the Showcase. When I asked what they each liked best, they said 'How can we choose just one thing? We loved everything!'"

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A Window to the World

By Tom Hinken

Using technology to collaborate with students and teachers around the world has helped me open up new windows for my group of 100 7th graders. Slightly less than 1,400 K-12 students roam the halls of our small rural school. My school lacks in cultural diversity, and with a little over 40% of our students qualifying for free and reduced lunch we also lack in opportunity. Hence, my kids are not exactly world travelers. They know very little about the world beyond our community, and much of what they think they know is wrong.

So, as a teacher of world geography, culture, and history, how am I supposed to help these kids understand why they should care about the rest of the world? Collaborative projects with teachers and students in several different countries are creating connections. These connections are, in turn, leading to caring.

When the news recently showed an explosion in the Middle East, my kids checked out the map to see whether the students they knew in Jordan were in danger. With the cyclone in Myanmar, we had to check to see how close it is to our blogging buddies in Singapore. We just watched a movie on the country of Jordan, and almost immediately, my kids were asking to compose letters to their friends in Jordan to tell them how beautiful and exciting we found their country. When we talk about Islam my kids now want to know: "Is that the religion our friends in Amman follow?"

While much of what we think we know about the world is wrong, much of what the world thinks they know about America is wrong as well. I'm happy not only that my kids are learning about other parts of the world, but also that we are helping students around the world learn about the real America.

Getting Started

So how do you make these connections? I started with ePals (www.epals.com) a website that connects schools around the world. A simple search will create a list of contacts in whatever country you may be looking to communicate with. You find a classroom to connect with, create email addresses for your kids, exchange con-



tact information with the other teacher and you're off to the races. This year we have epals from South Korea, India, and Jordan. The kids also enjoy visiting the forums on the epals site and posting their own comments or responding to the posts of others. One of my boys, for instance, is currently comparing fishing techniques with other boys around the globe.

My students are also part of the International Friendship Blog, which was created by a teacher in Singapore. We're a group of bloggers from Australia, Singapore, Brazil, Russia, Japan, Qatar and the United States. The goal of the blog is simply for the kids to share their culture with each other and to help us understand our similarities as well as our differences. I use the blog in a less formal way than the epals. Kids post information about their lives and experi-



ences and other kids respond. The different schools share comments, pictures, and videos. The group in Singapore sent out bears to each school. The bears live the life of an average student wherever the school is located and we share its experiences on the blog.

A balance between fun and focus

For kids the attraction is the chance to chat with kids from around the world. For me, part of the allure is that it's much easier to teach when the kids are tuned in and I love the fact that these connections allow me to cover some curricular expectations. So, I aim for a balance. Sometimes I just let the kids explore and chat about anything they want. Typically they chat about weekend plans, favorite movies, and sports. The kids are always amazed at the similarities in their lives (we have yet to find a culture that doesn't find little brothers annoying). Once in a while I will give the kids a direct question I want them to explore. Sometimes these questions come from conversations the students are having with their epals. In one recent example, students communicated with epals in India to compare discrimination in our two countries.

Monitor, monitor, monitor and monitor some more

Both with epals and the blogging software we use, Edublogs and Wordpress, I have a lot of control over what my students send and what they receive. I can set filters that allow me to see my students' posts and email before they send them, and can read incoming posts or emails before they hit my students'


mailboxes. You can opt for less control if you'd like. Personally, I prefer the control. It requires a great deal of time, but it protects my kids. It also allows me to see what they are talking about, which helps me understand what they want to know about the world.

Technology and tools

The technology involved is, by today's standards, pretty simple. A computer with Internet access enables you to do the basics. I have access to a small lab with 15 computers, and I have one more powerful machine that enables us to upload videos and podcasts. Kids can access the sites at school or at home.

One issue we have had to address is storage of pictures and video. Rather than storing the information on our network, we are using web hosting sites. For video, we will be using teachertube. Pictures are stored on Picasa. Both seem to be among the safest of options for students.

Conclusion

To say that the world is becoming a smaller place almost sounds stale today, but it is true. My students, and many of yours, are growing up in a world where they have very little contact with people outside of our own communities. Yet, they will be adults in a world that requires them to interact with people from many different cultures and places. International collaboration is a chance to give your kids a deeper understanding of the world outside our borders, and to act as ambassadors through which students from around the world can see the real America. 

Resources

www.epals.com

www.ed.gov/teachers/how/tech/international/guide.html This is a site put out of the U.S. Department of Education, with lots of resources that promote international collaboration.

<http://blogs.montague.k12.mi.us/thinken/> The author's web site.

<http://teddybearproject.edublogs.org/> The international friendship blog.

Tom Hinken teaches World Regional Geography to 7th graders at NBC Middle School in Montague, MI. He can be reached at thinken@montague.k12.mi.us.

TIP for Student Email Accounts

Problem:

Students need a valid email account for registering on most Web 2.0 sites. When they register a confirmation email is sent. The hyperlink must be clicked on before the account is valid. However students can't access their web based email because it is blocked and the school does not provide students with an email account.

Solution:

1. First create a classroom Gmail account. A personal Gmail account works, but all student email confirmations are mixed in with other email in your personal account. Best to create a separate Gmail account.
2. When students register for a site which requires an email address/confirmation, have them use your classroom Gmail address along with a +username between your email name and the @ symbol. Example: if your classroom Gmail is manns4thgrade@gmail.com, have the student add the following AFTER your name but before the @; i.e.: manns4thgrade+student1@gmail.com The + seems to be the key.

You can put anything after the + (student name, generic name -without spaces or funky punctuation symbols). A student named Mike Opeck who is creating a wiki or blog account could enter for his email address: manns4thgrade+mikeopeck@gmail.com. The confirming email would come to the teacher managed

Student Email
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A Social Networking Exemplar: Trip to DC

By Michael McVey, Ed.D.



Teachers may be aware of social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook but many are unaware of a service available for creating social networks for their own classes. Creators of white-label networks can modify the features and appearance of the site and strictly control membership. One provider of white-label social networks is www.ning.com.

During this past year, as part of an elective course on social networking at Eastern Michigan University, graduate students created an exemplar social network for middle school teachers. One of the discoveries made in the course of experimenting with and studying social networks is that the energy and time individuals devote to a network tends gradually to dissipate so it is best to use the network for a specific project or outcome. The students designed the exemplar social network for a project of limited time and scope suited to a middle school setting: a senior year trip to Washington, DC. Interested readers can view it and join, if they wish, by visiting: www.dctrip2008.ning.com.

Images

The social network should be available for parents and students to access before such a grand trip as a way of channeling their energy and enthusiasm. Since one may easily post images on the Ning site, photos taken by students or chaperones would provide an excellent summary of the trip. Visitors to the Ning site can play the images like a slideshow or display them on a single page.

For sharing images, one of the graduate students, a www.flickr.com user, used a photo stream feature to feed supplemental Washington-related images directly

to the Ning site from the Flickr database. By coding in keywords such as *Washington* and *Smithsonian*, the site receives an updated and random stream of images taken by other Flickr members. Since vague keywords may produce unwelcome results, it is best to develop a unique photo tag or specify several unambiguous keywords to generate the stream of images.

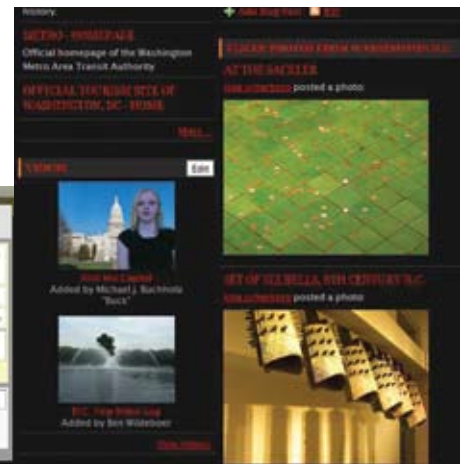
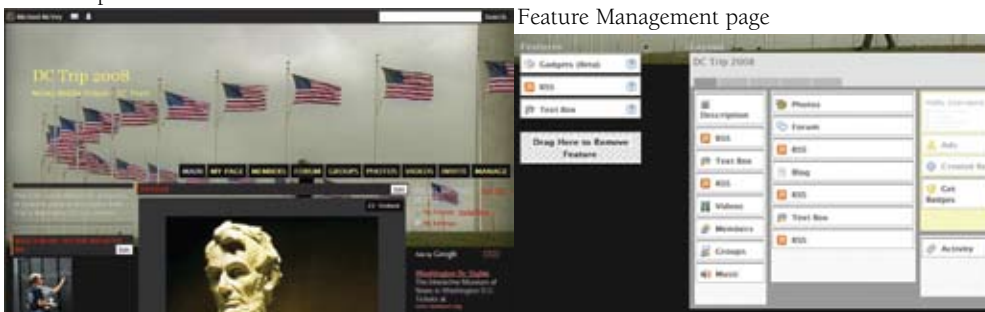
Additionally, one of the students posted a slideshow created with a tool from www.voicethread.com to the site. Using this tool, he was able to narrate the slide show and allow others to add comments.

Videos

It is a straightforward task to post videos created by students onto the Ning site. For the purposes of this exemplar, the graduate students went

Videos and Flickr Photostream

Screen capture of header



to the video sharing website, www.YouTube.com, to find typical videos from field trips to Washington. These were not in short supply. The ones shared also serve as excellent models for class video projects students could develop using images and video they took themselves. For YouTube and Google videos, Ning simply requires the user to paste the embedded code generated by the video sharing site.

RSS Feeds

By far the most exciting feature of the Ning exemplar was the ability to incorporate RSS feeds from blogs and other services directly onto the Ning site. One of the graduate students created a blog of a fictitious student on the trip. This example included a commentary about the profound feeling the student experienced when visiting the Vietnam Memorial. One can directly feed this and any other blog update by dragging an RSS feed icon over to the main page layout of the Ning site.

The graduate students did not labor under the presumption that middle schools students would be updating blogs from the road; however, we did expect teachers might encourage students to create blogs about their experiences. As a group, they thought this would be a good way of sharing information with each other and with parents. Another interesting use of RSS feeds is to use them in combination with a social bookmarking site, in this case del.icio.us.

In del.icio.us, if a parent or student discovers an interesting website about Washington, they can add a tag for that website through their own *del.icio.us* account. For the purposes of this exemplar, they created a unique tag, *dctrip08*, which all participants used to tag Washington-related web-

sites. Immediately upon tagging the website, *del.icio.us* feeds the information directly to our Ning network. This is an excellent way to generate parental involvement with the trip.

Groups and Forums

The Ning site also enables owners to create discussion forums with ease. The exemplar has at least one subgroup for parent volunteers so teachers could more easily pass along information through the network. The ability to participate in a forum engages parents and helps to delegate some of the minutiae of planning for the trip. For example, if one parent had the idea of purchasing disposable cameras for the students, parents could debate the merits of film versus digital and report their conclusions. In addition to channeling parental enthusiasm before the trip, the Ning site provides an excellent opportunity for debriefing and generating comments and reflection after the trip.

Membership

Parents joining this social network must answer a few brief profile questions, for example, the name of their child and if their child had visited Washington before. The brief survey also asked if parents were interested in becoming volunteers. To help create a sense of community, parents could include photographs of their whole family when they joined. As a safety feature, the creator of the network can control members and posted images, in effect making it a private space.

Audio


One of the more exciting features of the Ning site is a combination of RSS feeds and podcasting. After creating a free account on www.gcast.com, you can create a podcast using nothing

more than a cell phone. For the purposes of this exemplar, we generated several podcasts on the fly as examples of the kind teachers might post when something interesting happened. You can listen to examples of our fauxcasts describing a Marine helicopter landing near the White House, a description of the bus unloading students across from the Watergate Hotel, and more.

Sometimes the one with the most anxiety about an extended field trip is not the student but rather the parent. Having regular podcasts from the road to share information or recap the day is very comforting and engaging for parents. Using *Gcast*, the podcasts will show up immediately on the Ning site or in podcatching software such as iTunes or Juice.

Drawbacks

Unless your group or class is prepared to spend about twenty dollars a month to remove Google-based advertisements, you can at least take comfort that the developers at Ning have worked out a filtering tool to remove potentially offensive advertisements. After two months of working on the exemplar site, only two potentially awkward advertisements cycled through and these pre-dated the assurance ning.com gave that they had rectified these issues.

It was the intent of this graduate class to help colleagues become more familiar with white-label social networks. If you have any interesting additions or ideas for inclusion, please feel free to join the site or write to offer your suggestions. 

Dr. Michael McVey is a faculty member at Eastern Michigan University's Teacher Education Department in the Educational Media and Technology program. You may reach him at mmcvey@emich.edu.

Spotlight on Roberto Garza

Second Language, Service-Learning, and Technology

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Greetings MACUL members,

My name is Roberto Garza and I teach Spanish at Flint Southwestern Academy (FSWA) in Flint, Michigan. I have taught Spanish 1, 2, 3, and 4 at FSWA for the past 18 years. I also held the position of World Languages Department Chair for 12 years and have participated in a number of committees. I am an advocate for second language study.

The MACUL Conference 2005 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, was my first. A small team from FSWA's TIC attended the conference (with district support) and I became a MACUL member. I was so impressed and inspired with the level of presentations, its presenters, the conference organization, the Exhibitors, and the number of educators who were eager to

learn about the integration of technology into the classroom.

Another outstanding tech moment occurred in May of 2007, when my students revived the old Foreign Language Exchange Program (FLEP) through the use of the high end Interactive Television system (ITV) from Genessee ISD. The Foreign Language Exchange Program was a Service-Learning program coordinated by Connie Rau from Flint Youth Projects for 10 years. More than 800 students were involved in FLEP during 2005, its last year of operation. This program allowed high school students to mentor and teach Spanish, French, Latin, German, and American Sign Language to 3rd graders in our district. The 3rd graders were bussed to the high schools for instruction and interaction. Although FLEP was super popular among students, the lack of funding terminated the program. You may view one of the FLEP videos at MACUL Space: <http://maculspace.ning.com/video/video/listForContributor?screenName=rgarza>

The Universal Design lesson plan is located at the Michigan Department of Education Technology-Enhanced Lesson Plan 2007 Title: ITV Service-Learning a Second Language Project <http://techplan.edzone.net/ci2007/#WL>

During the 2008 MACUL Conference in Grand Rapids, MI, I was honored to present the revived FLEP as the new ITV Service-Learning a Second Language Project. This project allowed students to continue mentoring and tutoring 3rd graders via the ITV system. You may view the ITV Service-Learning a Second Language Project PowerPoint at www.robortogarza.org (click the Technology button).

I believe that educators face obstacles in reaching effective integration of technology. It's a long road for some. Some say that change can often happen from the bottom up. When it deals with technology and the enormous cost of hardware, software, installation, networks, and support personnel, change can only happen from the top down with collaboration from many. School districts, with the support of their board, must make technology an essential part of their long range strategic plan. The plan would appropriate:

- Adequate funding for hardware and software, computer labs for all students,
- Teacher training during professional development days,
- A full time building technology support person with supplies,
- Summer tech courses like the ATA, and
- Funding for MACUL and related conferences.

This past year I became part of the Michigan Champions team. The team approach also gives us motivation, pride, and enthusiasm for expanding our technology skills, the confidences

Member Spotlight
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STUDENT CORNER

Second Grade Wiki Wonderland

By Patti Harju
Second Grade Teacher
St. Stephen Catholic School
East Grand Rapids, MI



I asked the 2nd graders to tell me what they like about technology and our classroom wiki. Here are some of their responses. You can view our wiki at www.wikiharju.wikispaces.com

My favorite way to work with technology is using the class wiki. There is so much to learn on the wiki. My favorite part of the wiki

is the joke page. A lot of kids in our class have written stories. The stories are on a page called Student Authors. Click on the link to someone's story and hear their voice read their book aloud to you. Everybody has their own page. That is why I love the wiki! **By Alec**

I like technology because we get to work together. I love the wiki. We use it all the time. The wiki inspires us to write books. We make Claymation. It is fun. We do homework on the wiki. **By Maddie**

I like the wiki because we can do our homework on it. We can play games and type stories. I really like to read jokes on the jokes page. **By Dathon**

I like the wiki. The wiki is cool. We can play games. You can spend all day on the wiki. That would be fun. Go to Links to great websites and you'll find fun games. **By Elise**

I like technology because you can do really cool things with it. Our class wiki is fun because we read other peoples' stories. We type our stories. We look at other peoples' artwork and get ideas. We play games by following the links our teacher has put on the site. We watch our Claymation videos. We write jokes and write about our favorite books on shared pages. We do our homework on the wiki. Almost always I type my spelling words on the wiki. It makes doing home work more fun. I also liked recording poems with the camera. We watch our class videos. **By Katherine**

I like the wiki because it has games. I like to look at the videos. I like the Build Your Wild Self link. It is fun. **By Malik**

I like the wiki because we type our stories. We put them on our student authors' page. Another thing I like about the wiki is we can watch the videos we make. Our teacher tapes us and puts our videos on the wiki.

By Aidan

I like the wiki because you can do your homework on it. We share jokes on it. It is so cool because we did a movie. We get to make funny people on the wiki. We get to read other people's pages and get ideas. We get to type stories. **By Kennedy**

What I like best about the class wiki is that it is a website that we can share all of the stuff we do in the classroom and on the computer. I like technology because it is so cool.

By Ally

The wiki is the best website in the world! **By Luke** 

About the Authors: Alec, Maddie, Dathon, Elise, Katherine, Malik, Aidan, Kennedy, Ally and Luke attend St. Stephen Catholic School in East Grand Rapids, Michigan. They are all 8 years old and looking forward to third grade in Fall of 2008. They are all avid readers and some favorite books are the *Harry Potter* series, *Charlotte's Web*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Poppy*. They enjoy recess, math games, ice cream, chocolate chip cookies, and technology.

Writers + Wikis— It's Elementary!

By Julie Myrmel



Some teachers might think wikis are only for big kids, but as soon as they can type, little kids love them too! My teaching partner, Diane Rich, and I have been using wikis with our third graders for two years at Bauer Elementary. Once we showed them how it worked, they took off on their own and never looked back. Showing them how to do the editing took less than an hour. After that, they came up with many ideas of how they wanted to use it, and are motivated to work hard for the audience they see as “the whole world.” The power of an authentic audience has inspired

the students’ best efforts as nothing I’ve tried before. Now they see themselves as authors, take pride in their work, and value the collaborations with other classes within our district or from other states.

We are using dokuwiki, set up by Dan Ireland, Instructional Technologist at Ottawa Area Intermediate School District. There are many other hosts available, and www.wikimatrix.org has all the information you need to choose one and get started. There are many to choose from, but if you use their choice wizard, you can narrow it down to a manageable number. Wikispaces and PB Wiki in particular seem to be supportive of educators.

As with every project involving kids, we have learned a lot! We tried setting up pages for the content areas with the expectation that the students would each contribute to them on assigned topics. They contribute to these pages reluctantly, but if they have their own content pages, they’ll write often, even as a spare time activity. Asking them to do a quick entry on their own page about their understanding of new content is a good way for us as teachers to see who needs more help. Even the kids who are reluctant to share in class show what they know on their wiki pages. We can also see who is ready for a particular type of writing lesson—quotation marks, paragraphing, etc. All this can be done looking through their pages on our laptops on the couch, not flipping through 30 writing notebooks and learning logs. Parents have access to the wiki as well, and it’s a good way for them to see the range of abilities among the students. They can also keep up with what their child is learning at school. At the end of the year, this is a great portfolio of student work, and a record of their growth as thinkers and writers through our year in third grade.

Every student’s favorite page is titled “For my Friends,” and this is where they communicate with one another. This is a great opportunity for them to

get their feet wet with social networking, while our eyes look over their shoulders. Third grade seems young to think about Facebook or Myspace, but judging from the amount of time they spend online at Webkinz or Club Penguin, more grown up social networking can’t be far away. Before setting them loose, we talk about appropriate and inappropriate behavior, and Diane and I both monitor all the wiki pages by using a Bloglines account. We have the opportunity to model and teach positive and ethical online behavior before they set off on their own. The consequence for inappropriate behavior on their page or someone else’s is that we change their password and they can only read without editing until they come up with a plan for better behavior. One of my students created hours of work for me by making 50 new blank pages on his wiki last year, with the positive consequence that while he was blocked from contributing to the wiki, he made a very long list of some really creative and positive ways to use a wiki!

Once young students have an opportunity to write on a wiki, they do not want to stop. Last year I had two students move away, one of them to New Zealand. Both students asked to keep their wiki pages open so they could continue to interact with the


class, and share what was happening in their new schools. Students from the previous years also have requested to have a page to use, even though they've moved on to another grade.

This year we will also be using the wiki for an at home book club with students and parents. We used to meet in the evenings, but with so many busy schedules, it's hard to find a time when parents can join their children at school. Working on the wiki can be done whenever it's convenient, and we can still model and lead discussions so parents see how we talk about books at school. Then they can continue to work with their child after our book club has finished.

Another exciting aspect of the wiki for the students is to use it as a showcase for other projects they've done—Quicktime movies of clay animation, Voicethreads, podcasts, and slideshows. Now everybody—grandma in Florida, Aunt Sue in California, and their parents at work can see what smart kids they are.

Earlier this year when the students finished a final draft of a personal narrative, a group of 6th graders in Wisconsin got online to help them with suggestions about how to


improve their writing. We have also enlisted the help of 5th graders in our own building, and adults from our district who made helpful suggestions and gave compliments. All of these methods have proved to be much more effective than peer editing with classmates or meeting with me. I have set up a collaboration wiki at connectingkids.wikispaces.com/. If you are thinking about starting to use a wiki with your elementary students, please consider signing up to find other classes to partner with as you try out the power of wikis with your own students.

Setting up a wiki for your elementary students will lead you all in a new and powerful direction—publishing important content on the web for the whole world to see. All you need to do is set it up and watch the kids take off! 

Julie Myrmel has been teaching third grade in Hudsonville Public Schools for 13 years. Previously she was a speech and language pathologist for the same district. She can be reached via email at jdmyrmel@mac.com, and the third grade wiki can be viewed at blogs.oaisd.org/wiki/doku


Member Spotlight continued from page 12

to help others and the poise to explore new avenues.

I am pleased to announce that my proposal, ITV Service-Learning a Second Language Project, has been accepted as a round table session at the 8th Annual Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching in Traverse City, MI. The Conference will be held September 18-21, 2008. Please come if you can. I am also working on developing my presentation: Cool Tech Stuff for the Second Language Class as a proposal for the 2009 MACUL Conference. Thank you for taking time to read my article, and please share this information, especially with second language teachers. 

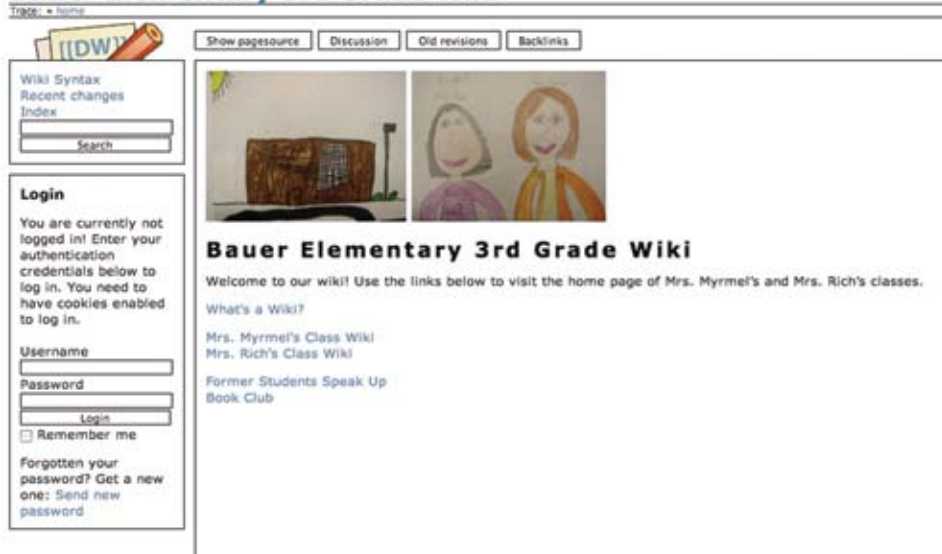
Roberto Garza
rgarza@flintschools.org
garzaroberto@comcast.net
<http://www.robertogarza.org>

From the President continued from page 7

ways to communicate and collaborate, I invite you to participate at some level in one or more opportunities that MACUL offers its members. Register in MACUL Space if you're not already a member. Attend the Collaborative Tools for Learning Conference on December 8 at Ottawa Area ISD. Finally, join us for the 2009 MACUL Conference in Detroit on March 18-20. Our theme is *Teaching and Learning in a Digital World: Best Practices*, and we're already working to make it the best conference yet! 

Diane Zoellmer is the Instructional Technology Coordinator at Muskegon Area ISD and current MACUL Board President for 2008-09.

Bauer Elementary 3rd Grade Wiki



5 Favorite Online Projects You Can Start This Fall!

Using Technology in the Elementary Classroom By Marilyn Western



This summer, take a rainy afternoon to explore some of the best-ever online collaborative projects that allow your students to step outside of your classroom. I have some favorites picked out for you, but make sure you explore each site completely for even more good activities that are motivating curriculum-supporters.

Before you commit to a project consider the following:

- Start by joining a simple project—something that takes a minimum amount of time (for example, collect one set of data and email to the project host) and supports your curriculum. See how it goes, learn from your experience, and then try something a little more involved.

- This project will be a learning experience for your students AND for you. You don't have to know everything before you start. Try to figure things out for yourself (ask students to help—you'll be amazed at what they can come up with!) If you get really confounded, ask for help. The project coordinator is there to make this adventure work.

- Don't give up. Other classes are depending on you. Finish the project to the best of your abilities, and then evaluate to decide what characteristics or activities to look for in your next project (What gave you problems with this project? Was it too time-intensive, involve too many new skills or tech tools you weren't familiar with or have access to, etc).

Here are five of my all-time favorite collections of online projects. Each has been around for a number of years, which means the coordinators have smoothed out the bumps. Choose ONE to try this Fall and enjoy!

JenuineTECH (formerly TechnoSpud, www.jenuinetech.com) Wonderful standards-based projects, often based on monthly holidays (e.g. Pumpkin Seed Count) or events (e.g. Salute to Seuss). Some past projects have had children predict and determine the most found vowel and consonant in a box of Alphabits, determine whether double-stuffed Oreo cookies really contained double the amount of cream filling as the regular Oreo cookie, and, after reading *Prince Caspian*, to select one of 17 reading

response activities, such as character trading cards, a reader's theater podcast, or to create a Narnia Newsletter. Watch for new projects throughout the year.

My fav: OREO (Our Really Exciting Online) Project PreK–6 students stack Oreo cookies as high as s/he can and then average all individual results to report the class average. This site offers instructions, standards, activities, recipes, worksheets, a sculpture gallery, and, of course, the results posted by grade level.

Journey North/South (www.learner.org/jnorth) K–12 students track the coming of fall in one of three ways: sunlight and the seasons, plants and the seasons, and seasonal migrations. In the Mystery Class project (Spring only), students try to find ten mystery classes somewhere in the world; clues include sunrise and sunset times, the location's history, geography, and culture. The Tulip Garden project encourages students to plant tulip bulbs in the Fall, they report when tulips emerge and bloom to map Spring's journey north. Students can also follow the migrations of animals (whooping cranes, bald eagles, hummingbirds, robins, and more).

My fav: Monarch Butterfly Migration Record your own observations of monarch butterflies as they migrate to Mexico! Learn how to watch for migrating monarchs, report



your sightings, and watch how monarch habitat changes, keep a journal (site provides templates and teacher tips), watch migration maps. Site also provides slideshows, activities, background info and assessment suggestions. AND there is a Symbolic Migration Project in which US students send paper butterflies to Mexico in the Fall. Students there return the paper butterflies in the Spring.

Global School House Network (www.globalschoolnet.org) The Projects Registry is the Internet's oldest and largest clearinghouse for online projects put together by classroom teachers. Online Expeditions connects students with real-time, real world expeditions. International Schools CyberFair gives students a chance to post their research about local communities and to evaluate other projects.

My fav: GeoGame (Grades 3–6) Register and select a game from the web site. Students use maps, atlases,



and other reference material to match the description of a location with a given city. When all cities are mated, enter the answers at the web site and submit. If you are correct, you will be able to print out a certificate to post in your classroom. You can also guide students in researching information about your own community and enter the information on the GeoGame Questionnaire. When GeoGame has enough entries, they form them all

into a new puzzle to be solved which will be posted for about one year.

CIESE (www.ciese.org/collabprojs.html) The Center for Innovation in Engineering and Science sponsors projects that link to Science and Math standards using real time data available from the Internet, and collaborative projects. Do check out Projects using Primary Sources & Archived Collections, and Engineering Projects (yes—scary title for elementary kids, but do check it out: Whichever Way the Wind Blows, Ant Day Care Center, and Mini-Squares of Life are all aimed at Grades 1–5).

My fav: Square of Life (Grades 1–5) Students plot square meters on the playground and record living and non-living things that are found there. After submitting your data, you can compare and contrast your information with data submitted by other classes to find How Are We Alike and Different? Great teacher guide that includes lesson plans, extension activities, curriculum standards, and student assessment suggestions.

CyberBee (Grades K–6) (www.cyberbee.com) More of a collection of lessons and web pages, this site has a wonderful collection of curriculum ideas, research tools, treasure hunts, how to's, web links and articles. The Interactive Copyright Questions and Answers is especially well done and worth a second look by elementary teachers and students.

My fav: Postcard Geography (Grades K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12) A class-to-class exchange in which your class commits to sending a post card—either 'snail mail' OR electronic—to every class on your selected category list to teach others about your community. This project may take more work than appears at first glance and,




if using snail mail, will run into some expense (postcards and stamps) but will be extremely motivating as cards are received from September through February 1. Last year's K–2 category had 135 schools to send postcards to and the Grades 3–5 category had 319 participants! The teacher blog is a great place to ask questions, share project expertise (some teachers participate every year) and ideas for getting the most out of this project. Please insert the Postcard Geography screen shot (found at the end of this article) near this paragraph

Of course, I can't stop at just five project collections. Give these a look:

Tooth Tally at <http://barwellroadess.wcpss.net/toothtally/08tooth.html>

Flat Stanley at <http://www.flatstanley.com>

Monster Exchange at <http://www.monsterexchange.org> 

Marilyn Western is the 2008 MACUL Teacher of the Year, a former member of the MACUL Board of Directors, a Discovery Educator Network (DEN) scholar, an MTIP Scholar, TAPS winner, and a Mt. Pleasant Public Schools 5th/6th grade computer lab teacher. Outside of the classroom, she has worked as the 1998-99 MDE Technology Using Educator on Loan, an ATA, FTL, and MI Champions course designer and instructor, a technology trainer for Gratiot Isabella RESD, a national presenter for the Bureau of Education & Research, and a district Tech Guru.

Implementing a Collaborative After-School Tutoring Program

By Kelly Kermode, SIGWEB



It seems like nowadays every school is looking for a way to offer a remedial after-school program that offers students the opportunity to find academic help and assistance. This year my school implement-

ed an after-school tutoring program that needed to meet the following goals:

1. Teachers need to be able to refer students for tutoring.
2. A tutoring program coordinator, as well as administrators and counselors, needed to be able to receive these referrals.
3. Teachers wanted feedback on students that attended the after-school tutoring program, so they could follow up with positive reinforcement in class.
4. Tutors wanted credit for being there.

This would have become an email or paperwork nightmare if we had not looked for options outside the box. But instead of following the old school rigamarole of paperwork and email trails, we began our program by insti-

tuting an online database program with online forms. The following is a set of step-by-step instructions.

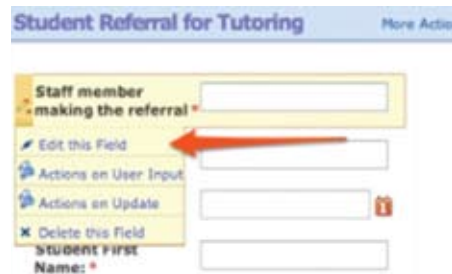


need to do to have teachers participate is give them the link to the online form. (*Before completing, see “The KICKER” listed below.)

Zoho is great because once the form is completed and deployed, Zoho automatically gathers all of the submitted data in a database. That information can be downloaded in an excel spreadsheet or another data form.

Step 1: Find out which kids need tutoring. Use an online teacher referral form to collect that data.

Create an account in Zoho (www.zoho.com). Using Zoho Creator, create an online form that teachers may fill out to refer students.



Step 2: Track the tutoring coordinators progress and communication with the referred kids.

Again we set up another online form. This time the coordinator would log into the form after making rounds during the week and document all contacts made with referred students. This allowed our school the ability to have a documented repository of data of when students were notified that they needed tutoring and how the follow-up conversations went.

Once you grab and place the buttons on the form, you can click and edit each one as needed.

By creating an online form, all you

Step 3: After-school attendees need to be held accountable for showing up to tutoring. Create a sign-out form for the after-school tutoring program.

Once more we created an online

form. This time we added a few integral fields in the forms. We added a staff email form where students would have to type in the email for the teacher of the class they were being tutored in. This field was set up to be an auto-email, so when the student hit "Submit" at the end of the form an email was automatically sent to that teacher. (*Before completing, see "The KICKER" listed below)



***THE KICKER:** So what about that communication piece mentioned at the beginning of this article? What about the administrators and counselors?

The online forms through Zoho

Creator also has an email feature for when someone submits information via a form. We simply set up the email feature to send a copy of the form data to each administrator and counselor. If the information wasn't relevant to their assigned students, then they could delete the email, but all bases are covered each time someone in the program referred a student or if a student attended tutoring.

Some of the benefits and feedback:

Teachers loved the online form. They loved the idea that both counselors and administrators were notified immediately once the submit button was hit.

Teachers also appreciated the after-school sign out form. They were able to follow up with students the following day and track progress.

Students liked how teachers were able to see that they were putting in effort to improve in specific classes. It improved rapport with teachers and progress in class.

Administrators and counselors had


great documentation. Besides giving them the email updates, each of them were given a username and password to see the databases and had complete access to that information should an issue arise. Counselors even used the referral form if they were aware that a student needed help or was having issues in one or more classes.

Screenshots of each form can be seen at the following links:

Referral Form: <http://creator.zoho.com/coachk/form/15/>

Student Sign-in Form: <http://creator.zoho.com/coachk/form/12/>

Coordinator Contact Log: <http://creator.zoho.com/coachk/form/17/>

If you have any questions, feel free to email me at coachk@kkermode.com. Please put "After-school tutoring program" in the subject line. 

Kelly Kermode teaches at Forest Hills Eastern High School, Grand Rapids, MI and is the Communications Officer for SIGWEB.

Showcase continued from page 7

"My students thought the experience was great! They really enjoyed seeing what other students had to share. Our local TV station came to interview us as well, and the students thought that was really neat."

"I think it is a great opportunity for schools to share what their students are doing with others and legislators."

The 2008 AT&T/MACUL Student Technology Showcase is free for participants and visitors. To register your team, visit www.classroomhelp.com/att or the link through the MACUL website, www.macul.org.

Thank you to MACUL leaders

MACUL thanks the following leaders who ended their terms of office. These members have spent many dedicated hours in service to our organization.

Steve Schiller, SIGMM Director
Jim Seitz, MACUL Board of Directors
Karl Zinn, SIGTELE Assistant Director

Welcome to new MACUL leaders

MACUL welcomes the following new leaders and thank them for their commitment to our organization.


Carol Isakson, SIGTELE Assistant Director
Steve Schiller, MACUL Board Member
Pam Shoemaker, SIGEE Communications Officer
Mike Oswalt, MACUL Board Member
Melinda Waffle, SIGMM Communications Officer

Collaborative Tools for Learning Conference

MACUL is sponsoring a one-day conference to demonstrate to educators how Web 2.0 resources can be used in the curriculum to support student learning and achievement.

The Collaborative Tools for Learning Conference will be held at Ottawa ISD north of Holland (MI) on December 8 from 8:30am until 3:15pm. Registration is \$85 for MACUL members/ \$105 for non-members and includes a MACUL membership, breakfast and lunch.

Presentations at the conference include: collaboration tools, Blackboard and Moodle, social networking sites, Google Docs, and much, much more.

To register or for more information, link to www.macul.org. 

Videoconferencing Provides Opportunities for Collaborative Learning Experiences

By Janine Lim



What is collaboration and why should we engage in it? According to Wikipedia, “Collaboration is a structured, recursive process where two or more people work together toward a common goal—typically an intellectual endeavor that is creative in nature—by sharing knowledge, learning and building consensus.” Clearly, collaboration has the potential to provide increased learning opportunities for educators and students alike. In this article, we will examine ways to collaborate with educators and students around the world using videoconferencing as the primary communication medium and supported by Web 2.0 technologies. We

often use the term collaboration to describe the negotiation and discussion that occurs between two teachers planning a videoconference between their two classes. We will look at collaboration within the structure of structured videoconference projects as well as teacher-generated collaborations.

Collaboration through Videoconference Projects

Videoconference projects “are centrally managed and coordinated by one or more persons. Information about how to participate is provided, dates and times are set, teacher training may or may not be required. Many are free if you know the person who is running the project and if you share projects with them. Interactions and presentations vary according to level of coordinator and training of teachers and building coordinators.” Michigan Week Exchange and Read Around the Planet are two popular Michigan videoconference projects. Michigan Week Exchange began in 1998 as “Michigan Collaborative,” where a group of ISD staff collaborated to match 4th grade classes together to share about their community. It is one of the oldest and longest running collaborative videoconference projects. In 2005, TWICE, Michigan’s K12 videoconference organization, took over the management of this popular project. Each year 50-90 classes participate in this activity celebrating Michigan studies.

Read Around the Planet began in 2002 as Read Across America, a celebration of Dr. Seuss’ birthday via videoconference. This project, also coordinated by TWICE, has grown to include 1500 classes in 5 countries, providing rich learning experiences for Michigan readers. RAP, as it is affectionately known, is also a matching project like Michigan Week Exchange. Teachers sign up for the dates and times they can do, and are then matched with a partner school for their videoconference. Both projects include teacher preparation materials

and suggestions for presentations and interactions.

So where does the collaboration come in? First, these projects are only possible through the collaboration of project leaders, ISD/RESA staff, district and school level videoconference coordinators, and of course the teachers involved. It takes many hands to make all the connections, preparation, and presentations flow smoothly. But more importantly, the best collaboration comes as the teachers discuss the event via email and phone. As they compare curriculum goals and learning activities, they design a quality experience for their students.

Read Around the Planet and Michigan Week Exchange are “exchange” projects. That is, at their simplest level, they include a presentation from each class, followed by time for questions and answers. The classes exchange presentations and learning with each other. But other videoconference projects are more involved. For example, Berrien RESA has been running MysteryQuest World Geography and MysteryQuest USA projects since 2002. The project is based on the “Where in Washington” project by Learning Space. It consists of four to six classes creating a presentation with clues and then trying to guess what the other classes presented. The format is highly engaging and involves students in practicing research skills,

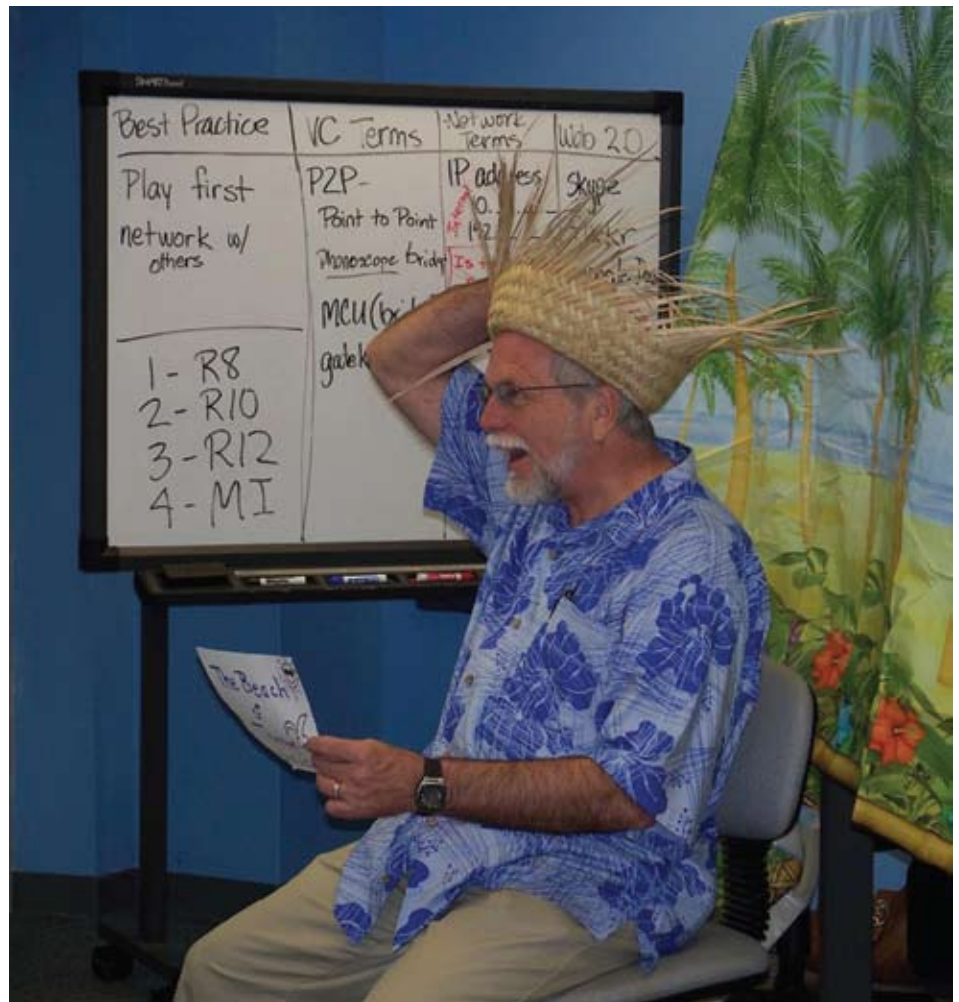
presentation skills, speaking skills and working effectively in groups.

How is collaboration involved with this project? Mainly by how the format has been morphed and adapted throughout Michigan and across the country. I have encouraged others to run their own versions of the project, and the MysteryQuest World Geography site has tips for facilitating your own project. Both Saginaw and Macomb ISDs are coordinating their own sessions of MysteryQuest. In 2005, TWICE began facilitating a “Where in Michigan” version of the project, targeted to 3rd and 4th grade classes focusing on Michigan studies. In 2006, Macomb ISD began facilitating a 3rd grade version called RegionQuest focusing on the regions of the United States. In addition, videoconferencing colleagues in Wisconsin facilitate a Wisconsin History Mystery using the same format and materials, and a collaboration to run Texas History Mystery has developed for Texas students. MAGPI, a videoconference and Internet2 support organization in Pennsylvania coordinates MysteryQuest USA for students in their service area. So collaboration also involves sharing and spreading good ideas and teaching materials.

Collaborating with other teachers to create engaging learning experiences for students

The videoconference projects mentioned above are created and organized usually by videoconference coordinators. However, another type of videoconference is a collaboration, where a teacher has an idea, finds a partner, and negotiates with the partner to develop the videoconference idea.

For example, in May 2008, Upton Middle School, St. Joseph, students, led by Joe Rommel, connected to a partner class in Australia to discuss daily life and learn about each other’s area. Joe’s class was studying Australia, and they had prepared questions for the Australian students. Both classes had prepared a small presentation



Jim Bartosh participates in MysteryQuest Beaches workshop called “Jazzing Up Your Curriculum with Videoconferencing.”

about their area. The teachers emailed ahead of time to discuss the format of the videoconference and what types of information they wanted to learn from the other class.

In April 2008, students from Coloma Middle School, Coloma, led by Peggy Clore and Stephanie Pevac, connected to students in Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Guatemala. The classes shared skits and presentations about misconceptions of their culture. Each class also prepared a Jeopardy game to quiz the other classes about their area and culture.

In early March 2008, as a celebration of Black History Month, students from Calvin Britain Elementary, Benton Harbor shared a presentation about 20th century African American inventors with students in Three Oaks Elementary, Three Oaks. Their little

skits showed what life would be like without the items invented by African Americans. Collaborations can be between classes far apart, or just down the road. They are still effective learning experiences for both classes!

In December 2008, students from Dowagiac Middle School, Dowagiac, led by Karen Ennesser, videoconferenced with classes in England and Alberta to discuss carbon emissions in their area and what their school is doing about it. Each of her five sections connected to a different school to share information and solutions to the carbon emission problem. One of the schools in England conducted a waste audit and shared their results with us. Another school shared information about carbon footprints in the popular gameshow style, “The Weakest Link.” The benefits to stu-

Web 2.0 Tools Support Videoconference Projects

The latest Web 2.0 tools are uniquely helpful for supporting videoconference projects on a large scale. Here are some examples:

- GoogleDocs can be used to keep track of contact and connection details for all participating parties in a collaborative project. The sharing feature makes it easy for all participants to see the details necessary to make the project successful.
- Blogs can be used for students to reflect and respond before and after the videoconference.
- Blogs can also be used to document quality collaboration experiences so we can all continue to learn and improve our practice.
- Moodle can be used to support multiple site projects to facilitate discussion across the sites before and after the videoconference.
- A wiki is used to support a Region 12, TX Monster Match project. See monstermatch.pbwiki.com. Teachers posted the monster descriptions on the wiki, and all the connection and paired class details were posted on the wiki too.
- Skype is perfect for establishing a quick plea for help when there is a problem with a connection. I use Skype often with many of my videoconference colleagues.


dents are best described by Karen:

“I personally feel that every school should use VC. The benefits to my special education and Title 1 students were absolutely amazing! They played a big part in drawing the backgrounds...and felt very successful! These students were on equal ground with the “A Students” and did a better job!! It had an educational impact on EVERY student that I teach!”

So how do you find partners for collaborations such as these? How do you even come up with the idea to start with? For ideas, you can visit the Collaborative VCs Wiki hosted by Berrien RESA at <http://collaborativeVCs.pbwiki.com>. Many of these ideas were written in one of Berrien RESA’s online classes focusing on videoconferencing: the four week introduction to videoconferencing called Planning Interactive Curriculum Connections , and the follow-up class focusing specifically on implementing collaborative projects: Kid2Kid Videoconference Connections .

There are several ways to find collaborative partners, and you can read more on my blog entry covering all the collaboration sites and listservs. For now, let’s focus on the new tool created by TWICE with funding from Polycom, <http://projects.twice.cc>. Collaborations Around the Planet or “CAPspace,” is a free site that provides the registration tools for Read Around the Planet and Michigan Week, as well as a directory and social network for videoconferencing. But now, you can also create and post your own collaborations. Login (or create a new account) and click My Projects, Collaborations. From there, you can create a new collaboration. If it’s open for participants, then it will be emailed out to either your “friends” on CAPspace, or to everyone who wishes to receive email from the

site. You can also write your collaboration ideas and keep them until you are ready to actually do the collaborative videoconference. Collaborations and events (like Read Around the Planet) combine together to give you a “rating score” of stars representing the videoconference events and collaborations you’ve participated in or created within CAPspace. You can search collaborations by keywords, grade level, or even by person. If you want to participate in more collaborative videoconferences, take the time to explore these helpful resources.

Technology communication tools are perfect for support collaborations between teachers and students. Videoconferencing is one example of how collaboration can make an impact on student learning. If you have not yet participate in a collaboration or videoconference project, why not try one this school year? 

¹Wikipedia. (May 11, 2008). Collaboration. Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaboration>

²Glaser, R. (February 1, 2008). Videoconference glossary. Retrieved from <http://www.edlink12.net/vcrox/2008/02/01/videoconference-glossary/>

³<http://www.twice.cc/>

⁴<http://www.remcl1.k12.mi.us/dl/MysteryQuest/>

⁵www.remcl1.k12.mi.us/dl/PICC

⁶www.remcl1.k12.mi.us/dl/K2K

⁷<http://bcisdvcs.wordpress.com/2007/12/19/which-collaboration-site-should-i-use/>

Janine Lim, an Instructional Technology Consultant at the Berrien County ISD coordinates videoconferencing for 18 school districts in Berrien and Cass counties. She also serves on the TWICE Projects committee.

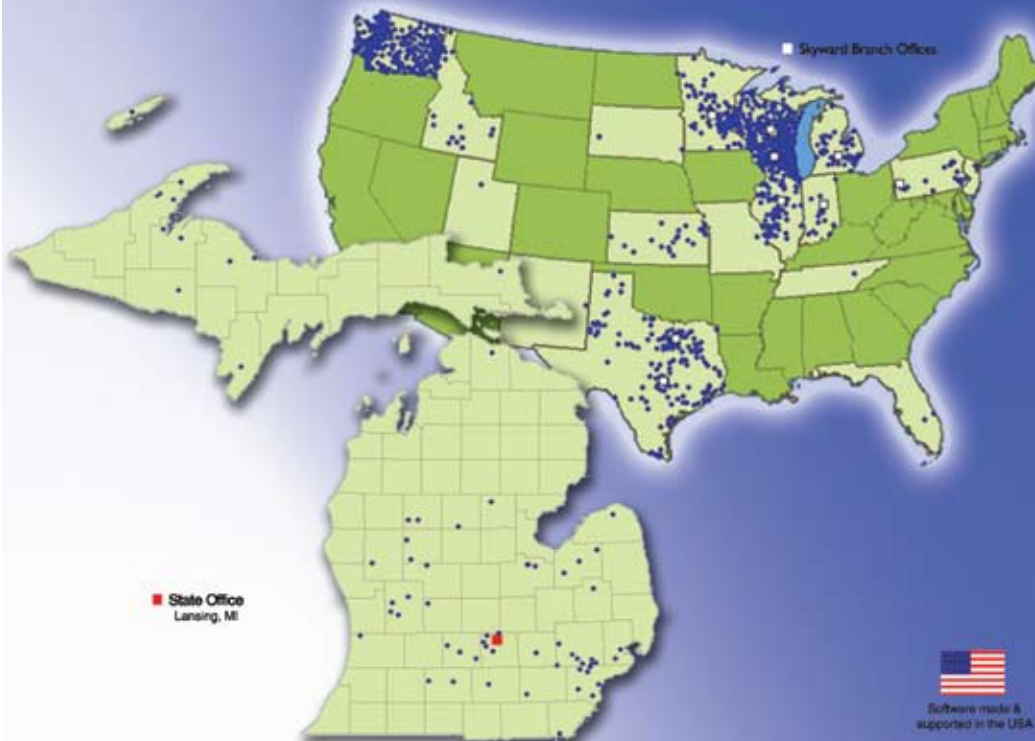
Collaborative Tools for Learning Conference



OTTAWA ISD - DECEMBER 8, 2008

<http://macul.org> for more information

72 Michigan districts have joined over 1,200 districts across the globe using Skyward's administrative software.



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What is Collaborative Writing?

By Julia VanderMolen



According to Wikipedia, the term collaborative writing refers to projects where written works are created by multiple people together (collaboratively) rather than individually. Some projects are overseen by an editor or editorial team, but many grow without any top-down oversight (Wikipedia, 2007). As educators, we are emerged into a world where collaboration is a way of the classroom. We are in a world where mobile technology and text messaging has become the norm for the average teenager and though plenty of adults grumble about e-mail and instant-messaging (IM), the text messages that send teen thumbs dancing across cell phone keypads have experts insisting that teenage composition is as strong as ever (McCarroll, 2005). The explosion of writing, in its hasty

forms, has actually created a generation more skillful with the written word. How can teachers can utilize this skill and learn the skill themselves? The following is a list of tools to try in the classroom to get students to use online Web 2.0 tools to collaborate, express and write.

What is Out There?

Document Collaboration

Web-based collaborative writing tools provide flexibility and usefulness in learning groups and educational settings. They offer a simple means to generate text exercises, research reports and write assignments in a collaborative mode. Collaborative writing tools can vary and can range from the simplicity of a wiki system to more advanced systems (Good, 2007). Many web-based collaboration writing tools have similar features. Features can include the typical formatting and editing facilities of a standard word processor with the addition of live chat, live markup and annotation, co-editing, and version tracking. Web-based collaborative writing tools can be used by teachers to provide feedback on student assignments, to make suggestions and comments on projects and to highlight required changes to a member of the project.

Google Docs

Google Docs allows a user to create basic documents for collaboration. Students can work on outlining concepts by adding bullet lists, images, figures and change font to emphasize concept points.

Access

To begin using Google Docs, a student or teacher will need to have an email account and sign up with Google. Once a student logs in he or she can begin to use Google Docs. Simply log into <http://docs.google.com> and click on the Get Started button to create a user account.

The Basics

Google Docs & Spreadsheets is similar in format to Microsoft Word 97-2003 and Microsoft Excel 97-2003. There is a basic toolbar containing the standard tools for editing documents: undo, redo, cut, copy and paste. The toolbar also contains the basic styles and alignments. Figure 1 illustrates the layout of a basic Google Doc screen.

To begin have students click on “New Document” or “New Spreadsheet”. Note that students can upload files already created by clicking on the “Upload” link.

Students can click on the tabs within Google Docs to insert images, links, comments, tables, a bookmark, a separator, and special characters, make edits, and check on the number



Figure 1. Screen Shot Using Google Documents

of revisions to a document. One of the most important features to remember in any document a student creates is to save the document.

It is important to note that the first time students save a document that they know what formats are available. Google Docs allows work to be saved in the following formats: HTML, RTF, Word, OpenOffice, PDF, and Text.

Learning Features

Google Docs can be used from a Web browser and there is no need to install any software to a student's or teacher's desktop. Students can access their work from anywhere which makes it easier to work on their projects. Finally, the best feature is that Google Docs is a free service.

Zoho Writer

Zoho Writer is an online word processor that allows a student or teacher to write, share, and collaborate on projects. What makes Zoho a collaboration tool to use in the classroom? Some of the basic features to the program are the ability to post documents to a blog, export and import documents in a variety of file formats such as Word (DOC), SXW, Portable Document File (PDF), ODT, Rich Text File (RTF), TXT and HTML; access, edit, and share (by email address) documents online from anywhere with whomever you choose and lock documents while working in shared mode.

Access

To access Zoho's many tools, simply type in the following URL into your

address bar of your web browser: <http://writer.zoho.com/>. Select "Sign Up as a New User". Signing up with Zoho is free.

The Basics

Zoho is easy to use as a basic word processing collaborative tool. It allows you to create and edit documents from any computer with an Internet connection. Like Google Docs, there is a basic toolbar containing the standard tools for editing documents: undo, redo, cut, copy and paste. There is a menu bar that allows a user to Publish, Email, Share, Print and DigiSign (a feature that allows for digital signatures). Finally, Zoho has a feature that other online word processing tools lack. Zoho Writer uses a new button in the toolbar that allows students to add headers and footers to your documents using an overlay panel. Headers and footers will print the way you expect and also show up when you export to .pdf or .doc files.

Learning Features

Zoho has a number of other products that a student and teacher can explore and use to collaborate. If curiosity strikes, try Zoho Sheet, Zoho Chat, Zoho Show, Zoho Wiki and Zoho Planner—all located at www.zoho.com. Finally, another great feature of Zoho is the template library. This feature can help teachers with classroom management as it has templates for quizzes, newsletters, résumés, and more.

WriteBoard

Writeboard is a collaborative writing tool that students can use to use as a way of working together and providing evidence of their collaborative writing process. The tool provides students with a place to "write without fear of losing or overwriting a good idea" (Fried, 2007).

Access

To access WriteBoard simply type in the following URL into the address bar of your web browser: www.writeboard.com. Once the page has loaded, students can begin to compose their collaborative document by typing in the name of their whiteboard, a password for the whiteboard and their email address. For best practice, have students read the terms of agreement. Once they have reviewed the terms have students click the check box and press "Create the Whiteboard".

The Basics

One of the disadvantages of using Writeboard is that student do not get a "What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) editor for formatting. It does not contain any toolbars like Google Docs and Zoho. Instead, Writeboard provides a simple text area that allows a student to simple text formatting by their set formatting codes. For example, `_this text_` would be italic because of the under-dashes before and after the text. Figure X shows the basic layout for a student to compose his or her work for collaboration. Students will find it easy and fairly intuitive to use.

ThinkFree Online

The final writing collaboration tool is ThinkFree. The Web 2.0 tool uses both asynchronous javascript and XML or better known as AJAX and Java technology. In short, ThinkFree is Office without the Microsoft. It is a collection of free online applications that support and contain most features found in Word, PowerPoint,

Figure 2. Screen Shot Using Zoho Writer Documents





Figure 3. Screen Shot for Writeboard Document

and Excel. ThinkFree provides a user with up to 1GB of online storage and more importantly they offer online collaboration so students and teachers can edit files at anytime on his or her own computer.

Access

The first step to using ThinkFree Online is to log in to the site at www.thinkfree.com and click on the Sign Up button to create an account. Once students have created an account, they will be able to use the three tools in ThinkFree Online.

The Basics

ThinkFree has three major components. The blue icon is for ThinkFree Write, the green icon is for ThinkFree Calc, and the orange is for ThinkFree Show. Once a student clicks on the Thinkfree Write icon, the application requests a file name and the option to use a Quick Edit or Power Edit mode. After a student or a group of students have finished a collaborative writing assignment, it is important for them to save the document. In addition to saving files in a number of formats, students can also upload documents from a variety of file formats such as MS Office. So if a student does not have access to the Internet they can use MS Word to edit.

Learning Features

ThinkFree has a number of wonderful potentials for the classroom. The first one is the issue of not having the expense of MS Word on all computers. In addition, an online word

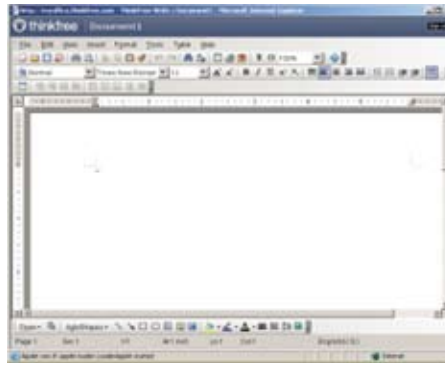


Figure 4. ThinkFree Document

processor is more convenient. If our students do their work one day at school in the computer lab, the next day at the library and another day at a friend's house, it can be hard to complete a project. With ThinkFree as an online word processor, a project is available wherever a student gets on a computer with Internet access. Students can create Microsoft Office compatible documents, have access to online storage and more.

Conclusion

Online web-based collaborative writing tools such as GoogleDocs, Writeboard, ZohoWriter, and ThinkFree can offer flexibility and usefulness in an educational setting. They can provide an easy way for students to generate text for reports and other writing assignments. Web 2.0 Tools are tools of the

here and now and they are only getting better with age. The digital natives are using them to communicate and collaborate daily, so, educators, why not make the most of this trend?

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	Google Docs	Zoho Writer	Writeboard	ThinkFree
File Types Support	Text	Text, Images	Text	Text, Images
Support Software	Web-Based	Web-Based	Web-Based	Web-Based (Java)
Public/Private	Public/Private	Public/Private	Private	Public/Private
Text Chat	Unknown	Unknown	No	Unknown
Revisions	Unknown	Unknown	No	Yes
RSS	Yes	Yes	No	Unknown
Email Updates	Yes	Yes	No	Unknown
Real Time	No	No	No	No
Comments	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Spell Check	No	Yes	No	Yes
Export/File Formats	DOC and XLS	DOC, PDF, HTML and RTF	TXT	DOC, DOCX, PDF, HTML, XML and TXT
URL	http://docs.google.com/	http://writer.zoho.com/	http://www.writeboard.com/	http://www.thinkfree.com/
Price	Free	Free	Free	Free

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Collaborative Tools

for Teacher Learning

By Steve Best
SIGTE Director



The past decade has brought significant change to many aspects of education, including professional development (PD) and learning opportunities for teachers. For years, these opportunities were addressed generally in two ways: teachers might attend a conference or take courses that focused on particular content or skills, or whole schools and districts might have a workshop on a PD day or during staff meetings, often addressing logistical processes or a particular instructional theme or topic. But now, the opportunities are more varied, and far more focused on how these issues relate to instruction. Just as student learning opportunities have extended to the Internet, so has teacher professional development. What follows is a summary of some of the

online collaborative tools for educators to enhance their learning and teaching. Additional resources and tools can be found at www.webtools4learning.org.

Professional Learning Communities

The idea of professional learning communities is not new—teachers have been collaborating for years by working on curriculum ideas, reviewing student work, and discussing challenging instructional issues. However, this movement has really taken hold in the last decade with teachers gathering regularly to discuss specific issues, such as writing or books focusing on educational practice and theory. Some of the most successful “grass roots” PD programs for teachers, such as the National Writing Project, are based on this notion of a tightly-knit community of educators with similar goals.

Such learning communities are also available online, where teachers can go to chat with others, share ideas, discuss content or instructional issues, and yes, sometimes vent about unruly class sizes or standardized tests. The sites below each have a different approach to how this community works and functions.

Tapped In – <http://tappedin.org>

A broad ranging collaborative community of teachers nationwide (and international) that relies heavily on chat and private messaging to groups to collaborate.

Elgg – <http://elgg.net>

Similar to MySpace or Facebook, this site uses social networking tools to find

others with similar interests, and to share ideas through site-based blogs and portfolios.

Product Focused Professional Development

As school districts try to respond to new grade level expectations, schedule changes, and other policies, many PD activities focus on developing some product or practice through small group collaboration efforts. Using a tool like Google Docs, teachers can contribute to a single document or set of files that will be simultaneously written and reviewed by a team of teachers. Without such a resource, teachers would end up emailing different parts to each other, having to keep track of who did what changes when, and what items are comments and what are actual text for the document. It’s a process that gets significantly more chaotic with every additional team member. With the following “product oriented” collaborative tools, teachers can share ideas and resources to build new plans or resources together.

Google Docs – <http://docs.google.com>

Zoho Writer – www.zoho.com

ThinkFree Boundless –
www.thinkfree.com

These online “office suites” allow users to not only create their documents online with free tools, but also

allow multiple users to collaborate on the same document in real time. Wonderful for shared work needs.

Wikispaces – www.wikispaces.com

Wikis offer multiple users the chance to easily create web pages or spaces where multiple users can create and edit documents, and can use built in discussion and tracking tools to keep track of changes. Similar tools are offered through PBWiki (<http://www.pbwiki.com>) and similar sites.



The Michigan Mathematics and Science Teacher Leadership Collaborative uses a wiki to share resources, discuss ideas related to workshop topics, and collaborate on and share new tools for educators.

Technology Support for Educators

Sometimes, teachers just want to learn about new tools and technologies, both for themselves and for classroom use. Think about how we often do this:

- We pick up the manual or a how to guide and read it. (Who am I kidding—we don't do that!)
- We ask our friendly neighborhood technology consultant or another knowledgeable individual about it, and either get the help we want, or no response, since we've asked them for this help too many times.
- We ask a student. They often have these answers, but can

go too fast to help us understand.

- We go to a conference like MACUL (more on this later).
- OR, we go online and find resources to help us out.

There are a number of online tools that can provide customized tutorial support on specific technologies or tools for classroom instruction. Check the sites below for more information.

Atomic Learning –

www.atomiclearning.com

Lynda.com – www.lynda.com

Screencastsonline –

www.screencastsonline.com

These sites provide video podcasts and limited free access and commercial subscriptions to access professionally created tutorials on software. Some, like Atomic Learning, are specific to teachers, addressing many educational tools, while others provide more in-depth learning opportunities on common commercial software.

Jing Project – www.jingproject.com

This unique “tool” from Lansing-based TechSmith software provides software that you can use to capture images from your screen and create videos, or “screencasts” that show exactly what you do on screen, and upload them to a site (screencasts.com). Technology coordinators or others who provide non-stop help to others can just create simple tutorials and post them here and send teachers to the site for the tutorial.

iTunes U – www.apple.com/itunesu/

I know it isn't exactly an online collaborative tool, but the podcast resources on iTunes and iTunes U (the academic podcast site for hundreds of universities and newly added K–12 education including MI Learning) are amazing in providing audio and video tutorials on software, and general resources for academic courses on most any topic you can think of. All for free.

Collaborative Tools for Learning Conference –

www.webtools4learning.org/CTL/
MACUL's own conference on online learning is linked to a customized website with a set of follow-up resources, presenter notes, and discussion forums available online. Conference date: December 8 at the Ottawa Area ISD—see the web site for more information.

General Resources for Teacher Learning

Sometimes, the collaboration aspect of professional development is secondary, and what you really need is information and resources to get up to speed on your particular topic of interest first. There are a number of sites that have such resources, and include discussion tools and file uploading to share ideas with others.

Learner.org – <http://learner.org>

This amazing set of free resources provided by the Annenberg Foundation and Corporation for Public Broadcasting includes hundreds of hours of on-demand video and other resources that focus on topics for educators around content topics and pedagogical issues.

Digital Workshops –

www.paec.org/teacher2teacher/
A set of more than 50 interactive workshops on issues related to teaching from the U.S. Department of Education. Includes video courses with supplemental materials, and online forums for sharing ideas.

Edutopia – www.edutopia.org

This site, from the George Lucas Educational Foundation, provides interesting stories and case studies of successful educational and instructional programs. This site is focused on providing educators with great

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Publish— Don't Perish!

10 simple rules to live and design by...

By John Smith

Today any avenue of communication and collaboration involving a variety of multimedia formats is fair game for professionals and amateurs alike, regardless of educational backgrounds or technical acumen. Unfortunately, the ease of which many software applications and digital editing tools allow us to assume “power-user” status and become SOHO desktop publishing “wanabees” is also balanced with an apparent lack of consideration or awareness of fundamental design principles.

Although one could easily spend a lifetime learning the “ins and outs” of the multimedia/publication business, there are a few practical guidelines and standards that can readily be applied to just about any form of digital communication, be it traditional web pages, Pageflakes, blogs, Powerpoint slideshows, PDF files, graphic designs, photographic touch-ups, emails, or even simple Word documents such as this one. Just as an unfocused résumé can be relegated to a prospective employer’s “201 file” (more commonly referred to as a wastepaper basket!) at a cursory first-glance, a published document displaying a masterful layout, complimentary color scheme, balance of elements, and consistency of style can often be immediately (and justifiably) imbued with added “PRESENTATIONAL KICK”, and the truth of the matter is this can usually be accomplished with hardly any extra effort on the creator’s part at all—just a little old-fashioned common sense.

A list of “dos and don’ts” in such a large arena as publication will always be a subjective and debatable issue; nevertheless, here are ten “pillars of publication” based on the current practices and experiences of many IT professionals:

1. **Content Is Still the KING!**

Regardless of the elements and design principles chosen to package a document, a “style over substance” approach is ultimately just as unimpressive as the empty thoughts the document contains. If you have nothing to say, better to not say anything at all. Publish when ready, and make sure that the information expressed is readily perceived as the primary focal point and purpose of the document.

2. **Rainbows Are for Dreams, NOT Publications!**

Exhibit control over the colors selected for a publication. A great document has the look and feel of a beautifully painted room: minimal colors that compliment each other are employed very economically and consistently for the maximum effect. Using more than 2 or 3 colors should always send up a

red flag. A white background can be just as dramatic as periwinkle blue. Less is more.

3. **Typography Can Also Be a Work of Art!**

Take a cue from a classic menu of a five-star restaurant: the food seems worth the hefty price tag just by the look of the description and the typography used to display it. Done correctly, words alone can be as artistically satisfying as a document incorporating countless graphical elements. Avoid underlined words, all-capped sentences, centered paragraphs, overused effects such as bold or italics, and remember that a document without a left (and often right) margin is almost always taboo.

4. **Consistency Applies to Graphics, Too!**

Consistency applies to graphic images just as much as any other element of a publication. Photos should be proportionately resized but uniform in dimension and shape; headers, bullets, and other graphical elements should be consistent in size and color. Generally, graphic footprints should be relative to importance, and thumbnail images covering no more than 25% of the viewing area should be the norm. Observing this practice will yield the added bonus of maintaining a smaller file size as well.

5. Smaller IS Better: Font Choices and Whitespace Add Clarity and Drama!

Unless you are looking at a newspaper (in which case the number of words and the cost of paper are of paramount importance), use whitespace (blank lines) to delineate sections of text instead of ugly dotted lines of demarcation or a meaningless row of asterisks inserted between paragraphs—it is a much more gracious way of differentiating elements without abruptly stopping natural eye movement while looking ahead and scanning the rest of the page. Unless geared for students at beginning reading levels, 8–12 point fonts are very effective and are similar to what most adults are used to (I prefer the 8–10 point fonts for most of my documents). Skip the “razzle-dazzle” fonts; use the tried and true ones such as Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma, and Verdana while avoiding the overused Times New Roman to give the document a sharper look and feel.

6. Navigation Can Make Readers Feel Like Users Instead of Losers!

If the document features items that hyperlink to other documents or parts of a page (such as with a web page, etc.), place the links in the same, consistent location which can be instinctively and naturally found without interfering with the essential document content. Remember that the size and shape of the links metaphorically convey meaning and can help the user discern the primary, secondary, and referential link levels. Duplicated links can be utilized, but peppering your publication with a variety of differently sized links in random areas will surely alienate the viewer. In most cases links near the top of the page or in the margined areas work best.

7. Glitz, Bling, and EYE-CANDY Do NOT Necessarily Mean Glamour!

A “tricked-up” document is not dissimilar to a person wearing a cheap suit. Loud, outrageous effects (ever see an aggravating mouse-trailer?) can only serve as a distraction to the important message of the document and is strictly a sophomoric practice. Those blinking candy-striped stars next to a main heading might work for unwanted popup ads but will probably annoy the user more than “wow” them. Moreover, smaller file sizes (i.e., faster download times) may be a direct result of a more spartan approach.

8. There Are No Free Lunches: Word-Art and Other Free Stuff Have To GO!

Most people today can easily spot a free banner or hastily constructed word-art title, and those freebies or “Sears and Roebuck’s” creations can be a major distraction to any document’s true message. Originality and creativity are the steadfast bulwarks of the publication industry, and the extra effort they entail will payoff in the long run.

9. Use Lots of TLC (Templates, Logic, and Consistency)!

A template, especially when used as the basic design structure of subsequent pages in a larger, extended document, is a great way to save time and establish a consistent, corporate identity throughout the publication. Built-in packaged templates that come bundled with most software programs are OK, but be careful to select only those that follow good publication practice (and you’d be surprised by how many do not!).

10. Get a Head Start On “Searchability”: It’s All About the Domain Name, Titlebar, Comment, and Meta Tag!

Anything that eventually appears on the World Wide Web must have a domain name that is descriptive yet economical if it is ever to show up on a popular search engine. Similarly, the same rule applies to the document’s titlebar information and main heading as well. For dedicated HTML purists, a Meta Name tag, Meta Description tag, and embedded summarizing comment should always be the first thing added to an internet document.

While all of these guidelines cannot possibly be followed all of the time, adhering to a few of them wherever applicable (with or without your personal modification) will most definitely raise the editing standard—and on the World Wide Web (just to cite one example), with more than an estimated 15 billion documents to choose from, every little bit helps bring a published thought closer to the top of an ever-increasing pile. Isn’t that what this business is all about?

Good luck and happy publishing! 

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What Does the Research Really Say?

By Reuben Rubio
Spring Arbor University
MACUL Board Member

The following is a selection from a commentary in the Spring 2008 issue of the Journal of Research on Technology in Education (JRTE). We share a common goal of wanting to see our students learn collaboratively using technology, but it is important to understand the mechanisms by which that happens so that we can create environments that are more likely to facilitate success. Hopefully this passage will increase our understanding, and provoke thirst for reading the original or even perusing that whole issue as it was devoted to research on distributed cognition in educational technology.

Exploiting the Use of Technology to Teach: The Value of Distributed Cognition

Neil H. Schwartz, California State University, Chico, excerpt from *JRTE*, 403(3), 389-404

Thinking of technology as tools. At a fundamental level, technology offers tools (e.g. word processing programs to write, graphics programs to visualize)—tools that permit learners to search for and find information, organize and present knowledge, explore simulated environments, participate in authentic learning environments, communicate and collaborate with other students, and practice and receive feedback on the development of skills; powerful devices with which to teach and learn (Jonassen & Carr, 1999), but tools nonetheless. The problem is that teachers, who know neither how to use these tools, nor what to build with the tools they use, are at a significant disadvantage in the classroom. The former is an issue of competence; the latter is an issue of knowing what to construct. Doering, Huffman, and Hughes (2003), for example, revealed that pre-service teachers are seriously limited in their ability to consider how to go about implementing technology into the teaching activities they conduct. Keren-Kolb and Fishman (2006) implicated, as limiting, the beliefs teachers hold about technology prior to their teaching apprenticeships. Both the findings underscore the governing effect of teachers' internal cognitive conceptions—conceptions that function to occlude their understanding of learning tools as principally cognitive.

I suggest that teachers find it difficult to use technology to teach because they fail to think of technology as cognitive tools. This is a major shortcoming because learners perpetually interact with tools when attempting to learn, and teachers make heavy use of tools when teaching. The point is that the teaching and learning process is negotiated and transacted between and within these tools and the agents who use them, and while the transactions are certainly social and cultural, they are also always cognitive. Schwartz and Ligorio (2004) put it this way, "For successful learning to occur, teachers and learners must negotiate the transaction of

knowledge at the juncture of what students need to know and what teachers understand about knowing" (p. 301). Understanding that learners require tools to think and learn is the crux of effectively teaching with tools.

Thus, careful selection of teaching materials as tools is a fundamental limitation among teachers in their implementation of technology. In part, this exists because teachers fail to think of technology as thinking tools capable of enhancing learning (Yuen & Ma, 2002). Teachers also fail to approach teaching using a framework with which to think that embodies both mind and tools within a dynamic system of active learning (Angeli & Valanides, 2005; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Totter, Stuetz, & Grote, 2006). This is particularly troublesome because some researchers have shown significant success of teachers' use of instructional tools when they are offered a model of instructional systems design that permits them to think more constructively (c.f., Angeli, 2005). One question is whether distributed cognition provides heuristics for thinking about the way teachers think about the role and efficacy of technology in learning and instruction.

Beliefs about learning and technology. Karasavvidis (2002) made the following observation:

"Much of current educational practice is founded on the assumption that cognition resides in the individual

head. The conception of the individual as the sole bearer of all cognition is widespread and is manifested in the conceptions of teaching and learning methods as well as in the classroom and examination practices. The underlying assumption is that the learner is a passive recipient of information and that teaching is the process through which the teacher instills information in the heads of the learners, who will in turn commit this information to memory where it will hopefully be maintained for future retrieval. Even ostensibly more interactive forms of teaching such as Socratic dialogue and questioning are also indicative of the penchant to view cognition as a property of the person as, even in the case of questioning, the bulk of the information and the major cognitive structure is still provided by the teacher with the students filling in the open slots.” (p. 22)

Thus, one of the most pervasive problems in getting teachers to use technology to teach is borne from their conceptions of learning. Most teachers hold epistemological beliefs about knowledge and learning that are dualistic in nature—that is, they are held as properties of the individual mind (Hofer & Pintrich, 2002). This is a major impediment to the employment of technology in teaching because knowledge has been traditionally viewed by most teachers as an entity that can be packaged and sent, independent of a teacher’s and learner’s interaction with it. These conceptions have been demonstrated as amenable to change in both teachers (Brownlee, Purdie, & Boulton-Lewis, 2001; Howard, McGee, Schwartz, & Purcell, 2000), and learners (Azevedo, 2005a, 2005b, in press; Schwartz, Stroud, Hong, Lee, Scott, & McGee, 2006; Tsai, 2005) but it is not clear whether the changes are long lasting over time. It is also not clear whether the use of technology can stimulate these changes within and between teachers operating in the context of the socio-cognitive milieu of the school culture.


Thinking as a socio-cognitive function. Schools are cultural entities in so far as they consist of constituent entities that comprise them (teachers, students, teachers’ aides, parents, parent groups, principals, school psychologists and counselors, etc.). Each of these entities functions under clear roles and structural relationships between these roles that influence and regulate behavior, expectations, goal setting, and plans. There are also clear norms that develop between and within constituent groups. Thus, the teaching-learning environment, as a distributed cognitive system, is steeped in the socio-cultural factors of the school, not unlike the socio-cultural factors indigenous to the distributed cognitive system of sailors in the navy. In Hutchins’ (1995b) illustration, for example, the social structure of the ship in terms of military ranks and their responsibilities, in addition to the norms, values, and goals of navy culture, all play a role in the distributed cognitive system operating when bringing a ship into port. But, these factors also operate among teachers and learners within the socio-cultural fabric of the school, and it is essential to consider them when examining the synthesis of technology into the teaching-learning process.

Thinking of learning with technology as a socio-cognitive function has been characterized by Koschmann (2002) in the context of discussions of computer supported collaborative learning (CSCL). Koschmann characterizes CSCL as practices of meaning making in the context of joint activity and the ways in which these practices are mediated through design artifacts. And, while Koschmann is not writing under the auspices of distributed cognition, the concept to which he speaks is clearly distributed. In other words, it suggests that people must be engaged in activity in the presence of material—artifacts of the minds of each participant as well as the minds of the designers who create the computer-based collaboration tools. Thus,

learning in computer supported collaborative learning groups takes place within a system—a system of minds, tools, and artifacts regarded as the hallmark of the distributed cognition perspective.

Cultural dimensions, then, are manifested within the minds of learners while concomitantly existing as artifacts surrounding those minds. Thus, words, gestures, objects, appliances, and tools, etc.—even the sequence and timing of the use or exhibition of them—carry with them considerations of meaning that are propagated one to the other by convention, history, and shared expectation within a community over time. These conventions do not exist in mind, or in the manifest artifacts of the environment, but in the collective union of both. In short, cultural elements of learning are situated within and between minds in the context of their historical and current productions. The problem is that teachers and other constituencies of the school do not yet think of technology as an integral part of the evolution of knowledge among the critical members of the school culture.

While research on CSCL can be regarded as a particular application of distributed cognition, there are epistemologies underlying CSCL that can inform the practices of teachers’ use of technology. They also can be used to inform the investigations reported in this issue. Suthers (2005), for example, elucidates four overlapping epistemologies that are borne from CSCL and relevant to our discussion here. One concerns the communication of knowledge; the second with the construction of knowledge collaboratively; the third with the commonality of ground that is necessary for learning partners to bring to their meaning making transactions; and the fourth with knowledge building that is self- and collectively-reflective. The first arises from the writing of Wenger (1987) who characterized the communication of knowledge as: “The ability to cause and/or support the acquisition

of one's knowledge by someone else, via a restricted set of communication operations" (p. 7). The second refers to an individual's efforts to build meaning of the world via a problem solving exploratory method of activity that is volitional, data driven, and intentional (Piaget, 1976; von Glaserfeld, 1995). The third is explained in terms of the inter-subjectivity between individuals in a learning group; that is, the notion that learning takes place between people on the basis of the interpretations they share among each other—crafted and re-crafted until a sense of homeostasis of thought is achieved between them (Clarke & Brennan, 1991; Koschmann, Zemel, Conlee-Stevens, Young, Robbs, & Barhart, 2005). The fourth is based in the writings of Scardamalia and Bereiter (1991); individuals build knowledge among each other as a community and expand the boundaries of that knowledge by reflecting on their collective limits of understanding. Both the latter two epistemologies are the more extensive of the four, and in my opinion the most relevant for teachers' use of technology under the auspices of distributed cognition. 

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Click on MI Learning link

Phase 2 of development for the creation and posting of curriculum resources in specific subject areas has started. If you are creating sequenced audio/video lessons in a particular curriculum area based on Michigan Content Standards and Benchmarks, please share on MI Learning! Watch for funding news for course content development at www.macul.org.

A project of the Michigan Department of Education and MACUL

Blackboard for ~~Teachers Administrators Students~~ Everyone!

By Kristi Bush



Remember the days of the chalkboard? Imagine how exciting it must have been for the first teachers to have these fabulous learning tools installed in their classrooms. They could easily write on them, erase, and write on them again! Chalk and erasers were relatively inexpensive, and the content displayed was dynamic, changing with one sweep of an eraser. Alas, they realized that chalk was dusty, bulky, and limited to primarily a few pastel colors. And there was that awful problem known as “fingernails on the chalkboard!” Teachers and students alike shiver just to think about it. . .

Miraculously, the white board was invented! It was dust-free, contained to just a few small reusable markers, and was available in an almost unlimited number of colors. Education was taken to a higher level with this exceptional learning tool. However, the white board came with its own set of issues. The markers were nearly intoxicating in their odor, for one thing. In addition, someone inevitably confused Sharpie with Expo, leaving a permanent display and a cry of dismay from the custodial staff. Perhaps the greatest disadvantage to the white board, however, was the fact that it was contained to a single classroom. Once you left Room 219, your English assignment stayed there, and you were out of luck if you hadn’t written it down.

Today’s teachers are taking education from the chalkboard, past the white board, and onto the Internet using Blackboard. Blackboard, the online learning platform, is working with teachers to break down the barriers of yesterday’s classrooms and to multiply the learning opportunities available to each member of the learning community (http://www.blackboard.com/products/Academic_Suite/index). Blackboard is not new to the state of Michigan, but exciting new tools that enhance the functionality of this tool are! In the coming year, many schools in the state of Michigan will have access to an expanded Blackboard license through their REMC, which includes the Content and Community Systems. Now, more than ever, Blackboard is a platform for educational opportunities that include all members of the school and community as well.

Administrators

At the administrative level, Blackboard Community System offers the flexibility of serving as a district-wide website with individual branding and additional personalization. Pages can be password protected or available to all viewers. Administrators can develop their own virtual meeting rooms within Blackboard to host discus-

sions, document progress, and share resources. School Improvement Plans can be developed through a collaborative effort, and Professional Learning Community progress can be facilitated and documented as well. Meeting minutes, forms, and calendars can be provided from any location with an Internet connection. Perhaps the greatest advantage to all of this is the ease with which items can be posted, a process which is much like adding an attachment to an email.

What to watch for: Scholar – One tool recently added to Blackboard that provides a powerful tool to administrators (and to all other Blackboard users as well) is Scholar. With Scholar, users can accomplish the following:

- “Find relevant, reliable resources more easily
- Evaluate the quality of the resources
- Save and classify bookmarks and searches
- Share resources among peers and with students” (www.scholar.com)

Rather than requiring users to share links or recall valuable websites, Scholar allows them to easily collect and classify information and then to share that information with others. This can serve the valuable dual purpose of collating

information and documenting progress at the same time!

Teachers

For teachers, Blackboard becomes the virtual “classroom away from the classroom.” Teachers can utilize Blackboard as a personal webpage, providing contact information, schedules, and information. A secondary level of Blackboard usage occurs when teachers utilize the interactive tools in Blackboard: discussions, internal messaging, assignments, and tests or quizzes. To offer multimedia components to classroom content, teachers have the option of utilizing RSS feeds, podcasts, Power Point presentations, and more! All of these tools are available with incredible ease (no web page design experience or knowledge is necessary) and provide an ideal blended learning environment (face-to-face and online) to meet the Online Learning Requirement as part of the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

A further benefit to Blackboard is that teachers can team teach or share resources easily among course websites. Common assessments become a breeze when teachers can easily export tests from one course and import them into one—or several—other(s). This is true of almost any type of content, which frees teachers from reinventing the wheel and allows them to tap into the rich resources already available within their own building or district, or throughout the entire Blackboard Consortium.

What to watch for: SafeAssign – “a free plagiarism prevention service...[that] helps educators prevent plagiarism by detecting unoriginal content in student papers. In addition to acting as a plagiarism deterrent, it also has features designed to aid in educating students about plagiarism and importance of proper attribution of any borrowed content (<http://wiki.safeassign.com/display/SAFE/Home>).

Students

Students have the obvious advantage of receiving 24/7 access to their learning materials on Blackboard. Hard copies can potentially become a thing of the past, as long as they have Internet access available to them. Even bulky textbooks can be replaced by links to electronic versions from many textbook companies. E-textbooks frequently offer more than just the traditional materials; they include copies and links to various enrichment activities. They provide options for teachers, but also allow students to determine their own level of involvement in the material. Hyperlinked glossary words, websites, worksheets, practice tests, and study materials are just a few of the additional resources available with e-texts.

In addition, students experience numerous other benefits when using Blackboard. They receive immediate feedback on many forms of tests and quizzes. Assignments can also be completed in a completely paperless fashion, and messaging with teachers and classmates can take place internally without ever utilizing outside email accounts.


What to watch for: Wimba Pronto

- “is a free instant messaging and voice chat tool that allows students and instructors to spontaneously meet live online at any time to discuss their coursework” (<http://www.wimba.com/products/wimbapronto/>).

Parents and Community Members

Individuals affiliated with the school can utilize Blackboard for password-protected resources (if they are given a username and password) or for public content through the new Community System. Parents can find teacher contact information, class information, schedules, requirements, handouts, grades, and much more. Community members can join in discussions and add content once they have been assigned usernames and passwords. Otherwise, they can access all public

information as well. Collaboration with parents and community members has never been easier!

Educational tools have offered increasing flexibility over the years, and today’s educational community members are blessed to live with the most flexible learning tool yet: the Internet. Gone is the dust, marker smell, and more; the Internet has removed the classroom walls and ceiling—the sky is now the limit! Today’s premium educational tool is available to all members of the educational community 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. We’ve moved from chalkboard to white board... to Blackboard! 

Kristi Bush is the Media Specialist at Shepherd Public Schools Secondary Media Center. (989) 828-6601, ext. 4456

Student Email continued from page 9

manns4thgrade@gmail.com account for validation. The next student would add a different name behind the +. The wiki or blog site would see the second user as a different user because they entered a different email address.

Limits:

Students can’t send mail from the +username account. We’ve tested this for a few Web 2.0 sites, and so far it works. You will want to check Gmail and the Web 2.0 site policies to be sure you are within account guidelines – in particular for students under the age of 13 creating accounts.

With the growing desire by educators to utilize Web 2.0 applications for instruction and collaboration, there is an increased request for student email accounts/email access. In districts where email accounts/email access is not available, this solution may help.

Thanks to Marilyn Western and Andy Mann for this tip.

Simple Machines Project

By Al Withrow
MACUL Grant Recipient

The idea of having my students do a simple machines project came almost by accident. I happened to see a machines project on the Internet and had time left at the end of the year to try it out. At that time I had a student who literally hated anything that gave the appearance of school work. But, after the simple machines project was announced, he became so excited that he did several excellent ones. That experience got me excited about the subject, which I now teach to all of our fifth grade classes.

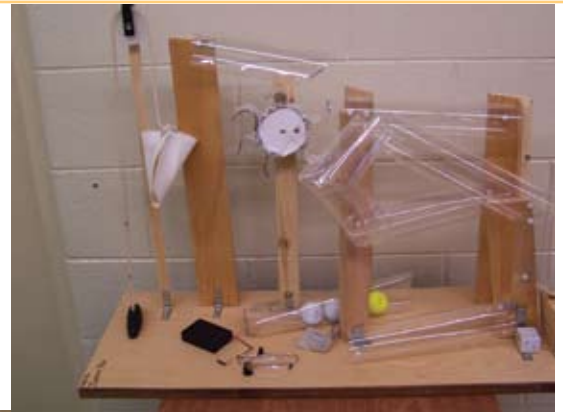
Background knowledge on simple machines is gained through textbooks, Inspiration presentations, and Internet examples. Students learn how to use PowerPoint in the computer lab. They utilize this information by creating group presentations on a simple machine to present to the entire class either using PowerPoint or through an oral presentation which includes a demonstration of how their machine works. The LCD projector allows the class to view past and present projects within the classroom. This project addresses Michigan benchmarks in both science and technology, while allowing students to collaborate with peers and synthesize new knowledge.

At Sylvester we have divided the fifth grade science into four parts. Since we have four fifth grade classrooms each teacher takes one topic and teaches that to all of the classes. The sessions run seven to eight weeks each. At the end of a session the students move to a different teacher and a new topic.

The simple machine project is assigned the first day of each new session. This class period is devoted to an explanation of the project requirements, discussion of ideas, and the ways the project will be graded. Written materials including this information are given to each student. The basic idea is that the more unique and more complex the machine is, the higher the grade.

Three weeks into the session students are required to turn in a labeled diagram of the machine they have chosen to make. Three weeks later the machine itself is due. The last week of the session is devoted to the students explaining and demonstrating the machines they have made. During the presentations photographs are taken with a digital camera for a PowerPoint presentation to show the next class.

Project Requirements



1. The machine must be a combination of at least five steps or five different simple machines.
2. The steps or machines must be labeled clearly on the diagram.
3. The more steps or simple machines included in your machine the higher the grade.
4. Your machine must do some kind of work.
5. Your machine must be put together well so that it does not fall apart.

Project Grading Rubric

Machine:

- The machine makes your work easier.
- It performs work without falling apart.
- The machine appear neat and well made.

Machine Grade _____


Oral Presentation:

- Your explanation of how the machine works is easy to hear and understand.
- You describe what your machine does.
- You use simple machine vocabulary words.

Oral Presentation Grade ____

The project goal is to provide students the opportunity in a whole-class setting to learn about simple machines and to present a project on simple machines through the use of current hardware, software, and peripherals. Students will learn how to research information using the Internet, how to create a PowerPoint presentation, and how to use a LCD projector to share information with a group.

The project objective is for students to create a science presentation about simple machines. During this project, students will learn how technology aids in researching information, manipulating data, and presenting information to a group.

These objectives ensure that students are introduced to various components of technology that aid in the learning process. The LCD projector is a tool that allows a small classroom setting the opportunity to use current technology to research, learn, and present. Student presentations will be easier to view in the classroom as opposed to in a computer lab. The projector allows curriculum and technology to combine which increases learning potential and provides students current opportunities for gaining knowledge and sharing with others. 

Al Withrow teaches fifth grade at Sylvester Elementary School in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Collaborative Tools continued from page 29

visions and research-based ideas to put into practice.

Managed Teacher Learning Environments

Many college and some K-12 classes are adding an online component using a course management system such as Moodle or Blackboard or some other tool selected by the institution offering the course. These tools allow course participants to extend their discussion with classmates, submit files for review by others, and view resources created by a group facilitator or instructor. And, if you aren't taking a class? Well, these tools can be customized to provide a school or group of teachers with an online system where centralized PD resources and activities can be taken online to allow teachers to participate when and how they want, or for facilitators to guide teachers on a particular issue.

Moodle – <http://moodle.org>


Blackboard – <http://blackboard.com/>

Angel – www.angelllearning.com

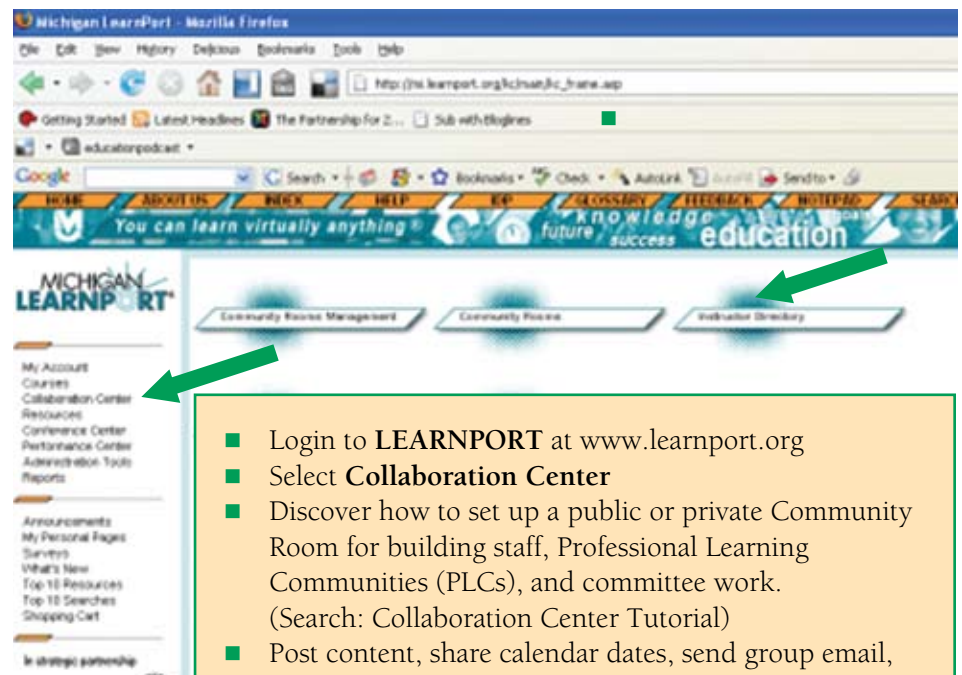
Sakai – <http://sakaiproject.org>

These tools (and other similar tools) are really course management systems that you can download (free from open-source sites such as Moodle and Sakai) and have loaded on your own server to create customized learning environments, which can be used for professional development for teachers. Also, commercial server providers, such as Siteground, allow you to easily install Moodle on their own servers, which they maintain.

TeachScope – <http://teachscope.com>

Commercial services focused on teacher professional development with customized libraries of resources such as videos of instruction and study work on particular topics. 

Steve Best directs outreach and professional development efforts for the University of Michigan School of Education. He is also Director of the Michigan Mathematics and Science Teacher Leadership Collaborative.

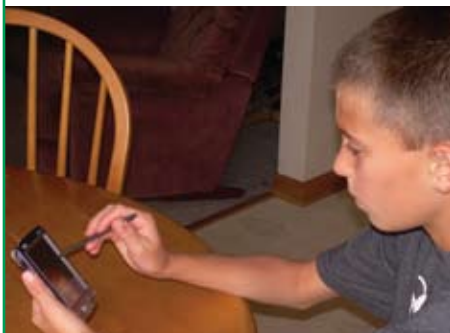


- Login to **LEARNPORT** at www.learnport.org
- Select **Collaboration Center**
- Discover how to set up a public or private Community Room for building staff, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and committee work. (Search: Collaboration Center Tutorial)
- Post content, share calendar dates, send group email, create discussion forums, hold live chat.

COLLABORATE!

Not Just Using Handhelds...

Building a Program



MACUL Grant Recipient
By Vicky Wickham

How many teachers use technology for the sake of saying they use it? I was falling into this trap when I decided to use handheld computers in my classroom. Sure, I can use them for practicing math facts or drafting and editing documents, but will this help my students understand the true power of this technology? Thankfully, with my MACUL grant, I purchased a resource: *Palm OS Handhelds in the Elementary Classroom...Curriculum and Strategies*, along with handheld computers. This book helps develop a quality handheld program.

Personal vs. Shared

My students share the handhelds because of funding. This “dilemma” is not a problem and I can design lessons that involve collaborative learning. The handhelds are also used as personal devices for specific students. With each model there are specific objectives for learning to utilize the handhelds best.

Managing Student Work

The beaming capabilities of the handhelds make collecting and distributing student assignments more manageable. I use peer evaluation of some assignments because my class is sharing the devices on a regular basis. The application by GoKnow called PAAM

(the Palm OS Archive and Application Manager) that was designed specifically for educators assists in this effort.

Storing Handhelds

The handhelds need to be accessible to all the students at any time and are stored in a plastic basket. Padded envelopes are available for taking the handhelds home.

Labeling Handhelds

The handhelds have two labels on them. One label contains a sequential number up to the total number of handhelds. The other number represents a table group and is used when a group of students share a handheld.

Handheld Policy


The care and appropriate use of the handhelds is explicitly taught at school. Some of the basic instructions include using only the stylus to “write” on the handheld, using it over a desk or table to avoid dropping them, using them the way the teacher asks, playing games only at designated free choice time, and the proper way of storing the handhelds. The students are allowed to take them home after signing a contract and showing they understand the rules of care and use of the handhelds.

Presentation Devices

This is an aspect of the handhelds that I hadn’t considered until I read this book. How will I present a lesson or skill using the handheld? How will my students present their work? A document camera is ideal. Another way to simulate a document camera is to use a video camera and tripod. Aiming the camera at the handheld and directing the video out to an LCD projector accomplishes the same result—an option readily available at my school.

Curriculum

Developing a handheld program means committing to integrate them into your curriculum, not just using them. With the wide use of the BlackBerry and iPhone, I want to be able to show my students that handhelds are a powerful device to help do your job no matter what your job is, including being a student. Preparing our students to be competitive in today’s world means that educators not only have to teach the skills related to technology but also apply the technology in similar ways that the adult and business worlds are using it. Then our students will be able to relate their learning in school and use the same thinking and skills to help them succeed in the rapidly changing

techno-world. My handheld program is an attempt to help my students down that path, and I eagerly await the results. 

Resources:

Curtis, M., Kopera, J., Norris, C., and Soloway, E. (2004). *Palm OS handhelds in the elementary classroom: Curriculum and Strategies*. Eugene, Oregon: International Society for Technology in Education.

Vicky Wickham teaches 4th grade at Laingsburg Elementary School after being a computer programmer and network administrator in private industry for 18 years. Vicky has a passion for teaching and using technology to prepare her students for the future.

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- Assistant Principal
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- Assistant Superintendent
- Other _____

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- Elementary
- Middle/Junior High
- High School
- K-12
- ISD/RESA/REMC
- Post Secondary
- Teacher Educator/Preservice
- Gifted/Talented
- Special Education
- Other _____

SIG group(s) you would like to join (check all that apply)

- SIGCS (Computer Science)
- SIGEE (Elementary Education)
- SIGMM (Multimedia)
- SIGPD (Professional Development)
- SIGSPED (Special Education)
- SIGTC (Technology Coordinators)
- SIGTE (Teacher Education)
- SIGTECH (Technicians)
- SIGTELEARNING (Telelearning)
- SIGWEB (Webmasters)

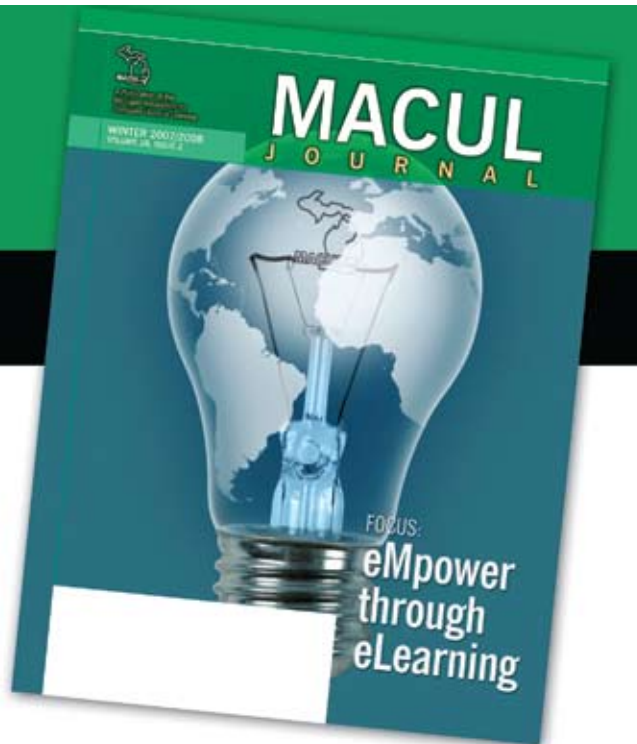
Please return this form to:

MACUL
P.O. Box 518
Holt, MI 48842-0518
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Apply online: www.macul.org



MACUL JOURNAL

Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning



Four-color Ad Rates

Size	1-Time Rate	4-Time Rate	Conference Issue 1-Time Rate*
Full Page	\$1,025.00	\$ 950.00	\$1,130.00
2/3 Page	\$ 865.00	\$ 825.00	\$ 950.00
1/2 Page	\$ 730.00	\$ 700.00	\$ 800.00
Back Cover	N/A	\$1,400.00	N/A
Inside Back Cover	N/A	\$1,040.00	N/A
Inside Front Cover	N/A	\$1,400.00	N/A
2 Page Spread	\$1,845.00	\$1,675.00	N/A

Black & White Ad Rates

Size	1-Time Rate	4-Time Rate	Conference Issue 1-Time Rate*
Full Page	\$ 870.00	\$ 820.00	\$ 960.00
2/3 Page	\$ 565.00	\$ 530.00	\$ 620.00
1/2 Page	\$ 540.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 590.00

*4-time advertisers pay their regular rate for Conference Issue ads.

For MACUL sponsorship opportunities, call the MACUL office at 517.694.9973. Major sponsors receive 25% advertising discount. General sponsors receive 10% advertising discount.

Ad Deadlines

Issue	Space Reservation	Materials Due	Mail Date
Spring/Summer 2008	Feb 8, 2008	Mar 7, 2008	May 2, 2008
Fall 2008	May 15, 2008	Jun 13, 2008	Aug 8, 2008
Winter 2008-2009	Aug 19, 2008	Sep 19, 2008	Nov 7, 2008
Conference 2009	Oct 31, 2008	Dec 2, 2008	Jan 24, 2009

For ad space reservation or more information, please contact:

Judy Paxton
Editor, MACUL Journal
 Telephone: 231.342.4801
 E-mail: jpaxton@macul.org

Publisher's Notes

- The *MACUL Journal* is sent to every school district in Michigan as well as to educators in nearly 40 states, and Canada.
- The *Journal* is an important source of information for teachers and administrators in elementary through college levels.
- The *Journal* is published four times a year, with a readership circulation of 6,000.
- Need help developing an ad? As a service to our advertisers, ad design and copy alterations are available for a fee.
- The publisher reserves the right to reject any advertising not in keeping with our standards.
- Cancellations are not accepted after the ad reservation deadline.
- Rates are effective as of January 2008.

Mechanical Requirements

Size	Live Area (w x h)	Finished Size (+ bleed)
Full Page	8" x 10½"	N/A
2/3 Page	5¼" x 10½"	N/A
1/2 Page	8" x 5½"	N/A
Back Cover	8" x 10½"	8½" x 11" (+ ⅛" full bleed)
Inside Back Cover	8" x 10½"	8½" x 11" (+ ⅛" full bleed)
Inside Front Cover	8" x 10½"	8½" x 11" (+ ⅛" full bleed)
2 Page Spread	16½" x 10½"	N/A

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