

# The Super Book of Web Tools for Educators

**A comprehensive introduction to using  
technology in all K-12 classrooms.**

There are teachers around the world who want to use technology in their classrooms, but they're just not sure where to start. That's why eleven prominent bloggers, teachers, and school administrators got together to create this free ebook.

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# Introduction

**“The times they are a-changing.”** Bob Dylan

This is probably the most overused, yet most relevant quote on the planet. The times they are always changing and although the world continues to change with it, some educational practices have become stagnant. Walking through classrooms, you can still see students lined up in rows, writing solitary exams, while the world continuously pressures us to shape collaborators, thinkers, and innovators. Education should be “a-changing” right along with society.



**Here is something that hasn't changed though:** the best teaching is always built upon relationships. Think back to your own favorite teachers. They were probably people who knew quite a bit about and made you feel that you were a unique and special individual. The fact of the matter is that they did this probably for most students they encountered. They were people who you felt believed in you and inspired you to do great things, maybe even to become a teacher. They always seemed to go the extra mile to ensure that you knew your strengths and cared deeply about your passions. No matter what technology comes into our classrooms, nothing will ever replace a good teacher. Nothing.

Now, take that good teaching and equip it with the advancing technology we now have at our fingertips. This is the game changer for educators. Preparing our students not only to be digitally savvy, but leveraging these technologies to help them create, communicate, connect and collaborate will prepare them to be contributing citizens to their future. When we were in school, bringing the “TV” to the classroom was one of the best days ever. Now we have the opportunity to bring the world to the classroom every day. I would be excited to have this opportunity as a learner, but I am even more excited as an educator. We have the means to create this revolution in learning where our students not only learn, but connect with people around the globe.

**Here is a problem:** you may not feel comfortable with this technology. That's okay, because there are probably people in your school that are, and those people are willing to help to get you started. If they are not in your school, they are sitting here and waiting to jump into your classroom from miles away. We all became educators to do what is best for all kids, not just a small group of kids. If you don't feel comfortable with the technology, though, I have three words for you: get over it. This is not about you, this is about our kids. We have to do everything to empower our students for their future, not our past, or even our present.

# Introduction

**What is your goal?** To have students become successful at school or successful in life? Don't be scared to take risks and screw up. This is what you tell your kids everyday in school, and we are meant to be their role models. Live your words in front of your students. My advice? When the screen pops up, to click any of these words: Accept, Next, and OK. I promise you that you will not wreck anything, but the rewards on the other side of these words are worth the risk. Go for it!



Image Credit: Kevin Bluer flickr.com/photos/kevinbluer/

**The best thing about this technology** is that it is built upon the same premise of good teaching: relationships. Social media is about connecting and learning from people, getting to know about other cultures and perspectives, sharing, and empowering our students to connect, not with computers, but with people. The biggest reason to use this technology is not about the “cool” factor. That wears off. It is about learning from people. By opening access to your students, you are opening their minds to perspectives and experiences that go far beyond the four walls of the classroom. Be the facilitator of these opportunities so that our students can learn in a safe and meaningful way. When they grow up, you will be held in the same regard to them as your teachers were to you. Provide opportunities and create change.

**I know that the learning in this book will help you** to prepare your students for their future so that they will not only contribute to it, they will lead and define it. Your students are going to use this technology either because of you, or in spite of you. I know which reason I want to be. How about you?

*George Couros*

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# Technology in Schools: An Administrator's View

*Editor's Note: [Patrick Larkin](#) is the Principal of [Burlington High School](#) in Massachusetts where he is in his 14th year as a high school administrator and seventh as a building Principal. Under his direction, Burlington High will become a 1:1 school next year. Learn more about Patrick in the "about the authors pages" at the end of this book.*

As school leaders we have a choice. Do we pull up the shades and look at what is going on outside our school walls or do we continue to insulate our schools from the "evil distraction" of technology with the ongoing misconception that what we have been doing for decades is still good enough?

## **Here are a few of my thoughts:**

We are so fortunate to be educators living in this time where the number of tools available to us to engage our students in meaningful activities grows by the minute. In this amazing era where we can increase our educator toolbox exponentially with the use of technology, it is the schools that allow their staff and students access to these tools who will have a distinct advantage. We need to think long and hard about the fact that we are preparing many of our students for jobs that do not exist yet. In order to do this successfully we need to break out of the model that was put in place to create assembly line workers.

This is truly an overwhelming thought for educators to ponder. However, if we open our eyes and our minds just a bit and do something that is not encouraged often enough in our schools and think outside of our classroom and school doors, I think we will see how we can accomplish our challenge. We will see clearly how the embracing the opportunities inherent in web 2.0 tools will allow us to create students who can think critically, problem solve, and work collaboratively.

In my eyes, the starting point is control. Or better yet, the false perception of control that many of us in schools cling to. This is not to say that we should not spend significant time setting up policies, procedures, and guidelines that help us function in a more organized fashion. The point here is only that schools claim control in some areas and all that really is in place is a mirage of control. While the policy may exist in words in some school handbooks, we need to be honest in regards to what we are really accomplishing.



# Technology in Schools: An Administrator's View

Here is one example of what I am talking about from my school. Thanks to the work of our student newspaper staff on the Devil's Advocate at Burlington High School, our wake-up call came [back in the early part of 2009 \(http://burlingtonhigh.blogspot.com/2009/01/mobile-technology-wealth-of.html\)](http://burlingtonhigh.blogspot.com/2009/01/mobile-technology-wealth-of.html) when the students were pushing for a change in our strict policy that prohibited the use of cellphones within the school building. Despite our policy at the time, the Devil's Advocate reporters uncovered the following statistics from a homeroom survey of students:

- Just under 100% sent or received at least 3 text messages in school each day
- 85% sent or received more than 15 texts each day

We clearly had a decision to make when these results were published. There were two possible options. One possible response would have been to tighten our death-grip on our "traditional" approach to running our school. We could have upped the ante with our punishments for cellphones in the school and kept our minds closed to the idea that there might be some constructive use for cellphones in our school. We could have increased the amount of time and energy that we wasted on this issue with our students and produced results that probably would have differed little from those cited above from our students newspaper.

Fortunately, we chose a different response, one that took into account our mission of producing responsible citizens and centered around the idea that allowing cellphone use in school could have positive implications. Additionally, we began to recognize the fact that in the "real world" people function with cellphones in the workplace and we needed to help our students learn how to do this in a responsible fashion.

Surprisingly, our change in policy was accomplished without too much debate. The reason for this was that we focused it on placing trust in our teachers. Our policy changed from no cellphones being allowed out in our building during the school day to one that allowed cellphone use in classrooms "at the teacher's discretion." The whole point here is not just the resolution to the cellphone issue, the larger point is surrounding the idea of trust.

# Technology in Schools: An Administrator's View

We cannot move forward without creating environments within our schools that trust teachers to make decisions on which tools are appropriate for their students. Administrators need to hire the best educators they can find and then give them the freedom to do the job they were hired to do. There is a clear trickle-down effect when we as administrators create structures that limit teachers and do not allow them to take risks with new tools. Frustration will occur when we stifle our talented staff and we will never see the levels of creativity in our students that we strive for.

In the words of Chris Lehmann, “We have incredibly caring teachers in a system that (stinks).” It is up to administrators to rewrite outdated policies and/or remove prohibitive structures that stifle staff members and create school cultures that allow and encourage educators to think outside the box without fear of reprisal. Again in the words of Chris Lehmann, “We need to be willing to be transformed. We cannot transform students if we are not willing to be transformed ourselves.”

One simple step to start this process of change is to alter the way you do Professional Development. For anyone following the happenings in education world via Twitter, it is quite clear that [the unconference model, started by a few passionate teachers in Philadelphia](http://voicethread.com/?#q.b819044.i0.k0) (<http://voicethread.com/?#q.b819044.i0.k0>), holds great promise if we look at bringing it into our schools. In my opinion, the unconference is all about teachers getting together and saying, “we can do this better on our own.” Let’s set up structures in our schools so teachers can have this type of learning during school time. [In my district, we have jumped on the bandwagon and the feedback from teachers has been overwhelmingly positive.](http://burlingtonhigh.blogspot.com/2010/09/professional-development-day-that.html) (<http://burlingtonhigh.blogspot.com/2010/09/professional-development-day-that.html>)

Again, the solution centered around our mission statement. Does your school’s mission mention the development of life-long learners? Do you think it is important to instill a sense of curiosity and a love of learning? Hoping that it is a given to answer yes to the previous question, I can state confidently that we will not develop students who are passionate about learning if we do not allow our staff to take the lead with their own learning first. We need classrooms that encourage and provide opportunities for learner to take the lead in their learning and as long as we do Professional Development in the traditional, one-size-fits-all model we will not get where we need to be.

# Technology in Schools: An Administrator's View

As John Carver, the Superintendent of Schools, in Van Meter, Iowa stated, “We need to get away from teacher-led classrooms and create classrooms that are learner-centered.” In this model Superintendent Carver describes, teachers and students are learners together. There are no more experts in the classroom, things are just moving to quickly outside of our schools for that to be the case.

Speaking of the world outside of our schools, parents live there and this whole Web 2.0/social media conversation confuses and scares them. In order for schools to move forward effectively and to lessen anxiety on the part of parents, we need to provide training for parents as well. [Hold technology nights](#), [write blog posts](#), [create wikis](#), and show parents how these tools can enhance their lives as well as those of their students. I have yet to meet a parent who did not want his or her child to have every possible advantage. By teaching our children to use these tools well will give them an advantage over those who are schooled in communities where access is limited or denied.

There is a moral imperative involved here that cannot be overlooked. [Dean Shareski makes this point so eloquently in his K12 Online Conference Keynote](#) (<http://k12onlineconference.org/?p=610>) where he talks about the fact “that the ability to teach and share beyond our classrooms is moving from “nice to do” to “necessary to do.”

In conclusion, Dean Shareski summed up the whole case for creating environments where we share knowledge and allow our students to connect with other passionate learners by utilizing web 2.0 and mobile technologies quite well this past summer at [November Learning’s Building Learning Communities Conference](#): “Sharing, and sharing online specifically, is not in addition to the work of being an educator. It is the work. Teaching is sharing. Without sharing there is no education. Online is simply the best and most important distribution channel. It’s not the only one but to ignore or deem it superfluous, is nearing educational malpractice.”

**For me, I would rather fail miserably trying a new model than maintain the status quo.**

# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools

## Introduction to Elementary School Tools

Web 2.0 applications are a fantastic addition to any classroom because of the way they invite information sharing and collaboration. Students become creators of content in a virtual learning community. Web 2.0 gives students an audience and a community to learn with. The web 2.0 experience is often ongoing, and the learning continues as dialogue unfolds.

**In the elementary classroom**, federal laws such as the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) must be taken into account before using web 2.0 tools. These laws are designed to protect students from receiving inappropriate materials or from having their personal data shared inappropriately. Sites created specifically for children under 13 years old generally include terms of use that require parental consent. Parental consent can be gained through a permission slip sent home, or an email confirmation. Some web 2.0 applications specifically state in signup that you must be 13 or older to register to use the site. This doesn’t put these web 2.0 application out of reach for the elementary classroom, but it does change their use. Always check a sites terms of use and privacy policy before using it with your students.

What follows are my favorite web 2.0 applications for the classroom. Next to each application I will share some ideas for use, and indicate if the site is for students 13 and under or 13 and older. When a website asks for an email address for registration, I use temporary inboxes such as: <http://mailinator.com> or <http://tempinbox.com>. These are particularly useful when the email address is only part of the registration process and the site does not rely on the email address for communication.

*Kelly Tenkely*

*Kelly Tenkely is an educational technology and curriculum design consultant who was previously a 2nd grade classroom teacher and a K-5 technology specialist/teacher. You can learn more about Kelly on the “about the authors” pages at the end of this book.*



# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



Wiggio (<http://wiggio.com>) Wiggio is a free online toolkit that makes it easy to work with and coordinate groups. It is simple to use and has an intuitive interface that makes it easy for students, parents, and teachers alike. Wiggio is a place to share and manage files, manage a group calendar, poll your group, post links, set up conference calls (including voice, webcam, shared whiteboard space, and screen sharing), chat online, send out mass text messages, and send voice or email messages to the entire group.

Wiggio can be used to create a class group with students and families each year. Keep families up-to-date with the latest happenings in your classroom, volunteer opportunities, and class projects that will need parent support. Share all the important documents, videos, and resources that you use in your classroom for easy access at home. Live meeting opportunities mean that you can hold a virtual parent university where you can catch parents up on the new math/reading/science/writing curriculum. Teach parents everything from reading strategies to use at home to working through math problems together. Offer virtual conference opportunities for parents who are unable to make it for a live conference due to long-term illness, job travel, or in multiple parent homes. Create student groups where you keep your students up-to-date with classroom happenings and resources. Offer your students a study hour where they can meet with you virtually for a little extra support or mentoring. Remind your students of upcoming assignments by creating to-do's. Collect digital assignments using Wiggio files. Students can create study groups of their own for collaborative projects. As they work together, they can meet virtually, share resources and links, and create a schedule to keep themselves on task.

Wiggio is a great platform for connecting multiple classes within a school, or around the world. Students can collaborate on a project, with all resources and communication housed in one location. Sign up for Wiggio as a teacher, students can join without sharing any personal information making it appropriate for students 13 and under with a permission slip.

# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



Symbaloo EDU (<http://edu.symbaloo.com>) Sharing the web with students can be a challenge. Websites can often have urls that feel unending, students can copy down a url incorrectly, students type with different speeds, or characters show up in the address that they are unfamiliar with. Complicated urls can single-handedly persuade the elementary teacher to ditch a wonderful web resource for something easier to manage...like a worksheet. Sharing websites with your students doesn't have to be a challenge.

Symbaloo was created with educators in mind. It lets you gather all of your favorite online tools and sites into a webmix about the topics you teach. Symbaloo web mixes can be published and shared with colleagues, students, and parents. Symbaloo can be used by students or teachers to create a personalized learning environment. With Symbaloo, folders can be created that contain sites and resources that are related. Symbaloo can be used yearlong, just continue adding sites and resources for your students through the year. Everything that you have used all year will be in one easy place for students to access. Symbaloo can also be used by students to create their own "textbooks". As students search the web for resources based on subjects or inquiry questions, they can save what they find and create a virtual e-book of sorts.

Symbaloo can also be used by students to organize all of their working in one place. Students can add links to the slide shows, documents, videos, images, etc. that they create online. Symbaloo becomes an e-portfolio of sorts when used this way. Teachers can also use Symbaloo to create a customized "textbook" for their students complete with articles, web games, maps, videos, images, and interactive content. Teachers can create a webmix for students to access using a unique url with no registration required. To create their own web mix, students under the age of 16 must have parental consent (this could be a permission slip).

# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



Weblist (<http://weblist.me>) Weblist lets you pull together and content on the web. Create a list of urls centered on a theme and combine them into one easy to navigate url weblist. The list can be saved as a bookmark or a homepage. Weblist is particularly useful for the primary elementary classroom because of its visual aspect. Each website is saved as a snapshot of that website with the website name and a description below. The visual organization is perfect for younger students who may not be able to navigate links designated by text alone.

Weblist is wonderful for quickly sharing a collection of sites with students. They are fast and easy to create (you don't even have to login and register first!). Students can easily travel from one site to another because the web page is embedded in the Weblist, the url never changes. Allow voting in your Weblist to collect students opinions on the websites they are using during learning. Weblist doesn't require any registration or personal information. Students under 13 can use this site to view or create Weblists.



Dushare- (<http://dushare.com>) Dushare is an incredibly easy way to share files. It lets you transfer files by way of a web browser as fast as you can upload. The site could not be easier to use, just pick your file, decide if you want it password protected to download, and then share the file. Dushare requires no login or registration to use. While the transfer is in progress, you can chat with the person you are transferring the file to over Dushare. File sharing just doesn't get much easier!

Dushare is a great way to quickly share files with students, parents, colleagues, or Twitter friends. In a computer lab setting, quickly share a file with all of your students by way of a unique url. If they can access a website and have downloading privileges, they can access the file. Students can use Dushare to quickly turn in work or send in work that needs a quick review. Because Dushare requires no login or registration, it is appropriate for students under 13.

# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools

## AnswerGarden

A minimal tool for maximum feedback

Answer Garden (<http://answergarden.ch>) Answer Garden can be used as an online answer collection tool or be embedded into a website, wiki, or blog. Question creation is fast and easy. Just enter the question and click “create”. There is no login or registration required. Students can post answers to questions by entering their own text answer or by clicking on, and submitting, existing answers. Answers are represented as a word cloud. Twenty-five answers are visible per garden but as students submit the same answer as another student, that word will grow bigger. Answer Garden is a fun way for students to brainstorm, plan, and work together. Pose open-ended thinking questions on your classroom blog, website, or wiki for students to answer. Use Answer Garden to host a classroom poll. Create a geography Garden that gives students a place that they can describe the state or country they are learning about. Answer Garden can be used during reading as a place for students to reflect on different characters, plots, settings, and themes. In history, give students a date range, event, or historical figure and let them add words to the Garden that describe it. Practice phonics by typing in a phoneme combination and have students submit words that fit the phoneme rule. Create a Garden to recognize VIP students in your classroom where each child can answer with a character quality that they appreciate about the student. Because Answer Garden requires no login or registration, it can be used with students under 13.



Kerpoof (<http://kerpoof.com>) Kerpoof is a necessity in any elementary classroom. This free online creativity center lets students create their own pictures, drawings, storybooks, movies, and practice spelling. The Kerpoof studio provides students with scenes, characters, and props.

Students can use these tools to create pictures, stories, or movies that they can write and direct. These can be saved directly to the Kerpoof website or downloaded as a jpeg file to student computers. As students create with the Kerpoof pictures, info bubbles pop up above the pictures (denoted by a question mark). These info bubbles teach students a fun fact related to the picture. Students can learn everything from: who wrote Treasure Island, to learning the national animal of Australia.

The Kerpoof interface is extremely user friendly, students will pick it up in no time. Kerpoof is a creativity tool that can bring student work to life. Students can practice writing fairy tales, poetry, collaborative stories, fables, math based stories, illustrated science journals and nonfiction books. Kerpoof offers the freedom of creativity, students only limit is their imagination. It makes an excellent publishing center where students can illustrate their stories, or create a movie out of their own writing. The site provides students with basic movie making skills and makes a good precursor to more robust movie creation tools such as iMovie. Apart from publishing student writing, Kerpoof can be used to teach character education, have students create stories or movies that show emotion and solve problems. Teach the life cycle of a butterfly using Kerpoof’s butterfly pavilion scene. Kerpoof can be used to retell a fiction or nonfiction story, history, or science experiment. Kerpoof has a teacher center where classrooms can sign up to use Kerpoof. Students are given a nickname, password, and class ID to login with. Kerpoof can be used with students younger than 13.



# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



Game for Science (<http://www.gameforscience.ca>) Game for Science is a virtual world for kids dedicated to getting them excited about science and technology. Students can explore various virtual islands where they will learn about health, aeronautics, genomics, environment, engineering, and more. Students can learn about science careers, what scientists do, play games, learn interesting facts, and explore science photos and videos.

Students can play Game for Science as a tourist without registering, or they can register for an account (this requires an email address with confirmation). Game for Science is an outstanding way for kids to get excited about science and technology. As students travel through the virtual world, they can collect neurons (smart stars) by answering questions and playing games. The neurons can be used to “buy” items for their avatar. Game for Science is a great way to introduce new science topics or areas of science. The virtual world will capture interest and keep students wanting to learn more about each topic.

If you teach primary students (without an email address), visit the virtual world as a tourist or as a class using an interactive whiteboard or projector. Give each student a turn to direct the journey through Game for Science. The rest of the class can jot down observations in a science notebook that can be used in later learning and experiments. Students who can read independently can visit the site individually on classroom computers as a science center, or in a computer lab setting. If they don't have a school email address, they can visit as a tourist without registering. This is a fun site for students to just explore and interact with; however, for use in the classroom, you can direct students to specific islands to study. Game for Science can be used by students younger than 13 using a tourist account or a class account.



Skype an Author Network (<http://skypeanauthor.wetpaint.com>) The Skype an Author Network provides k-12 teachers and librarians with a way to connect authors, books, and young readers through virtual visits. Classes can video chat with authors while they are reading books written by the author. There are two types of visits. The first is free and is a 10-15 minute author session. The second option is an in-depth visit. The length and fee of visit are determined by the individual authors. There is a growing list of excellent children's authors joining the network. Set up a virtual visit in your library or classroom today. Be sure to test Skype on your school network prior to setting up the visit. Students under 13 can participate in a Skype the Author session using a teacher or class Skype account.

# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



Zimmer Twins (<http://zimmertwins.com>) Edgar and Eva Zimmer are 12 year old twins who appear normal but have developed psychic powers. Strange things began to happen when the twins adopted a black cat named 13. On the Zimmer Twins website, students can create their own cartoon movie endings to a story starter, or create their own animated movie from scratch starring the Edgar, Eva, and 13. Students can create and edit movies solo or “Collab-o-write” and work together on creating a collaborative movie.

Your students will love this site! They can direct and produce their very own animated movies. The easiest way to start using Zimmer Twins in the classroom is to use it as a story starter. Students can watch a “starter” video and finish the story however they would like. The first time you introduce the site, complete a video as a class. After your students are familiar with the Zimmer Twins website, they can start a story from scratch. Students could direct “screen plays” of their writing as a way to publish their finished work. Zimmer Twins would make an excellent alternative to the traditional book report. Students could create a movie where the main character is being interviewed, the story is being summarized, or retold. Students could also create movies about historical events, describing a science experiment or concept, in math as a story problem, to demonstrate understanding of character education, or for vocabulary practice. Create a Zimmer Twins original yourself to introduce a new topic to your students.

Zimmer Twins can be used without registration, however, students will not be able to save their creations. Creating an account requires an email address. If your students do not have access to a school email address, you can create a classroom account that every student logs into and saves their videos on. Students will need to include their first name or a class number in the title of their video to differentiate it from others in the class. You could also set up an account for each student using your email account. You will have to check this email account to provide students with their passwords. Zimmer Twins states that it is designed to encourage the participation of children ranging in age between 8 and 17. If your students are younger than 8, send home a permission slip to be signed by parents.

# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools

neoK12

Neo K12 (<http://neok12.com>) Neo K12 is a comprehensive collection of educational videos, lessons, and games for students in grades k-12. Neo K12 believes that, “kids learn best by ‘seeing’ the real world.” They have created this site with that belief in mind.

Neo K12 has cataloged the best free online education videos from the Internet and brings them together in one place. Each video is watched and reviewed by k-12 educators to ensure their accuracy and appropriateness for students. Subjects include physical science, life science, human body, earth and space, social studies, math, English (including phonics, stories, and grammar), and fun videos such as time lapse, slow motion, arts and crafts, learn magic, music lessons, and sports lessons. Along with videos, Neo K12 has web 2.0 tools. The School Presentation tool is a mashup of Flickr and Wikipedia, and allows students to create and share presentations online. To create a presentation, students choose pictures for their presentation from Flickr, read an article about the subject from Wikipedia, and then add text to their presentation. When the presentation is finished, it can be printed or viewed online as a slide show. Quizzes, games, and puzzles on Neo K12 are an interactive way to improve learning. Teachers can create and share video playlists complete with notes and instructions for their students.

Videos provide excellent opportunities for learning, they make it possible for kids to visualize and build a model in their minds. This helps them to better understand key concepts and can stimulate curiosity in a subject. When students or teachers search a subject, they are given a list of related videos, quizzes, games, and puzzles. When a teacher creates an account, they can create a complete assignment within Neo K12 that includes instructions and notes for the students. Students can complete the assignment by watching videos, playing related games, and creating a School Presentation that demonstrates understanding. The presentations are easy enough for even young students to create. Primary students can skip reading the wikipedia article and just choose pictures and add some captions about facts they learned from a video they viewed. These videos are a great way to introduce new learning, expand on previous learning, or spark creativity in a topic. Many of the education games and puzzles can be used whole class using an interactive whiteboard or completed individually in the computer lab or on classroom computers. The jigsaw puzzles can be used as teasers to introduce a new topic. The jigsaw puzzles use incredible images from Flickr. Have students take turns coming up to the interactive whiteboard or computer (connected to a projector) to put puzzle pieces together. Students waiting at their seats can take guesses about what new learning you will be doing in class.

Neo K12 requires an email address to sign up. Students don't have to register to view your dashboard (that can be shared with a unique url) but they will have to register to save presentations. Students younger than 13 can have a parent or teacher sign up on their behalf, or create a class account and have students save their work with first name or number included in the title.

# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



Stixy (<http://stixy.com>) Stixy is a virtual bulletin board space. Notes, photos, documents, and to-do items can be added to the Stixy bulletin board by users. After content has been added to a board, it can be shared with others of your choosing. Those that have been invited to the Stixy board can be given permission to add content, upload, or edit.

Stixy can be used as a communication tool with your students. Create a classroom board where you post homework assignments, resources, to-do-items, etc. for your students. Students can, in turn, submit assignments through the document upload, add notes asking questions of the class, and participate in online discussions.

When working on group projects, students can create a Stixy board where they can collaborate virtually. Here they can post ideas, research findings, and add deadlines for the group. Stixy can also be used as a virtual portfolio for students. Ask each student to create a Stixy board for the year (or per semester, trimester, or quarter). Throughout the year, students can add their content and learning to the board. Teachers, other students, parents, and family members can be invited to view the board throughout the year. Students can view their learning and progress in one place and parents, teachers, and other students can leave feedback and encouragement on the Stixy board. This virtual portfolio can “travel” with students as a body of evidence.

Stixy does require that users register with an email address. If your students have not been assigned a school email account, you can use a service like tempinbox.com or mailinator.com to set up an account. Stixy does not specify a minimum age requirement for use and does not require any personal information for use.



Glogster (<http://edu.glogster.com>) Glogster is a great creativity site who's tag line is “poster yourself”. A ‘glog’ is basically an online poster web page. Students can combine text, pictures, graphics, video, and audio to create an interactive online poster. Glogster has a very simple to use interface. The final glog can be hosted by Glogster or you can embed it into a wiki, blog, or class website.

Glogster is a great way for your students to display knowledge. Students can create interactive content to display information in history, math, language arts, book reports, science, social studies, character education, and for public service announcements. Students can create these online posters to display any learning. Because Glogster has the ability to handle audio, students can create podcasts (using Audacity, Garageband, etc) and upload the content to their glog. Students can share their school work and accomplishments online with classmates, family, and friends. Allow your students to collaborate on projects using a glog. Glogster EDU has school-level teacher management of students and classes and provides a safe student environment for any age student.



# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



Wiglington & Wenks Virtual World (<http://www.wiglingtonandwenks.com>) In this virtual world, students are dropped into the middle of a story where they become world travelers to places around the real-world, meeting historical characters, playing brain games, building culture-inspired houses, exploring secret locations, and solving ancient mysteries. There are 100 educational real world and imaginary places for students to visit from the past, present, and the future.

Wiglington and Wenks was originally a children story book series written by Johan Bittleston. It has exploded into an online world where students can learn and explore. This virtual world has a rich storyline with well developed characters, plot, mystery, and quests. Students are dropped into the story and invited to participate, learning through exploration, problem solving, and critical thinking. The world highlights famous real-world landmarks, historical figures, inventions, culture, nature, and wildlife. Students are motivated to learn more about each as they complete a series of quests. The story behind the virtual world is about two water rats from England, Wiglington and Wenks, who are in search of a legacy left by Wiglington's great explorer ancestor. A series of magic maps guide them as they travel through time and space. Through a series of events, a time portal was accidentally created that transported the famous figures from the past to the future. All the historical figures seem to have forgotten who they are. Students embark on a quest to help Wiglington and Wenks find the famous missing characters and recover their lost memories. Historical figures include Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Cleopatra, Confucius, Copernicus, Damo, Emperor Quin, Galileo Galilei, Isaac Newton, Marco Polo, John Rolfe, Nostradamus, Pocahontas, Wilber and Orville Wright, Vlad Dracula, and many more. The rich storyline alone makes this site one to bring into your classroom. Students can do character studies, learn about plot, mystery, and suspense.

Use this site to teach your students about environmental issues such as global warming, forest preservation, protection of marine life, and endangered animals. This is an immersive learning environment where students will learn by doing. As students travel the virtual world, they will learn geography, cultural differences, history, and inventions. Students are encouraged to think creatively to solve the issues facing the world today. Wiglington and Wenks would be a great site to introduce to students at the beginning of the year and use throughout the year as a platform for learning. Make it a class goal to solve the mysteries of the magic maps before the end of the year. Throughout the year students can visit the virtual world, learn about historical figures, famous inventions, and geography. Hand up a world map in your classroom and keep track of the places that have been visited. Encourage students to create character cards as they learn about new historical figures and story characters. Each student can have their own account, but keep track of progress as a class. Students could use Wiglington and Wenks as inspiration for creating PSA posters for the classroom as they learn about environmental issues. Explore more about each inventor and the inventions that students come across in the virtual world. Have students keep a journal of discoveries (on or offline) as they discover new clues. Have students write newspaper articles about the happenings of the virtual world and it's characters.

Wiglington and Wenks encourages discovery of knowledge, teamwork, and critical thinking. Students under the age of 13 provide Wiglington and Wenks with a Travelers name (not their real name), a password, birthdate, and parent or teacher's email. A teacher or parent must approve the account for students to participate. A permission slip can be sent home to be signed by parents giving permission to use the site.

# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



Secret Builders (<http://secretbuilders.com/teachers.html>)

Secret builders is a virtual world for kids (age 8-12) that introduces them to fictional characters from history and literature. Secret builder has historical characters for students to interact with including Jane Austen, Bach, Alexander Bell, Emily Bronte, Confucius, Marie Curie, Thomas Edison, Hafez, Magellan, Omar Khxyam, Mozart, Isaac Newton, Rumi, and Lao Tzu just to name a few. Students can actually visit the historical figures house, learn more about them, interact with them by asking questions in a virtual chat (answered as the character would answer), and take a quiz to find out how much they know about this historical figure. Secret Builders allows kids to get up close and personal with history and literature in ways not previously possible. It allows them to gain a better understanding of historical figures that a textbook offers.

Secret Builders has additional school friendly features like areas for students to write, collaboratively draw and share, and play educational puzzle games. Secret Builders also has a great Internet safety quiz that tests students on their knowledge of what online behavior should look like. Secret Builders has a Teacher's Console where teachers can add and manage their students from one central location. Teachers can set up an online reward system for students where they can unlock special Secret Builder features by completing "quests" that you assign. For example, you may be studying Thomas Edison in class. You could send students on a quest to find and learn about Thomas Edison and give the reward to those students that correctly complete the quiz.

Secret Builders is an excellent way to bring history to life for your students. They will understand historical and literary figures better as they interact with them and other students in this virtual world. Students can interact with and "interview" the historical figures they encounter, they can then write an article about the historical figure in the Secret Builder's virtual newspaper, Writers Block. Students younger than 13 years old can access this site after signed up by a teacher (See Teacher's Console).



Storybird (<http://storybird.com>) Story bird is a fun collaborative storytelling website. Storybird makes it easy to create and tell stories digitally. Students and teachers can create stories together by combining imaginative artwork and text. The final product can be printed, watched on screen, played with like a toy, or share in an online library with the world. Storybird "promotes

imagination, literacy, and self-confidence." Creating, sharing, and reading a Storybird is free. The imaginative artwork will have your students imaginations soaring and lead to enthusiastic writing. Students can work together in teams to create stories. Students will feed off of each others ideas, creating more creative stories and learning together. Storybird is also a fantastic place to create a classroom story, each student can contribute pages to the story. The final product can be easily share with family and friends in the online library.

Storybird can be used by teachers to make "special" stories for students. They can include students as characters, emphasize classroom themes or curriculum, and be created for specific reading levels. Encourage your students to create and share their stories on Storybird, open up your classroom computer during DEAR time for students to read the stories their classmates have created. Storybird has free class accounts that allow students to use Storybird without providing an email address. Students of all ages can use storybird.

# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



Live Binders (<http://livebinders.com>) Live Binders is a website that allows you to view links like pages in a book instead of urls on a page. PDF and Word documents can also be combined with links in a binder. Links and documents can be organized into tabs and sub-tabs. Live Binders are easy to share from the Live Binder website, on desktops, or embedded in a class blog, wiki, or website.

Live Binders can be used as online digital portfolios for students. Any Word or PDF document that a student creates can be added to a binder along with any web content they create. The binders are easy to keep track of and share. Each tab can represent a year in school and each sub-tab can represent a subject within the school year. The Live Binder can easily be used from year to year creating a digital portfolio. Live Binders can be placed on desktops so that students don't have to type in long urls to access a website. Everything can be organized and easily updated in a Live Binder as a portal for your students to access the web through. This is a great time saver for classroom computers. Create your own "textbooks" for students to access as a Live Binder. You can easily add content to it and students can access the materials from any Internet connected computer. Create an assignment Live Binder with all worksheets, homework, links, and digital classroom materials. Students can access any classroom materials from home, no more lost papers! Students can create Live Binders to keep themselves organized as they complete research projects. Students could turn in a final project as a Live Binder that includes all of their web research, notes, and final written work. To register for an account, students must be at least 13 years old. Students can access binders without registering.



Museum Box (<http://museumbox.e2bn.org/index>) Museum Box is based on the work of Thomas Clarkson who collected items in a box to help him in his argument for the abolition of slavery. He collected items in a box to demonstrate to others the fine craftsmanship and abilities of the African culture. He used his box as a sort of traveling museum to aid him in his debate.

The [Museum Box](http://museumbox.e2bn.org/index) website provides a place for students to collect information and arguments in a virtual museum box of their own. They can collect items to provide a description or add to an argument of a historical event, place, or time period. Students can add images, text, sounds, video, external links, etc. to each compartment of the box helping them form their own virtual museum. The [Museum Box](http://museumbox.e2bn.org/index) can be shared as a presentation, saved, or printed. After a box has been created, students can view other student's boxes and leave comments about the box. Use [Museum Box](http://museumbox.e2bn.org/index) as a medium for students to learn about and collect information about a historical event, person, or time period. Because students can upload their own content to [Museum Box](http://museumbox.e2bn.org/index), you might also have them create a box all about them. This would be a great way for students to get to know each other at the beginning of the year. [Museum box](http://museumbox.e2bn.org/index) is a neat way to share information about geography, students can make a box all about a place including items in their box that are unique to that place. The ability to incorporate text, sounds, images, video, and uploaded items makes [Museum Box](http://museumbox.e2bn.org/index) especially impressive! After students have created boxes, spend time viewing other's boxes and leaving comments about the box. This is kind of like a science fair atmosphere for history, geography, and literature. Teachers register their schools to use museum box, this allows students to save their work to a class account.



# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



Creaza (<http://creaza.com>) is a suite of web-based creativity tools. There are four tools in the Creaza toolbox that will help your students organize knowledge and tell stories in new creative ways. Mindomo is the mind mapping tool. Students can use this tool to organize thoughts, ideas, links, and other information visually. Mindomo is the perfect tool for exploring new material, looking at connections, and organizing thoughts for further development. The mind map topics can contain media files, links, and text.

Cartoonist is a cartooning tool that students can use to create multimedia stories. Cartoonist can be used to create comic strips or more personal digital narratives. The finished product can be viewed online or printed out.

Movie Editor helps students produce their own movies based on Creaza's thematic universes, video, images, and sound clips. Students can use the Movie Editor to edit a short film, create a news cast, a commercial, a film trailer, etc. Movie editor can import film clips, sound clips, and images to tell a story.

Audio Editor is the final tool in Creaza's creative suite. Audio Editor is a tool that allows your students to produce audio clips. Students can use Audio Editor to splice together their own newscasts, radio commercials, radio interlude, etc.

Creaza allows your students to display learning creatively. The Media and Audio editors follow established conventions for sound and media editing complete with timelines. Using this online software will be a nice introduction to more robust media and audio editors. Mindomo is a great way for students to connect new and existing knowledge or to plan out a story. Cartoonist and Movie Editor are great tools that provide students with a creative outlet for telling a story. Allow students to show their understanding of a period in history by creating a cartoon about it. Display a new science concept in Movie Editor complete with voice over. Students could create a short video or radio type commercial for a book they read (book trailer) in place of a traditional book report.

Creaza does not specify an age in their terms of use. However, in the registration they require a first and last name, year of birth, and email address. Sign students up for a class account using teacher information to create the account, or request a signed permission slip for use of the site from parents.



# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



The National Archives Experience: Digital Vaults

(<http://www.digitalvaults.org/#/create/>) The National Archives has put together an amazing site where students can create digital content with primary resources. Students can search photographs, documents, and other records and collect them. Students can use collected items to create their own digital poster or to make a movie. Students can also create a Pathway Challenge. In a challenge,

students create a series of clues that show relationships between photographs, documents and other records. Others can take part in these Pathways Challenges. There are also ready made challenges that students can take part in, I just took the Lincoln challenge. Clues are given and students have to find a record that matches the clue. This is a truly incredible way for students to interact with history.

While the site may be too hard for primary elementary students to use on their own, the Lincoln Pathway Challenge could be used with an interactive whiteboard with the teacher guiding the challenge. Teachers could also create a unique challenge that directly matches your curriculum for students to complete. The poster, movie, and create your own Pathway Challenge are an engaging way for students to learn about history in a hands on approach. Give students a direction to go and then give them time to collect resources, and create their digital history vault. The Pathway Challenges are like virtual field trips through history. Digital Vaults does not specify an age to use the site; however, you must have an email address to save work on the Digital Vaults. If your students don't have a school email address, they can use a temporary email address to sign on with, or a classroom email address.



Shidonni (<http://www2.shidonni.com>) Shidonni is an intriguing web application for kids. Shidonni is an imaginary world that kids create. It provides a virtual universe where kids can create their own imaginary world, play, and share games and interact with each other in a safe environment online. Kids can create their own animals or characters online and make them interactive. Their

characters actually move and interact with the kids (no programming required!). They can create a world for their character, feed their character, write stories starring their characters, and play games using their character. Shidonni is an amazing way for kids to express themselves creatively. They will LOVE the interaction that this site provides.

Shidonni is simple enough for kindergarten students to use but will keep even secondary elementary students intrigued. Students can use Shidonni as a place to start digital storytelling. They can use the site to imagine new worlds and characters, and use them in the Shidonni storytelling feature. Shidonni can also be used to create "living" dioramas for the classroom. At the bottom of the Shidonni site, you will see a Teacher link. This will take you to a teacher dashboard where you can register your class. The teacher account will generate usernames and passwords for your students to use. Shidonni can be used by students of all ages.

# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



Ed.VoiceThread (<http://ed.voicethread.com>) is a secure collaborative network designed specifically for the k-12 school environment. Teachers and students can collaborate around almost any type of media including voice, text, webcam, and drawing commentary in a secure environment. Access is restricted to k-12 educators, students, and administrators to ensure safe classroom collaboration.

Ed.VoiceThread is an accountable environment, which means that all users are responsible for their content and behavior. Some added features that you will find on Ed.VoiceThread are, students have individual accounts that are easily viewable to educators, students can create, edit, and manage their own portfolio, students cannot add contacts or send invitations to any users outside of the Ed.Voice Thread community, and they cannot view any content that is not created by an Ed.Voice Thread member. Teachers can quickly view and access all students' Voice Threads. Voice Threads can be made private or public depending on the assignment and requirements. Ed.VoiceThread comes in two packages one free and the other, called Class Subscription, for \$60/year. Free users can only create 3 VoiceThreads, have 75 MB of storage, no uploading of MP3 comments, 30 min of webcam commenting, advertising will be present, single file size limit of 25 MB, and no downloads of the media. In the Pro version, students can create an unlimited number of Voice Threads, get 10GB of storage, can upload MP3 comments, have unlimited webcam commenting, 30 archival movie exports, no advertising, single file size limit of 100MB and allows downloads of media. Ed.VoiceThread is the ideal place for students and teachers to collaborate and interact with digital media. The added functionality for schools with Ed.VoiceThread is very useful. Students can use Ed.VoiceThread to create digital stories, documentaries, practice and document language skills, explore geography and culture, solve math problems, and much more.

As a teacher, I like VoiceThread as a place to teach. Because everything is web-based, you can upload the days lessons to Ed.VoiceThread for students to refer to and collaborate with while doing homework. Ed.VoiceThread makes you your students personal tutor. The self paced learning is fantastic! Students can use Ed.VoiceThread to document learning, collaborate with classmates, or collaborate with other students around the world. Ed.VoiceThread can be used in any subject as a way to document and record learning and conversation. The possibilities are endless. A class subscription to Ed.VoiceThread makes it possible to give your students their own accounts (any age) by creating student usernames without an email address. With a class subscription, you are automatically made co-editor of student work, can manage student accounts and create classes, and get a custom web address to easily share public VoiceThreads.

# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools



Shelfari (<http://shelfari.com>) Shelfari is a virtual bookshelf that you create to show off books that you have read and recommend. It is a Web 2.0 site that allows you to connect with students, other teachers, and parents around books.

Shelfari is a great way to discover new titles, discuss books, start an online book club, and show others what you are reading. You can show off your Shelfari bookshelf on your blog, classroom website, or other social networking site of choice. Build a bookshelf of age appropriate reading for your students. Embed the bookshelf on your classroom website, wiki, or blog to encourage reading. Shelfari allows you to create online book clubs and discussions making it easy to keep student reading and comprehension skills in top shape. Shelfari is an excellent resource for parents who may feel overwhelmed when they enter a library with their child. They often aren't sure of their child's reading level and what age-appropriate books might be. With Shelfari, parents can visit your shelf before the trip to the library for some great suggestions. Shelfari is an ideal place for you and your students to connect over reading. Students can create their own bookshelves to show off what they are reading. Students can comment and rate the books they read and check out other students reviews. Allow students to start a discussion on Shelfari in place of a more traditional book report. Connect with other staff members over books that you are reading.

Shelfari does not specify an age requirement in their terms of service; however it does require an email address for registration. If your students do not have a school email address, they can use a temporary email address to login with. Students will have to check back with their Shelfari account for any updates as they will not receive them by email.



Weebly (<http://education.weebly.com>) Weebly is a place for you and your students to create free websites and blogs. Weebly makes it extremely easy to create a website or blog because of its drag and drop interface, ready made designs, the ability to customize content simply, and the drag and drop approach to organizing pages. These websites are easy to create and have great looking, professional results. Teachers can use Weebly to create a class website. Here your students can explore topics that you are

studying in class, view any assignments that are due, see class pictures, read newsletters, and find content related links.

A class website can become the hub for any classroom. Post all current information on your class site, pictures of field trips you have taken, and add links to websites you are using in class. This is a great way to boost classroom-home communication. Weebly is also a wonderful creation platform for students. Students can create websites to document learning in any subject. Students can use a Weebly website as a digital portfolio by collecting learning, images, and other web 2.0 creations in one place. Weebly's education account makes it easy to sign up and manage student accounts from one location, accept homework assignments online, and keep parents up to date. Students of any age can use the teacher-moderated education version of Weebly.

# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools

## ThinkQuest

Think Quest (<http://thinkquest.org>) Think Quest is a free online community for learning. Learning is social, Think Quest engages and inspires students by providing a wider (but protected) audience. It turns students into multimedia authors for their classmates and allows them to think and learn together. This is more than a blog, students can hold debates, brainstorming sessions, polls, and more. Only teachers and students from your school can enter this password protected learning community (or you can open it up a little more so that other schools can communicate with yours...virtual pen pals). Think Quest allows members to use websites and interactive tools to publish their ideas, collaborate on projects, and build knowledge together. Think Quest also holds competitions where students are challenged to globally think, create and innovate using the Think platform to work together on projects, digital media, or application development.

Think Quest is a highly motivational environment for students. It can be integrated into any subject and any curriculum. Give students a writing assignment and have them brainstorm and write together using Think Quest. Have them post project they have been working on and encourage them to view other students projects and sites (this doesn't require much prompting!). Students will use this tool outside of school and naturally extend learning on their own. They can create their own "homework help" page where they are the expert. Think Quest offers the interactive learning tool to thousands of schools around the world in eight different languages, get real world foreign language experience for your students! Think Quest can be used with students at any age. A teacher registers the school for an account and manages student accounts. Send home the included Think Quest permission slip to be signed by parents.



# The Best Resources for Elementary Schools

fotobabble

Fotobabble (<http://fotobabble.com>) is an online creation tool that allows students to create and share talking photos. It is very easy to use, just upload a photo, record your voice, and send or embed it.

Fotobabble can be used in a variety of ways in the classroom. Students can take pictures, or find creative commons images that illustrate vocabulary that they are learning and record themselves saying the definition and using the word in a sentence. Students could collect and trade Fotobabble vocabulary with other students and embed them in a blog or wiki to create their own talking dictionary. A talking virtual word wall of this sort would be helpful for math, science, social studies, history, and regular vocabulary words that students learn. The format is valuable for audio and visual learners. Upload pictures of a field trip to Fotobabble for students to record thoughts, observations, and lessons they learned on the field trip.

Consider creating a class Fotobabble account that you (the teacher) are in charge of. Upload student illustrations and record a story that they have written in their own voice. This is the perfect type of project to share at parent teacher conference time. Parents can get a good idea of their child's writing, reading, and fine motor skills all in one spot. If you complete a similar project several times through the year, both students and parents can see the growth and progress that has been made during the school year. Fotobabbles are an outstanding way to send young students on an Internet scavenger hunt. Along the way, record directions with Fotobabble and embed on your class website, wiki, or blog. Nonreaders or struggling readers will be able to listen to, and follow directions for any assignment. Upload a picture of a landmark or map and have students record fun facts that they have learned about the place. Send special messages from your class home to parents in the weekly newsletter. Take a picture of a project that the class has done, or a fun activity from the week. Students can record a message about the upcoming events, fun highlights of the week in learning, and a list of helpers who have signed up for the week. Parents will love hearing their kids give the news updates each week. Looking for a special holiday activity? Record students leaving a special message to their parent with a special picture made just for them—now that is a keepsake!

Fotobabble requires an email address during registration. Consider creating a class account if your students do not have school email addresses of their own. Fotobabble is set to come out with an educational version in early 2011, this will allow teachers to create student accounts without an email address.

# The Best Resources for Middle Schools



**ahead.com** Presentations don't have to be static or boring and Ahead is a web-based tool that allows students and teachers to create non-linear presentations that are as unique as they want them to be. Very similar to Prezi, Ahead allows users to upload high resolution images, videos, and even files from Adobe products and Microsoft Office directly as part of the interactive presentation. The site offers website and blog embed codes for sharing and has a great high-speed zooming interface that is cool and easy to work with. This is a great tool to create presentations for students of all ages to explore and learn from, as well as one that students can use to create their own presentations. Middle School kids are sure to love the endless possibilities that this learning playground offers them!



**Art.com - Art Pad** is an amazingly simple, yet fairly full-featured drawing and painting website that allows students and teachers to create amazing artwork, share it with the world, and even watch (or playback) the whole artistic process that they and the other painters go through. The site is very simple and easy to use. You don't need to be Michelangelo to use this one either, sometimes the simplest of drawings can express the most complex ideas. The art can be saved, printed, and easily shared or incorporated into a document or online presentation. (<http://artpad.art.com/artpad/painter/>)



**Bitstrips** - Bitstrips (<http://bitstrops.com>) is an easy to use comic building site. Students (and teachers) of all ages can use this webtool to create a comic cell, strip, or story and then share it with their peers or the world. The possibilities are endless with this simple to use website. You simply click on attributes of a character's build, pick the colors, the background, and add dialogue. It would be a fantastic tool to use with illustrating a scene from a novel, or even to help a student understand a complex theory such as gravity in science. Bitstrips is fun, free (although there are paid features available), and very useful as a teaching tool.

# The Best Resources for Middle Schools



**Schoolology** - Schoolology is a free web-based learning management system (LMS) built on a social network. Schoolology leverages the familiarity of popular social media tools such as Google Docs and Facebook to improve communication and collaboration. It is a great tool to use with Middle School students and between faculty members, especially in this social networked society. It offers students a simple way to keep track of their class assignments and assessments, as well as offering their teachers a great way to extend the four walls of the classroom and distribute information, images, documents, movies, and more. Teachers can even take attendance and enter student grades from the site - it is a brilliant and full-featured web tool that will be valuable academically for students, as well as socially as it teaches them how to use a social network responsibly in a safe environment. (<http://schoolology.com>)



**Sweet Search** - Sweet Search is an educational search engine where all the websites and content that is suggested has been evaluated by a research department for educational content. A simple way to help reduce extraneous search results, especially helpful with Middle School students who are often doing their first large online research assignments. This is a great resource for all subject areas and all students to use. (<http://www.sweetsearch.com/>)



**Capzles** - Capzles is a site that allows users to create engaging multimedia timeline presentations. Students can upload images, video files, and documents (PDF/Word/PPT/etc.) to create an slick-looking animated timeline that can be shared and annotated. Great for making historical timelines and interactive multimedia presentations with or for your students. Students can even embed moving images as a background for the whole page and music to accompany the viewing of the Capzle. In addition to being shared and commented on, students can also embed a Capzle on their classroom website or blog. (<http://capzles.com/>)

# The Best Resources for Middle Schools

THE  
NATIONAL  
ARCHIVES  
EXPERIENCE

DOCS  
TEACH

**Docs Teach** - Docs Teach is an amazing Web Tool that helps to make History come to Life. Each of the several activity-creation tool helps students develop historical thinking skills and gets them thinking like historians.

Teachers simply find and insert primary sources into a customizable and very slick template in order to customize the activity to fit their unique students. This is one of those awesome sites that make teaching easier and more fun while exciting the students and engaging them to learn at the same time. (<http://docsteach.org/>)



**Qwiki** - Qwiki is a unique "Information Experience". It is a remarkable new way for the user to search for information and receive an interactive, customized, engaging, narrative response on the fly. I can imagine a

Middle School student searching for information on a historical event or a foreign country and receiving the results in this highly entertaining and informative way. While it is in private Alpha testing right now, this is one to watch and wait for. After playing with this one for the past month, it is easy to see that the educational possibilities are limitless. (<http://www.qwiki.com/>)

eduTecherTV webisode --> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1NbfAi-J2Y>

Print What  
You Like.com

**Print What You Like** - Print What You Like is an awesome website that lets users to edit the content from other web pages in order to reformat or isolate the information they wish want to print. It is easy and very powerful - with dedicated options to remove all images

and backgrounds. Middle School students could isolate a particular article off of an online newspaper and print just that one section instead of all the ads, comments, and junk that often times comes along with it. You can also edit the font type, size, and even formatting of the picture in order to truly get what you want and nothing more. A great way for schools to save money on paper and toner and save the planet at the same time.

eduTecherTV webisode --> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-7fPNqc36E&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-7fPNqc36E&feature=player_embedded)

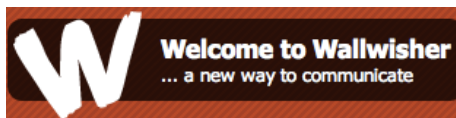


# The Best Resources for Middle Schools



**Sumo Paint** - Sumo Paint is an amazing web-based tool (and downloadable program as well). Think PhotoShop but free - and web based. This is one of the best photo creation/manipulation tools available today. A great tool for students and teachers who don't have access to or money for PhotoShop or other heavy-duty image manipulation software. Middle School students can create visual masterpieces using this very robust art program, and even edit and touch up photos that they upload. The files can be saved on the computer as a JPEG, or even on the web and accessed from any computer with web access. (<http://www.sumopaint.com/app/>)

eduTecherTV webisode --> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyrDNHVdGKo&feature=related>



**Wall Wisher** - Wall Wisher is a web tool that allows students and teachers to collaborate on an interactive cork board. Imagine the ability to post notes with reminders about class trips, even the PDF file for the permission slip, as well as photos and other great items for your peers and students. But there are so many other uses for this great tool - Middle School students can take and organize project notes or class notes on specific content, they can easily brainstorm ideas together, and even include videos and hyperlinks to other valuable content they wish to share with their teachers and their peers. Wall Wisher is simple to use and can be shared or kept private. It is an easy way to share a workspace either with students or colleagues. Teachers can even set up the wall wisher so that they need to approve new notes if they want to monitor the content being posted.

eduTecherTV webisode --> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBnlEVzh6wk&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBnlEVzh6wk&feature=player_embedded)



**Boolify** - Boolify is a search tool that aims to make it easier for students to understand their web search by illustrating the logic of that search, and by showing them how each change to their search instantly changes their results. It's simple to use and easy to use with your class or in your library. The search results are all filtered through Google's Safe Search Strict technology. Overall, it is a nice take on the student search engine and can be a valuable search option for students. (<http://boolify.org/>)

# The Best Resources for Middle Schools



**Show Document** - Show Document is a great site that allows teachers and students to conduct free web meetings to share documents with one another in real time. It is a free service that lets you explore Google

Maps together, surf the web with peers or students, share and comment on a Word or PDF document, or even use a virtual whiteboard space to conduct "meetings". Students can chat even conduct a live chat while the teacher hosts an open whiteboard that all the users of the site can access by entering a simple access code which the organizer of the "meeting" gets. This is a very simple way to collaborate online with other teachers and groups of students. There is unlimited space on the virtual whiteboard and you can always save a PDF of all the work before leaving a session. This is a great web tool that is easy to use and can be very valuable in any classroom for teachers and students alike. (<http://www.showdocument.com>)



**Creative Commons Search** - Creative Commons Search is a site that allows students to look for creative commons branded material which they can use in classroom projects. Middle School students can search through

Google Images, Flickr photos, music, and even TV clips that are free for use anywhere in your classroom or on the web. In addition to offering students (and their teachers) tons of multimedia assets to incorporate in their school work, this site helps to teach about how to give proper accreditation, and what a copyright or creative common license is all about and why it exists. A nice resource for teachers and students alike, especially in a time where it is sometimes too easy to simply copy and paste pictures and information without giving credit or asking permission. (<http://search.creativecommons.org/>)



**Easy Bib** - Easy Bib is a powerful and very useful tool that helps students (and teachers) properly cite in MLA and APA formats for formal reports. This site even allows you to enter a book's ISBN number and then automatically fills

in the information for you. It can print the information out, export it to a Word Document or PDF, and even email it to you. A great tool that makes the research much easier for Middle School students and their teachers. (<http://easybib.com/>)

# The Best Resources for Middle Schools



**Weebly for Education** – Weebly is a website creation site that makes it simple for teachers (or students) to create their own simple to work with websites. It is an easy to understand and versatile tool for educators and students alike. By using drag and drop functionality Middle School

students can use Weebly for Education to start a Digital Portfolio, a personal blog, as well as create a website for any school club or extracurricular activities. Weebly offers some great features, such as polls, embeddable maps and videos, and much more to make the sites dynamic, interactive, and very nice ways to display student work.



**Edmodo** - Edmodo is a private microblogging site (like Twitter) that teachers and students can use to send notes, links, files, alerts, assignments, and events to each other. It is a great way to communicate in a safe and

controlled environment while still keeping the immediacy and appeal of a social network. Middle School students are often blocked from Facebook in school, and usually could use some guidance on how to use social media more effectively (if not appropriately). Edmodo is a great learning tool and also a great teaching tool as well to help better prepare students for the social media rich world in which they live. (<http://edmodo.com>)



**Embed It In** - Embed It In is a great site that allows teachers and students to easily upload any file to the site for free and then embed it in their website or blog. The

user can also add annotations on the file (mark-up a Word Document or doodle on a JPEG). Imagine a Middle School student being able to highlight and annotate a worksheet that they are working on, or even peer-editing documents they need help with. The site is really easy to use and very helpful when it comes to sharing files on the web. (<http://embedit.in/>)

eduTecherTV webisode --> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=meaMifcgKcQ&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=meaMifcgKcQ&feature=player_embedded)

# The Best Resources for Middle Schools



**Glogster** – Glogster EDU is a site that allows students to create a digital poster with any text, images, movies, sounds, voice recordings, hyperlinks to other resources, etc. It is a super nice way for students to create project posters in a much easier way than the traditional cut and paste - with obvious benefits. These "glogs" can also be shared via popular social networks, embedded in a student digital portfolio or classroom blog, and commented upon. Teachers are able sign up for (currently) 50 free accounts for their students and access all the student's glogs (as well as moderate the comments) from one dashboard. Glogster EDU is a wonderful tool that is so easily customized for a specific subject area. Kids will really love this one - and you will too. (learn more about Glogster in the elementary school section)

## FLIPBOOK!

**Flipbook** – Flipbook is a web tool that allows teachers and students to create a digitally animated flipbook and then share it with the world. It is easy to create and is lots of fun to work with. Besides the obvious art implication, Flipbooks might be a great creative way for Middle School students (or teachers) to animate a historical event, show the visual representation of how to do a math equation, show a scientific process, or even retell a scene from a book. Fast, fun, and Free! (<http://www.benettonplay.com/toys/flipbookdeluxe/guest.php>)

eduTecherTV webisode --> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rG5oDDLQf-Q&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rG5oDDLQf-Q&feature=player_embedded)



**VoiceThread** – Voice Thread is a site that transforms media into collaborative spaces with video, voice, and text commenting. This is a nice and easy way to create multimedia work spaces for teachers and students to share. Students can start by adding pictures, videos, sounds, or documents, and then adding voice annotations. Others are then invited to annotate on the same page using a webcam, telephone, microphone, or simply writing in a response, and users can see and hear all the comments that are recorded about the picture, video, document, etc. The Voice Thread can then be embedded in a student or classroom website or blog. Simple to make, this really is a great way for Middle School students to share their input. (learn more about VoiceThread in the elementary school section)



# The Best Resources for Middle Schools



**History Pin** - History Pin is a site that lets teachers and students view and share their personal history in a totally new way. It uses Google Maps and Street View

technology and hopes to become the largest user-generated archive of the world's historical images and stories. History Pin asks the public to dig out, upload and pin their own old photos, as well as the stories behind them, onto the History Pin map. Uniquely, History Pin lets you layer old images onto modern Street View scenes, giving a series of peeks into the past. This is a great tool for writing compare and contrast literature and, of course, for use with a History class as well. One of the hopes of the site is that it will connect Middle School students with their older people (grandparents, great-uncles, etc.) and have them connecting in a way that they may not have done so before. (<http://www.historypin.com/>)



**Kerpoof** - Kerpoof is a site that provides free multimedia software that can be used directly from any browser, on any computer with Internet access and an up-to-date Flash player.

The site can be used to create original artwork, animated movies, and storybooks, among other things. Kerpoof's look and feel will be sure to keep the students actively engaged and allow them to create and view content that is exciting and can be easily adapted for specific school assignments. The work can then be shared with the Kerpoof community, but only after it passes an inspection of the content to make sure that it is all appropriate. Please note that Kerpoof offers paid, premium services directed to at-home use of the site, but all basic content directed to in-school use is entirely free. (learn more about Kerpoof in the elementary school section)

## The Learning Network

Teaching & Learning With The New York Times

**Learning Network - NY Times** - The Learning Network, a website that is run by the New York Times, is a wonderful resource for teachers and

students. One great feature is that current articles are made easier to understand by offering definitions of vocabulary words and also maps to areas discussed in articles. The Learning Network also offers daily lesson plans which are tied into articles from the newspaper. The site also contains themed activities and lessons based on school units. For example, in February there are daily Black History Month lessons and web activities. This is really a wonderful resource to encourage students to be a part of current events and also read and understand the news. (<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/>)

# The Best Resources for Middle Schools



**Museum Box** – Museum Box is a site that provides the tools for teachers and students to build up an argument or description of an event, person or historical period by placing items in a virtual box. What items, for example, would you put in a box to describe your life; the life of a Victorian Servant or Roman soldier; or to show that slavery was wrong and unnecessary? You can display anything from text files, PDFs, videos, images, even a webcam video or audio recording that you can produce right on the site. You can also view and comment on the Museum Boxes submitted by others. Middle School students will love using this site because it makes learning engaging and fun. (learn more about Museum Box in the elementary school section and in the video linked below)

eduTecherTV webisode --> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBnlEVzh6wk&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBnlEVzh6wk&feature=player_embedded)



**One Word** – One Word is a very simple and elegant quick-write solution for students. The site offer a one word prompt and gives the student 60 seconds to start writing. This is a great way to fight writers-block and make writing a little more fun as the words are usually really interesting and offer lots of room for students to get creative. This is a great site, especially for Middle School students of all academic performance levels. Super simple to use, I feel like the slogan for the site should be Just do it! - But I guess that one is already taken. (<http://oneword.com/>)



**Paper Rater** – Paper Rater is a web tool that offers a robust grammar checker to find mistakes and correct them. It can also check to see if a students paper contains plagiarized text. Most recently, the site has added a feature that will try to make suggestions so that students can actually improve their work. In a world where some students need a little extra help with their writing or some guidance as to how to be a good digital citizen and not lift information in the improper way, Paper Rater is a wonderful tool for Middle Schoolers in and out of the classroom - plus it is easy to use as well. (<http://www.paperrater.com/>)

# The Best Resources for Middle Schools



**Google Search Stories** - It is amazing to think that an entire “story” can be told in just a few searches on-line, but it is certainly true. My favorite commercial of the Super Bowl this past year was called [Parisian Love](#). It was a simple relationship story that was told entirely

through various Google searches. Google Search Story Creator allows teachers and students to quickly and easily tell a digital story using this same technique. The user selects a search term (up to 7 of them) and type of search (Web, Images, Blog, Maps, etc.). Then they can select a genre of music and voila - An instant YouTube submission of your Search Story. This can be a very powerful tool for a whole variety of subjects. Just think of the challenge and fun it would be to retell your favorite novel in seven simple search terms. This one is fast, fun, and free! ([http://www.youtube.com/searchstories?utm\\_source=en-us-bkws-sem-ss&utm\\_medium=ha&utm\\_campaign=en](http://www.youtube.com/searchstories?utm_source=en-us-bkws-sem-ss&utm_medium=ha&utm_campaign=en))



YouTube launched their own video editing tools last summer.

The tools are a bit coarse, but they do allow you to edit your own uploaded works. The YouTube video editor could be helpful for you and your students when working with raw footage uploaded from a Flip camera or similar device. Learn more about how to edit videos using YouTube’s Video editor in the presentation found at [https://docs.google.com/present/view?id=df6bwk2v\\_552gj98kwf9](https://docs.google.com/present/view?id=df6bwk2v_552gj98kwf9)

# The Best Resources for High Schools



[JayCut \(http://jaycut.com\)](http://jaycut.com) is a free, online, video editing service. To use [JayCut](http://jaycut.com) online you will need to join the [JayCut](http://jaycut.com) community. Once you've joined you can immediately start creating a video. The [JayCut](http://jaycut.com) editor allows you to use two video editing tracks, an audio track, and a transitions track to create your video. JayCut provides some stock video and stock transitions that you can use, but the best option is to upload your own images, video clips, and sound tracks. Earlier this fall JayCut also introduced new options for slow motion effects, direct recording from your webcam, a green screen, and color editing. The videos you create can be published online on the JayCut site, published directly to YouTube, or downloaded to your computer. If you have the skills or if someone in your school district has the skills, you can access JayCut's API for free to install it on your local server(s).



Common Craft (<http://commoncraft.com>) videos should be in every teacher's and technology trainer's toolbox. Common Craft produces videos called "In Plain English." These videos explain potentially confusing subjects through the use of paper cut-outs and clear narration. Common Craft offers videos for introducing blogs, wikis, and social media to teachers. Common Craft also offers videos explaining concepts in personal finance, political science (The Electoral College In Plain English) and online identity protection.



[Khan Academy \(http://khanacademy.org\)](http://khanacademy.org) offers more than 1800 mathematics and science tutorial videos online. There are even some videos covering topics in the humanities now too. While [Khan Academy](http://khanacademy.org) is best known as a [YouTube Channel](http://khanacademy.org), there are other ways to access the Khan Academy content. Khan Academy can be [accessed through iTunes U \(http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewiTunesUInstitution?id=391034778\)](http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewiTunesUInstitution?id=391034778). Khan Academy can be [watched and downloaded on Curriki \(http://www.curriki.org/xwiki/bin/view/Group\\_KhanAcademyMathGroup/Curriculum\)](http://www.curriki.org/xwiki/bin/view/Group_KhanAcademyMathGroup/Curriculum). Finally, Khan Academy can be [downloaded onto a flash drive \(http://mujica.org/khan/\)](http://mujica.org/khan/) for viewing on any computer.



# The Best Resources for High Schools

## Today'sMeet

[Today'sMeet](http://todaysmeet.com) (<http://todaysmeet.com>) is a free chat service that can be used for holding a back-channel discussion with students and colleagues. [Today'sMeet](http://todaysmeet.com) is completely free to use. Setting up a chat area in [Today'sMeet](http://todaysmeet.com) is very simple. To set up your chat area just select a name for your room (that name becomes the url for your chat area), how long you want your room to exist, and select an optional Twitter hashtag for your chat area. To invite people to your chat area send them the url. What makes [Today'sMeet](http://todaysmeet.com) different from similar services is that [Today'sMeet](http://todaysmeet.com) doesn't have a public gallery of chat rooms containing questionable content. [Today'sMeet](http://todaysmeet.com) also doesn't place inappropriate advertising on your chat area. I use [Today'sMeet](http://todaysmeet.com) when we watch films in the classroom. Having an active backchannel allows students to ask questions and post comments while watching the film. I also use [Today'sMeet](http://todaysmeet.com) during lectures or presentations as place for students to record their questions for discussion.



[Synchtube](http://synchtube.com) (<http://synchtube.com>) is a service for watching videos and chatting about them at the same time. Here's how it works; find the url of your favorite YouTube video, copy that url into [Synchtube](http://synchtube.com), and begin chatting with your friends while the video is playing. You can comment on the video and share thoughts inspired by the video while you're watching. [Synchtube](http://synchtube.com) allows you to have up to 50 people watching and chatting simultaneously.



[BizEd](http://www.bized.co.uk/educators/index.htm) (<http://www.bized.co.uk/educators/index.htm>) is a great resource for economics lessons and virtual field trips. I started using [BizEd](http://www.bized.co.uk/educators/index.htm) a few years ago and it has been a valuable resource to me ever since. [BizEd](http://www.bized.co.uk/educators/index.htm) is a UK based website so some of the lessons and activities have to be manipulated a little bit for use in US classrooms, but the overall value of activities is fantastic. Some of the highlights for teachers are frequently updated lesson plans, a comprehensive glossary of terms, slide shows available for download, and fantastic virtual field trips. [BizEd](http://www.bized.co.uk/educators/index.htm) even has an RSS feed that provides subscribers to updates in the lesson plans, activities, and reference section of [BizEd](http://www.bized.co.uk/educators/index.htm).

# The Best Resources for High Schools



## Wikispaces

Building pages on a wiki is a great way for students to record and share knowledge about topics they've researched. Last year one of my classes created a wiki about 1920's culture in the United States. When everyone was done contributing one of my students made the observation that the wiki had more information than the textbook did, he was right. Teachers and students can also use wikis to create digital portfolios. Students can create and edit their own pages to show-off the work they're most proud of. There are quite a few good wiki services on the web, but I prefer [Wikispaces](http://wikispaces.com) (<http://wikispaces.com>) because they provide free advertising-free wiki hosting to teachers. Wikispaces also offers helpful free training webinars on a fairly regular basis.




Aviary (<http://aviary.com>) offers an online suite of free image and sound editing services. [Aviary's Myna](#) service is a free web-based audio track mixer created by Aviary. Using [Myna](#) you can mix together up to ten tracks to create your own audio files. The sounds you mix can come from the [Myna](#) library, your vocal recordings made with Myna's recorder, or audio tracks that you upload to your Myna account. [Aviary](#) offers a service designed to complement [Myna](#) called [Roc](#) (and it does rock). Using [Roc](#) you can create your own music loops or samples. After you've created your music samples you can download them, reuse them in Myna, or embed them into your blog. Aviary also has image editing and image creation tools that, for most high school students, are very comparable to PhotoShop and other expensive image editing programs. Finally, for Google Apps for Education users Aviary's services can be incorporated into your account through the Google Apps Marketplace. This means that teachers and students can save their Aviary creations in their Google Accounts.



## The [Chemical Education Digital Library](http://www.chemeddl.org/)


(<http://www.chemeddl.org/>) is a large collection of resources for teaching and learning chemistry. The [ChemEd DL](#) contains tutorials for students, 3D models, lesson plans, and more. The [tutorials](#) include [3D chemical models](#) and explanations of what each part of the models does and how those parts work together. In the [lesson plans section](#) you will find downloadable lesson plans organized by subject. [ChemEd DL](#) also features a periodic table that links each element to data and explanations about that element.

# The Best Resources for High Schools

 **Goofram** (<http://goofram.com>) is a mash-up of Google Search and Wolfram Alpha search. Enter your search term(s) into **Goofram** and it will display relevant results drawn from Google and Wolfram Alpha. **Goofram** really shines when you're searching for information about a topic that could potentially have a lot of numerical information as well as text-based information. For example, when I searched using the phrase, "first person to climb Mount Everest," the result was a column of links, generated by Google, to articles about Mount Everest and a column of statistical information, generated by Wolfram Alpha, about Mount Everest.



**Knotebooks** (<http://knotebooks.com/>) is a neat service that allows users to create, customize, and share lessons composed of videos, images, and texts from all over the Internet. **Knotebooks** uses the term "lesson" to describe what users build, but I think a more appropriate description is "multimedia reference article." Using **Knotebooks** you can organize information to create a reference article for yourself or to share with others. You can also browse the articles published by others, add them to your account for later reference, and or alter the articles that others have written to suit your needs. For example if I find an article in **Knotebooks** about Newton's Laws but some parts of the article are too difficult for me to comprehend, I can click the option for "easier content" and Knotebooks will change the article to meet my needs.

 **Google maps** Maps are obviously useful for Social Studies teachers, but did you know that you can also use multimedia maps to tell a story? **Google Maps** and **Google Earth** can both be used to create a multimedia story. Try having your students write the biography of a famous person by plotting points on a map and adding text, images, and videos about that person to each placemark. Visit Jerome Burg's **Google Lit Trips** to learn more about using Google Earth in a literature course. Visit Tom Barrett's **Maths Maps** to get ideas for using maps in mathematics lessons.

Need some general directions for using Google Maps or Google Earth? Please consult my free publications **Google for Teachers** (<http://www.freetech4teachers.com/2010/03/free-33-page-guide-google-for-teachers.html>) and **Google Earth Across the Curriculum** (<http://www.freetech4teachers.com/2010/01/google-earth-across-curriculum.html>).

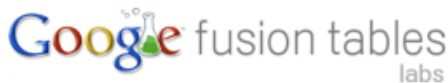
# The Best Resources for High Schools



[Quiz Revolution](#) is an easy way to make a multimedia quiz for your website or blog. With [Quiz Revolution](#) you can include video, audio, and image file in your quiz. Each question in your quiz can have a different media format. There are two options for answer format, multiple choice or open-ended response. Quizzes are easy to create and easy to embed into a website or blog. If your students register for a Quiz Revolution account before they take your quiz, you can monitor their quiz results. (Quiz Revolution was previously known as MyStudiyo).



Google Documents can be used for many purposes across the curriculum. This year I've started using Google Docs to have my students not only peer-edit, but to collaboratively create entire research papers. By working together online my students are able to create research papers containing a greater depth analysis than they did when working individually. Google Docs Forms can be used to post surveys and quizzes online. Having students take quizzes online through a Google Form makes grading a more efficient process which gives me more time to spend on planning better lessons for my students. For directions on using Google Docs Forms to give a quiz online, please see my free publication [Google for Teachers](http://www.freetech4teachers.com/2010/03/free-33-page-guide-google-for-teachers.html) ([www.freetech4teachers.com/2010/03/free-33-page-guide-google-for-teachers.html](http://www.freetech4teachers.com/2010/03/free-33-page-guide-google-for-teachers.html)).



[Google Fusion Tables](#) is a neat spreadsheet application that makes it easy to create visualizations of data sets. [Fusion Tables](#) can also be used to create visualizations of data set comparisons. At its most basic level [Fusion Tables](#) can be used to visualize existing data sets with one click. At a deeper level, [Fusion Tables](#) can be used to compare your own data sets and create visualizations of those comparisons. The types of visualizations available include tables, maps, charts, and graphs. As a Social Studies teacher, I really like the map visualization options. For the visual learners in your classroom, Google Fusion Tables could be an excellent tool for showing the various ways that data can be interpreted. Fusion Tables also provides students with a fairly easy way to compare their own data sets.



# The Best Resources for High Schools



[Scribblar \(http://scribblar.com\)](http://scribblar.com) is a free, simple service designed for creative, real-time collaboration. Using [Scribblar](#), users can collaborate on the creation and editing of images and drawings. Scribblar also supports mathematics equation symbols when creating from scratch on their whiteboard. If you have an image you can upload it to your whiteboard where you and others can edit it or comment on it. The commenting can take place directly on the whiteboard or in one of two side bar chat options. Users can chat in text or in voice which makes Scribblar a good option for hosting informal online tutoring sessions. You can create a [Scribblar](#) room without creating an account. However, if you choose to create an account you will get some additional free benefits like locking and unlocking rooms, naming of rooms, and privacy controls.



There are hundreds of places to find educational games and quizzes on the Internet. That said, sometimes you still cannot find quite what you're looking for. In those cases you're better off creating your own games.

[Sharendipity \(http://beta.sharendipity.com/\)](http://beta.sharendipity.com/) makes it possible for students and teachers to quickly create and share simple video games. [Sharendipity's](#) drag and drop creation tools can be used to create a game in as few as four steps. For new [Sharendipity](#) users the tutorials provide clear directions and helpful game ideas. Games created on Sharendipity can be embedded into your blog or website.



[Snag Learning \(http://snaglearning.com\)](http://snaglearning.com) is a good resource for teachers who would like to use high-quality documentaries in their classrooms, but don't have the funds to purchase DVDs. Snag Learning also solves the problem that arises when you show a documentary to a class when a student is absent.

Rather than having to lend out a valuable copy of the DVD you can direct the student returning from an absence to watch the film on Snag Learning. Snag Learning offers a series of guiding questions for each film. You can embed previews of each video into your blog, but you have to watch the full-length versions on [Snag Learning](#).

# The Best Resources for High Schools

## DROPitTome

[DROpitTome \(http://www.dropitto.me/\)](http://www.dropitto.me/) is a free service that works with [Drop Box](#) to allow people to upload files to your Drop Box account without giving them access to the contents of your Drop Box account. For those not familiar with Drop Box it is a service that provides 2GB of free online file storage. You can access your Drop Box from any computer and most mobile devices. You can also sync it across multiple computers. [DROpitTome](#) works by synchronizing with your Drop Box account. After connecting the two services [DROpitTome](#) provides a url that you can give to others to upload files to your Drop Box account. You must specify a password that has to be entered before an upload can take place. Give the url and password to those people you want to be able to upload files to your Drop Box account. Why do I use DropitTome? To eliminate the email inbox clutter that comes with having 100 students email me their assignments.

## facebook

Everyday more students and more parents visit their Facebook accounts than they do any other place on the web. This year I took advantage of that situation by creating a Facebook fan page for my course blog. On the fan page I post course-related information like assignments, outlines, and other materials through Facebook without having to check my blog separately. The information I publish on the fan page is essentially the same as on my blog and often contains links back to my blog. My hope in doing this is that my students will see course reminders when they log into their Facebook accounts. By making the fan page public I'm also allowing the parents of my students to access course information in the same way as their children. Please note, that creating a Fan Page requires you to have Facebook account. Also note that just because a student or parent becomes a "fan" of your Fan Page that does not mean that they become your Facebook friend.

## facebook

Leverage students' familiarity with Facebook for a history lesson, [Derrick Waddell](#) created a [Facebook template for historical figures](#). This [template \(http://bit.ly/gMWhWI\)](#), available through the [Google Docs public template gallery](#), asks students to complete a Facebook profile for famous people throughout history. The [template](#) has a place for pictures, an "about me" section, a friends column, and a map to plot the travels of historical figures. Please note, this template will not result in an actual Facebook account being created. Creating a Facebook profile for a historical figure could be a good way for students to record some basic information about that person. You could have each student in your class create a profile then have the students work together to figure out the connections between each historical figure. For example, I might have my US History students create profiles of the delegates to the Second Continental Congress then, as a group, determine the connections between the delegates.

# The Best Resources for ESL/ ELL Teachers

## Introduction:

Technology can be a huge asset to English Language Learners on a number of levels:

\* Since one of the best ways for anyone to develop their literacy ability is to read about topics in which they have high-interest, the thousands of fiction and non-fiction online stories available online and provide audio, visual (and, often, animated) support for text dramatically increases the accessibility and variety of challenging readings available to ELL's.

\* The willingness to take risks is a critical quality of a successful second language learner. The countless free sites that provide immediate error correction -- that no one else sees -- are invaluable confidence-building tools to help students feel more comfortable using their new language skills in different contexts.

\* There are many ways technology with ELL's can be maximized to help students develop and strengthen face-to-face relationships. An arborist once told me that redwood trees can grow very tall on their own, but they really reach their towering heights when they are in groves. Being in the same place allows their roots to interconnect and provide the support necessary to skyrocket. The same is true, I believe, for our students. Students using these tools entirely on their own can be helpful. But it's when we use them to help students relate to -- and work with -- each other is when tech can be used most effectively to enhance student achievement in language and other areas.

Here are a few of my favorite tools that achieve these goals (in order to be on this list and, in fact, in order for me to use any web tool at all, it has to be easy enough for a non-tech-savvy individual to learn to use in under a minute).

*Larry Ferlazzo*

*Larry Ferlazzo teaches Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced English Language Learners (as well as native English speakers) at Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento, California. (Learn more about Larry in the author pages at the end of this book).*

# The Best Resources for ESL/ ELL Teachers



[English Central](http://www.englishcentral.com/en/videos) has engaging and current video clips from news shows and movies, and shows the text as the words are spoken. Users are then prompted to repeat the words that are shown, and the online software “scores” how well the student has pronounced the text. The free site, financially supported by Google, is so sophisticated that it takes into account the particular native accent of the speaker. Users can register on their own, or a teacher can create an online classroom to monitor student work. (<http://www.englishcentral.com/en/videos>)



[U.S.A. Learns](http://www.usalearns.org) (<http://www.usalearns.org>) is an excellent multimedia self-paced (and free) site for Beginning and Intermediate English Language Learners. As with English Central, users can either register on their own or as part of a class to develop their listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills. It’s a joint project of the Sacramento County Office of Education and the University of Michigan. It’s designed for adult learners, but is also very appropriate for others.

[MABE](https://abeweb.mpls.k12.mn.us/) (<https://abeweb.mpls.k12.mn.us/>) is a great free “one-stop shop” for all levels of English Language Learners. It comes from Minnesota Adult Basic Education, but is appropriate for others. It provides a massive and well-organized set of activities touching all aspects of language-learning.



[Mingoville](http://www.mingoville.com) (<http://www.mingoville.com>) is an exceptional free site for younger English Language Learners. It’s colorful, has lots of games and interactive exercises, and also functions as a “one-stop shop.” Surprisingly, it’s based in Denmark, and has a worldwide audience.



# The Best Resources for ESL/ ELL Teachers

Having students play online video games in groups, with them having to follow written instructions on how to “win” (called walkthroughs), are excellent language learning opportunities. [Phantasy Quest \(http://www.spacepretzel.com/phantasy/games/phantasy\\_quest.html\)](http://www.spacepretzel.com/phantasy/games/phantasy_quest.html) is one example of a game with a [walkthrough](#). You can read more about how to use these games with ELL’s at this article -- [Free Online Games Develop ESL Students’ Language Skills. \(http://www.techlearning.com/article/8270\)](http://www.techlearning.com/article/8270)

Students can also work in groups to create online presentations can touch on all the important aspects of learning a second language. Sites like [VoiceThread](#) let students either grab images off the Web or upload their own; then provide audio narration and, finally, others can leave audio or text comments. Here’s one [student-created example \(http://esleflstudents.edublogs.org/2008/03/30/san-francisco-by-maria-yulia-and-karina/\)](http://esleflstudents.edublogs.org/2008/03/30/san-francisco-by-maria-yulia-and-karina/).



Creating online content so that others besides the teacher can see student work can enhance student motivation. Other easy tools for students to use include the [Dvolver Moviemaker \(http://www.dvolver.com/live/moviemaker.html\)](http://www.dvolver.com/live/moviemaker.html), where they can create short animations with no registration required, and [Fotobabble](#), where users can grab an image off the Web or upload their own and then provide a one minute accompanying narration. You can read about a lesson using Fotobabble, and see many examples, [here \(http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/2010/10/19/a-pretty-darn-good-lesson-if-i-say-so-myself/\)](http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/2010/10/19/a-pretty-darn-good-lesson-if-i-say-so-myself/).



Annotating text to demonstrate reading strategies (visualizing, making connections, asking questions, writing summaries, etc.) is a way students of all English levels can improve their literacy. By using a tool like [Webclipper \(http://webclipper.com/\)](http://webclipper.com/), students can show these strategies through the use of virtual “post-it” notes on any webpage. In fact, classmates can see those annotations and add their own.

# The Best Resources for ESL/ ELL Teachers



Of course, you need a place to put student-created content in order for you, their classmates, and others to see it, a prerequisite for saying it has an “authentic audience.”

My favorite tool to make this happen is [Edublogs \(http://edublogs.org/\)](http://edublogs.org/) because it’s simple to use and gets through most school content filters. A teacher can quickly write a post listing instructions, and students can leave links to their work in the comments section (see my [Intermediate English class blog](http://sacschoolblogs.org/burbankeld/) as an example) (<http://sacschoolblogs.org/burbankeld/>). It has a free version, but in order to have no advertising and to allow “threaded comments” (this allows students to comments on their classmates’ work immediately below that student’s work), you have to pay \$40 per year. Believe me, it’s money well-spent!

One site that has to be on any ELL teacher’s list of favorites is [Henny Jellema’s Online TPR Exercises](http://www.digischool.nl/oefenen/hennyjellema/engels/tpr/voorbladtp.html). (<http://www.digischool.nl/oefenen/hennyjellema/engels/tpr/voorbladtp.html>) The best word to describe it is “brilliant.” The free site applies the idea of Total Physical Response, a universally used second language teaching technique, to the Web. Images of people performing various actions are shown, and users have to choose the correct text and audio description.

Another “must-use” site for teachers is [EFL Classroom 2.0 \(http://eflclassroom.com/\)](http://eflclassroom.com/) At this site, thousands of teachers of English Language Learners from around the world share resources and ideas. Any teacher can join it for free.

There are many, many sites that provide the thousands of available free online books that provide audio and visual support for the text. In addition to suggesting excellent specific sites like [Literactive \(http://literateactive.com/Home/index.asp\)](http://literateactive.com/Home/index.asp) and [Starfall \(http://www.starfall.com/\)](http://www.starfall.com/) for beginning ELL’s, I’m also going to suggest you visit [my website \(http://larryferlazzo.com/englishbeg.html\)](http://larryferlazzo.com/englishbeg.html) that provides numerous direct links to fiction and non-fiction stories.

This list is just a tiny glimpse of the resources out there for English Language Learners. To find more, visit over five hundred other “The Best...” lists (<http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/about/my-best-of-series/>) geared towards ELL’s.

# Teaching Online Courses: Strategies and Resources

## **Introduction:**

I have been developing and teaching online courses for the last seven years and in a number of unique programs. The nature of teaching online, and the fact that you do not have to be in a physical space with the students you are teaching (for some jobs), gives you the ability to take on multiple jobs working from home. As a result, I have taught courses for four different states...simultaneously. I have taught blended learning and 100% online learning courses...on the same day. I have taught college, professional development courses to teachers, and high school students from my couch and kitchen table. While there are many differences in teaching online, good teaching is still good teaching, so for the most part you just have to adapt your skills and expand your toolbox. This short article will discuss some of the daily tools of an online teacher and a few of the strategies for working with kids and adults online.

*Cory Plough*

*Cory Plough teaches Social Studies and Web 2.0 courses online at a large charter high school in Nevada. He has also developed and facilitated courses for the State of Idaho's online professional development program. He teaches Beginning Online Teaching for Boise State's Education Technology department. He teaches high school social studies for both New Mexico and Connecticut's state online programs. He was also hired to work for the first ever GLBTQ online high school in the country. Learn more about Cory Plough in the author pages.*

# Teaching Online Courses: Strategies and Resources

## Tools:

My average day consists of going into my blended learning school and working mostly from my cubicle, with a dash of classroom time thrown in there. Blended learning online schools are programs that primarily teach students online, but include a face-to-face component. The majority of teaching that I do is done on the Internet, but I meet with students to work one-on-one and help them with their assignments and course management. Typically, I log into my Learning Management System from my computer and email, grade, have discussions and create lessons right from my desk.

What's a Learning Management System? A [learning management system](#) (LMS) is a software program for administering your courses. Have you ever heard of Moodle? Well, [Moodle](http://moodle.org/) (<http://moodle.org/>) is an [open source](#) program that allows you to operate your courses at an online site in which students log into in order to complete their work and contact their instructor. [Blackboard](http://www.blackboard.com/) (<http://www.blackboard.com/>) is another very popular LMS, especially in college and state K12 online programs.

Within your courses, you can use any number of tools that are of interest to you. One of the best parts about teaching online is the ability to try those tools that you haven't been able to use in your brick and mortar program because of district or school filtering, or a lack of computer access, or the fact that online tools scare many administrators. I am able to find new tools through my Personal Learning Network (PLN) and then include them into lessons as an optional way for a student to complete an assessment. For example, I recently discovered [Vocaroo](http://vocaroo.com/) (<http://vocaroo.com/>), which is an audio recording site, so when I wrote a lesson that included a short essay as the culminating task, I gave students the option to record an audio or photo essay (using [Flickr](#)) instead of just a written one.

One of the problems that you run into with utilizing interesting Web 2.0 or social media tools in an online course, is that students will have technical problems and nobody to support them. About 4 years ago, I started implementing Web 2.0 tools and requiring students to pick from a list to complete an assignment. They would just skip over that assignment because they couldn't figure out the tool and the teacher wasn't there then to show them. So, students have to learn two things on their own, the tools and the content, in order to complete something and that can limit their success. Now I just give them alternatives to the norm. If you don't want to do a written essay you can use [Vocaroo](#) or [Flickr](#) or record a [Vlog](#) (video blog), or instead of PowerPoint you can use [VoiceThread](#) or [Prezi](http://prezi.com/) (<http://prezi.com/>), or any number of other fun tools.



# Teaching Online Courses: Strategies and Resources

## **Strategies**

When teaching online, you have to develop certain skills that you typically do not think twice about when working with students face-to-face. Below are four key areas where you need to develop additional strategies when teaching online.

### **1. Communication:**

Here is a proposition for you, how would you like to try teaching without using your face, hands or voice? Sounds daunting doesn't. When teaching online there aren't any non-verbal communication devices....for the most part. Since much of online teaching is currently asynchronous, you have to consider that the student is unable to watch your facial expressions and body language when delivering content. Also, your sense of humor may not transfer so things that are funny out-loud may sound like insults or demoralizing comments in digital text. You need to get very good at being super specific in emails (the main form of online communication), instant messaging and feedback. You want to show emotion through the use of emoticons and acronyms but be careful not to lose that teacher-student relationship by being overly friendly and informal.

### **2. Course Development:**

Developing courses online takes 1.5 to 4 times as long as developing a face-to-face course. A large part of this is that you have to spend so much time researching curriculum for accuracy prior to publishing the material online. However, the main issue that adds to development time is your necessity for attention to detail. You have to be ultra specific. Think of publishing your online lesson and assessments as the first period of the day or the first time you teach a new lesson. In face-to-face you get to do it 4 or 5 times to perfect it that day, but online when you put something up, it needs to be almost perfect (shooting for perfection) the first time. You are building all your scaffolding into the lesson and laying out details to help eliminate student errors and misunderstanding when they are working from home.

# Teaching Online Courses: Strategies and Resources

## **Strategies (continued)**

### **3. Feedback:**

When working with a student face-to-face you can walk around, glance over their shoulder and make comments like “you might want to be more specific on that sentence” or “double check number 12, you still have some work to do.” But when you are online, there are very little formative assessments. So, you might consider getting into the habit of treating all assignments as if they are formative. When a student turns in something, write all your feedback with the intention that a student is going to redo the missed questions. Then make sure you set up your assessments so they can.

### **4. Engage without Handouts:**

Many teachers new to online teaching begin by trying to recreate what’s familiar. A lot of people will try to scan in former handouts that they used, or record 20-30 minute lectures they have done for years (5 minutes tops for videos), or have straight textbook and quiz lessons. Since you are online and all of your students have access to a computer, take advantage of the tremendous amount of resources and free Web 2.0 tools available on the Internet. Use engaging material, stuff that you have wanted to use or heard of others doing but couldn’t quite implement before because there were so many roadblocks in a traditional class.

For a video introduction to these tools and strategies You can check out this [2 Minute Ed Tech Talk](http://wetoku.com/Simplek12/2n9) (<http://wetoku.com/Simplek12/2n9>) I recorded with [SimpleK12](http://www.simplek12.com/) (<http://www.simplek12.com/>) highlighting some of these points.

# Connect Your Students Globally Via Skype

*Editor's note: Because there are so many academically valuable things that can be accomplished through Skype (<http://www.skype.com>), I thought it warranted having a section devoted to the use of Skype in schools. This section written by Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano.*



In our flat and interconnected world, we owe it to our students to teach them the skills that will allow them to communicate and collaborate with others from around the globe. These connections can and should go beyond an initial “Hello” with inquiries about the weather, language, customs and food traditions. Students can use connections to collect and analyze authentic data, learn first hand from eye witness experiences and subject area experts. Many free tools are available to bring collaboration partners together to learn with and from. Educators are able to transform the way they teach and learn about our world. Students are taking learning off the pages of a textbook, are actively engaged and are shaping their own learning experience in the process.

Skype, a video conference program, is one of these tools. Never has it been easier to connect across distances with friends, family, colleagues, peers, eye witnesses, and subject area experts.

## **What do you need to connect your students via Skype?**

- Computer
- Internet Connection
- Downloaded [Skype](#) program
- Webcam (usually has an integrated multidirectional microphone)
- Microphone (if not integrated with webcam or if higher audio quality desired)
- LCD projector (optional, but highly recommended)

# Connect Your Students Globally Via Skype

## **Connection Partners**

There is an infinite amount of possibilities and opportunities to find a connection partner. From your students' own family members, local acquaintances, to educators and students from around the world, authors, scientists, business people or friends of friends. How do you connect to them though?

Don't be shy...ask! When you meet someone in person or online, think how their "expertise" could relate to skills, facts, concepts, a lesson or unit you are teaching in class. Be on the lookout for already established collaboration projects. Take advantage of an already established network of interested contacts and the projects' established procedures and process. Start building your own PLN (Personal Learning Network). Cultivate your PLN through blogging, tweeting or becoming a member on selective Nings. Surrounding yourself virtually by selectively choosing users who will become your potential pool of connection partners increases your chances of finding a planned collaboration or a just-in-time connection when needed. Depending on your learning goals, choose people from different subject areas, geographic locations, language speakers, grade levels, etc. Once you have grown your PLN, it is easy to give them a "shout-out" call for a participation in a project, connecting for a collaborative task or to gather specific information.

## **Skyping for the first time?**

I would suggest to set up a test skype with your connection partner WITHOUT students present before you skype WITH your students the first time. Nothing is more nerve wrecking than to have a classroom full of students and NOTHING is happening on the screen.

Do a quick test skype to check that both partners' computers are configured correctly and audio/video is working. Also let your students know that technology is not fail proof. Have a backup plan, in case your call does not go through or your Internet connection is down. I also would recommend splitting your class into two groups a few days before the actual planned Skype call and sending one of the groups to another room in your school with an assistant or other teacher in order to practice skyping with each other.



# Connect Your Students Globally Via Skype

## **Skyping for the first time? (continued)**


Having the class practice with each other is a great way to give everyone a chance to be in front of the camera, get the giggles out and practice speaking clearly. Set up one or two “hot seats” directly in front of the webcam. This helps your connection partner focus on what you are saying and makes it more personal than if the entire class is on the screen and it is hard to see who is speaking. It also cuts down on students speaking out of turn, which makes it even harder to follow along on the other side of the connection. Practice how the change in “hot seats” will occur and how to transition between two speakers, etc. It is also a wonderful opportunity to reflect on appropriate behavior guidelines and technical issues such as lighting, background movement, etc.

## **Preparing your students for the Skype Call**

Ask yourselves what you would share with a connection partner about your school, city or country? Remember that something very common to you, could be considered exotic by someone else. What questions will you ask your connection partner? What knowledge do you already have of their location/culture/etc. Take the time to locate their city and country on a map. Prepare interview questions, practice with your students to help guide and keep an interesting conversation flowing during the call. Role play with them to learn how to answer unexpected questions. Figure out if you want to collect authentic data from the schools that your are connecting with, in order to work with spreadsheets, analyze and compare data and create graphs later on. What kind of data, related to your curriculum are you looking for?

# Connect Your Students Globally Via Skype

## Preparing your students for the Skype Call (continued)



### Preparing for a Skype Call

We will connect with a  School  Teacher  Expert  
In City, State, Country: \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions Starters**

- \*We learned about...what do you...?
- \*Can you describe... to us?
- \*How is...like...?
- \*How do you feel about...?
- \*Can you explain to us...?
- \*Can you tell us about an experience you had with...?
- \*Have you ever...?

**Question #1**

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**Question #2**

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**Question #3:**

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Remember, no questions that you can answer with a yes or no.

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# Connect Your Students Globally Via Skype

## Preparing your students for the Skype Call (continued)




### Where in the USA?

We will connect with someone in \_\_\_\_\_ (City) \_\_\_\_\_ (State).

State Capital  
\_\_\_\_\_

Weather Conditions?  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
mark the spot

Estimate the distance (miles)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Time Zone


EST  CST  MST  PST



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Image licensed under CC image taken from the [English language Wikipedia](#) \*It was created by [User:Wapcaplet](#) in [Inkscape](#), derivative work: [itruscott](#)

# Connect Your Students Globally Via Skype

## Preparing your students for the Skype Call (continued)




### Where in the World?

We will connect with someone in \_\_\_\_\_ (City) \_\_\_\_\_ (Country)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Continent)

Country's Capital  
\_\_\_\_\_


Time Zone  
\_\_\_\_\_

Season of the Year  
 Spring  Summer  
 Fall  Winter

  
mark the spot

Native Language Spoken  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other Comment  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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Map Image licensed under Creative Commons The map was made by [User:Vardion](#) and adapted by [User:E Pluribus Anthony](#) for Wikipedia.



# Connect Your Students Globally Via Skype

## Preparing your students for the Skype Call (continued)

Consider having a “Show and Tell” item to share in order to spark a story or questions. Maybe you could establish a Skype ritual, like singing a song or playing a game of “Rock, Paper, Scissors”. Have a digital camera and/or flip camera ready, so you can document your video conference connection. You can also record the Skype conversation with a software program such as Ecamm (mac) or Pamela (PC). It is a good habit to send a reminder email the day before or the morning of the Skype call to your connection contact. It might be good to mention something like “Looking forward to talking to you in “x” number of hours. This could help prevent timezone confusions. It is just an additional precaution to avoid waiting with a room full of students and no one answers your call on the other end. Assign different jobs to as many students as possible in order to engage students during the Skype call beyond having to listen to the conversation. Take a look at the handouts for possible jobs and their descriptions. It is helpful to create a list of the order your students will be coming up to the webcam/microphone and make this list visible for all students in the class to see.

Calendar	• Responsible for adding scheduled Skype calls to embedded calendar on classroom blog.
Greet	• Greets the partner school. Makes initial introduction. Talks about geographic location.
Share	• Shares something special about school, city, state or country. Could be song, dance, souvenir, project, sports team, etc.
Q & A	• Asks specific questions for data collection, responsible for keeping conversation fluid.
Photographer	• Responsible for documenting connection via still images.
Videographer	• Responsible for documenting connection via movie clips
Backchannel Writers	• Documenting conversation, questions, answers and classroom happenings during the connection with backchannel chat
Backchannel Cleanup	• Responsible to save backchannel chat as word document and cleaning up duplicate comments and mark questionable statements to be verified.
Blogger-Skype	• Live blogs Skype connection on classroom blog.
Blogger-Word Problem	• Creates a Math word problem from data, questions and answers from the Skype connection.
Google Earth	• Finds location of Skype partner and measures distance in miles and kilometers.
Google Maps	• Responsible for adding placemark of Skype partners' location to embedded map on classroom blog.
Info Station	• Responsible to search for any data questions on the spot. Verifies questionable information too.
Data Entry	• Responsible for entering data collected into embedded form on classroom blog. Ex. Distance in miles/km, temperature in F/C, etc.
Elapsed Time	• Responsible of noting time skype call started & ended as well as calculating elapsed time.

# Connect Your Students Globally Via Skype

## During the Skype Call

When the moment of the Skype call has arrived. Get your students situated in the classroom and remind them of proper etiquette, your overall goals for the Skype call as well as their job responsibilities. Make sure your webcam is mounted properly and pointing to share the faces of your students (not the top of their heads or the ceiling). Have your “hot seats” positioned in front of the webcam/microphone. The “other side” will be able to focus better on one or a few people rather than a larger crowd. Re-enforce the rule of only one person speaking at a time. It gets very confusing if several people are speaking at once for your listeners/viewers. If you have several students who will be talking, make sure they vacate and take the hot seat quietly and with the least amount of movement. The background crowd needs to move as little as possible, as that can mean a major distraction. Briefly introduce yourself and your class to your “visitors” and have the first student take over the conversation from that point on.

Photo Tip: Take photos of your students faces, general area, and students with the projector screen and the Skype screen with the other school in the background. Also take images from behind the students with only the back of their heads showing in case of media release issues.

## What about assessment of learning?

After you have witnessed a class of students connect via video conferencing and felt the hustle and bustle in their classroom as they get ready for their assigned “jobs”, connect and talk to others from around the world as if they were friends from their neighborhood...

...you know that your students are learning...

...you see motivation in their eyes...

... you feel excitement in the air...

you hear them say: “How cool”, “That was awesome” or “When are we skypeing again?” ...

...you also know about the different skills your students are being exposed to and are practicing while skypeing...

# Connect Your Students Globally Via Skype

## What about assessment of learning? (continued)

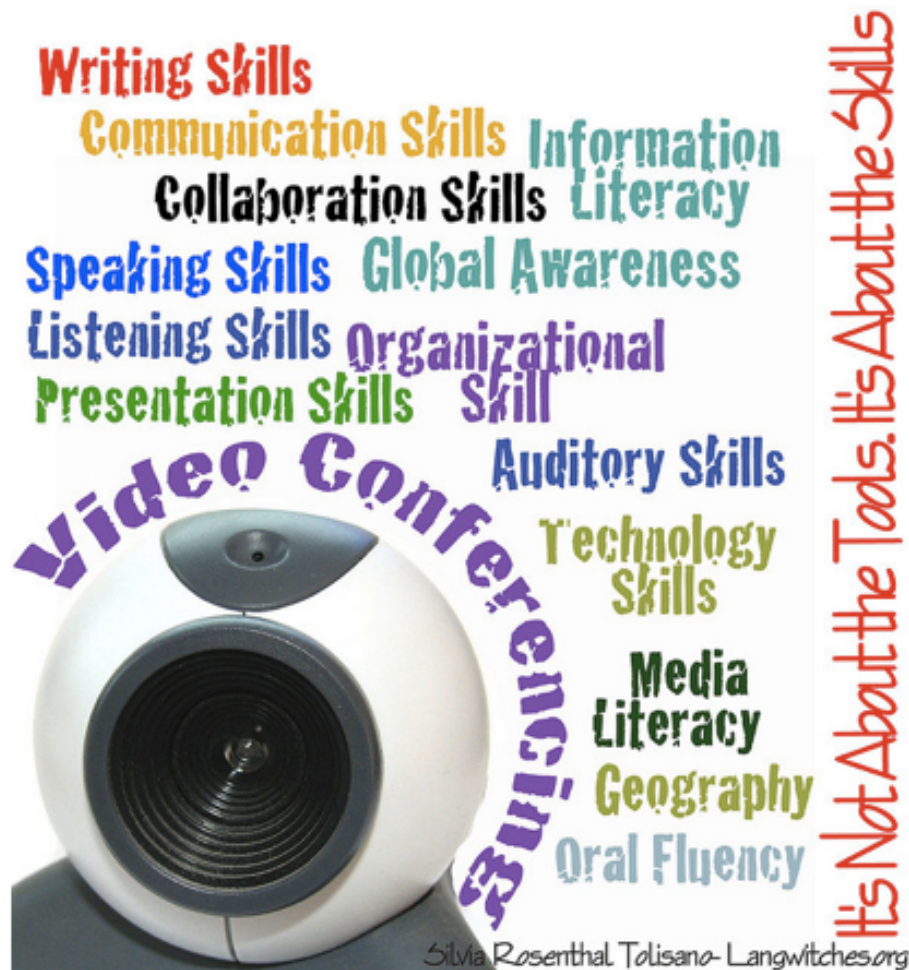
...you know that you are helping them learn differently than from a textbook...

...you know that you are preparing them for a work environment where they are expected to collaborate with colleagues and teams who do not live in the same country, nor continent and operate in a different time zone...

...you know that you are exposing them to a world, people and cultures beyond their horizon...

...you know that you are broadening their perspectives, tolerance for someone who is different...

...but... what about formal assessment and documentation of this kind of learning?





# Connect Your Students Globally Via Skype

## What about assessment of learning? (continued)

It is important that the pioneers who are integrating video conferencing into their teaching toolbox assess and document student learning. It is equally important to start sharing these assessments and successes of video conferencing in the classroom. Too many school districts are blocking tools such as Skype. Too many administrators are not supporting their teachers in their pioneer work of giving the words classroom, classmates and primary resources a new meaning and a new form. Too many educators are still too afraid to venture beyond the four walls of their classroom.



## We Skyped Today!

We connected with a  School  Teacher  Expert in  
City, State, Country: \_\_\_\_\_

What information can you  
share with your classmates,  
teacher, parents?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I was surprised to learn:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What would you like to  
investigate further? :  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My Job Today  
was:

- Collaboration-Coordinator
- Calendar
- Greeter
- Share
- Q & A
- Photographer
- Videographer
- BackChannel
- BC Clean-up
- Google Maps
- Google Earth
- Blogger
- Data Form
- Timer
- Info Station

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# Connect Your Students Globally Via Skype

## **More Resources for Skyping with Students**

There are many resources available on the web for teachers interested and ready to upgrade their teaching practices to include video conferencing in their teaching practice. The best way to get started is to just jump in. Find a mentor who has skyped before and get your feet wet.

### Resources:

- Skype- <http://skype.com>
- “Assessment of Learning with Skype” Handouts- <http://langwitches.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Skype-call-learning-call.pdf>
- Around the World with 80 Schools -<http://aroundtheworldwith80schools.net/>
- Langwitches’ Delicious Bookmarks tagged “Skype\_in\_classroom” [http://www.delicious.com/langwitches/skype\\_in\\_classroom](http://www.delicious.com/langwitches/skype_in_classroom)
- Ecomm- <http://www.ecamm.com/mac/callrecorder/>
- Pamela- <http://www.pamela.biz/en/>

*Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano was born in Germany, raised in Argentina and is living in the United States. She holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Spanish with a Minor in International Studies and a Masters in Education with an emphasis in Instructional Technology.*

# Blogging in Elementary School Classrooms

*Editor's Note: Blogging with elementary school students can present its own unique challenges. Therefore, I invited elementary school teacher and former district technology specialist, Lee Kolbert to share her knowledge on the topic.*

Blogging with elementary students can be an extremely rewarding experience. With their own blogs, students can have a place for publishing their own writing; creating authentic learning spaces where every child can contribute and engage in conversations that point back to his or her original post. Just imagine how powerful that can make a child feel, to have others contributing to HIS/HER conversation! Yes, even small children can do this.

In my experience, the most successful elementary student blogs begin with a [single class blog](http://weblogs.pbspaces.com/mrskolbert/) (<http://weblogs.pbspaces.com/mrskolbert/>) which contains posts by the teacher or “guest posts” by the students. With the target audience being the students and their parents, the teacher typically writes brief, relevant posts that appeal to her audience. In my class, I tell my students’ parents that everything Internet-related is a shared experience; whether it be from school or home. So, if students are reading or commenting on my class blog from home, I will assume they are with their parents or are doing it with the permission of their parents. I believe this shows parents that I respect their judgment and boundaries. It also allows them to feel comfortable in their knowledge of what their children are doing online per my directions.

[Highlighting classroom activities](#), providing additional [curricula resources](#), [pushing parents’ thinking](#), showcasing [students’ work](#) and modeling and sharing [best practices for blogging](#) are all excellent fodder for class blogs. By sharing in the collective enthusiasm of the class blog as work is published and comments are received, students share the excitement together and will begin to brainstorm ideas for when they finally have their own spaces. One of the best blogging lessons I did early this year was on commenting. I used a [paper blog commenting activity](#) that was shared with me by good friend, Karen McMillan. Students create paper blogs and comment on them using sticky notes. Since almost all blogs require something in the email field when leaving comments, this gave my students lots of practice using my non-flexible directives. This is that no last names or personal information is revealed and that all email addresses would be [firstname@example.com](#). Just as 555- is a fictitious phone number prefix used in television and movies, [@example.com](#) is a [fictitious domain](#).

# Blogging in Elementary School Classrooms

At one time or another almost all parents will express some concern regarding their child's safety; and rightfully so. It behooves us to spend some time with parents to explain/demonstrate what we are planning and most importantly, why. The perceived risks (<http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/internet-crimes/>) of posting students' images, videos and work is debatable ([http://dangerouslyirrelevant.org/2007/01/the\\_one\\_percent.html](http://dangerouslyirrelevant.org/2007/01/the_one_percent.html)) and much has been written about this (<http://macmomma.blogspot.com/2010/11/scott-mcleod-s-recent-post-in.html>). What works for one teacher may not work for another, but I have been successful in sharing previous online work with parents and explaining what will and will NOT be published. I also let parents know that if they are ever uncomfortable with something their child has posted, or something posted on behalf or about their child, I will remove it immediately; no questions asked. My school district has a standard consent form (<http://macmomma.blogspot.com/2010/11/scott-mcleod-s-recent-post-in.html>) on which I add "including but not limited to blogs, podcasts, videos and videoconferences." I also let parents know that if they choose not to sign it, their children will still participate as much as possible on paper but the work will not be published online.

I start whetting the children's appetites for their own blogs a few weeks before I'm ready to give them theirs. Daily interjections like, "Here is something you might want to write about on your own blog" and "What kind of ending do you think would encourage people to add a comment?" stimulate students to start writing notes to themselves, lest they forget when the time comes.

When my students have a clear understanding of online blogging privacy (no last names, no photos of anyone else, no real names of anyone else, no names of school or teams, no email addresses, etc.) they are ready to write their first posts. I use Kidblog.org (<http://kidblog.org>) because it's easy for me to set up and maintain, it's free and it's simple for even young students to use. I always make sure that post and comment moderation is turned on, so nothing goes live until I approve it. Teachers should take extra care when approving outside comments because sometimes email addresses or websites are included in the comments. One nice feature about Kidblog.org is that you can edit the comments. I always remove email addresses and preview websites before allowing them to remain in the comments.

# Blogging in Elementary School Classrooms

Getting students to write on their blogs is as simple (and sometimes as difficult) as getting them to write on paper. For most students, writing online with the knowledge that “the world may be reading” is strong motivation to write more and use extra effort. Soliciting comments for their blogs, is another story. As an adult blogger myself, it has taken me years of blogging before cultivating an audience. Even then, many posts go untouched by commenters. I use every resource I have to generate comments for my students. I assign each student a blog-buddy whose job it is to read each other’s posts and write thoughtful comments. I also encourage parents to comment and send out links to family members. Many parents don’t know how to comment or send out a link. You can create a screencast for free using [Screencast-O-Matic](http://www.screencast-o-matic.com/) (<http://www.screencast-o-matic.com/>) or [Jing](http://www.techsmith.com/jing/) (<http://www.techsmith.com/jing/>). Your class blog is a good place to post about commenting and embed your screencast. Parents can look back at the post as a reference.

I also use my own social network of educators to solicit comments. I choose one or two posts and send the links out to other educators in my online network via Twitter. There are loads of Twitter lists online and [Richard Byrne](http://www.freetech4teachers.com/) (<http://www.freetech4teachers.com/>) has some of the best. If you are new to creating an online educator network of your own, his list of [Classroom Teachers on Twitter](http://twitter.com/#%21/rmbyrne/classroom-teachers) (<http://twitter.com/#%21/rmbyrne/classroom-teachers>) is a great place to begin. There is also a wonderful movement, put together by WMChamberlain called [Comments4Kids](http://comments4kids.blogspot.com/) (<http://comments4kids.blogspot.com/>). This site hosts a list of teachers and their blogs, along with great resources. If you are looking to hook up with other classes who are also blogging and creating BlogBuddies, this is a terrific resource for you. Likewise, if you are on Twitter and you send out a link to a student’s blog and add the hashtag [#comments4kids](#), you are likely to get comments from educators like you and me hoping to help young authors stay motivated.



# Blogging in Elementary School Classrooms

Like all bloggers, your students will start to see a pattern of which types of posts help them find their voice and those that gain the most attention. By prompting students, you can guide them towards deeper writing. Depending on your blog settings (if they can see each other's posts), they will learn much from reading each other's take on the same subjects. If left to their own ideas, I've found most of my students will publish newsletter type articles. They post about school (<http://kidblog.org/MrsKolbertsClass2011/Mariana14/the-best-school-in-the-world/>) and animals (<http://kidblog.org/MrsKolbertsClass2011/Sammi7/i-love-dogs/>). Once in a while, a student will reveal something in writing that she may not have expressed otherwise. Lily's post on "Bullies" generated 34 comments (<http://kidblog.org/MrsKolbertsClass2011/lily79/bullies/>). She told me that she never knew there were so many people who understood!

When the school year ends, I close commenting and prevent new posts by changing students' passwords. I do let the children know that their posts and comments are still there and they can return to see those conversations anytime they like simply by clicking a link. Previous students have shared their favorite memories of my class being that they had their own blogs. Many have continued on to create their own and it warms my heart when they visit our current blogs and leave their comments... and so the conversations continue.

*Editor's note: In addition to KidBlog, for more student blogging tools, please see the elementary school, middle school, and ESL/ELL resources sections.*

# Using Technology in Alternative Education

## Introduction

My name is Beth Still and I have taught in an alternative education high school in western Nebraska for nearly six years. The majority of the students who attend the alternative school where I teach have been identified as being at-risk for dropping out due to a variety of academic, social, and cultural reasons. They are square pegs who have spent the vast majority of their school years being crammed into round holes.

## Technology in Alternative Education Settings

One of the hallmarks of many alternative education schools is smaller class sizes and my school is no exception. I have always had more computers than students. A few years ago I decided I needed to start making better use of the technology that was available to my students. I started learning about blogs, wikis, Moodle, social networking, and Google Apps. I wanted to figure out how I could incorporate these types of web tools in my classroom to help connect my students to the world. I am fortunate to work at a school that encourages its teachers to think outside of the box and to use web tools to help engage students.

One of the areas that we pay particular attention to at my school is forging meaningful relationships with our students. One of the ways we do this is by getting to know them beyond the classroom. I set up a MySpace account for the sole purpose of creating another avenue to communicate with my students. I found that quite a few of them appreciated having a space outside of school to talk to me about issues that were bothering them. It not only helped me gain a deeper understanding into the lives of my current students, but it also helped me keep in touch with them after they graduated. Two students that dropped out came back to school after conversations they had with me on [MySpace](#) and Facebook. The student that I connected with on MySpace graduated and went on to college where he is majoring in Criminal Justice. The other student wrote on my Facebook wall asking how to come back to school is doing well and expected to graduate in the spring.

# Using Technology in Alternative Education

Teachers and students at my school are encouraged to use technology to get organized and communicate with each other. At the beginning of this school year we started using Google Apps for Education. This has allowed us to collaborate and communicate with each other and with students better than ever before. Students are able to connect their Google Calendar to their mobile phone then have text reminders sent to them to help them remember everything from the due dates of assignments to parent-teacher conferences. Both teachers and students enjoy having Google chat open during class. My students use the chat to privately message me when they have a question, but do not want to ask in front of everyone. Teachers have started using Google Docs to share ideas about strategies we use that work with our students. We have also started using Google Docs to share ideas before staff meetings. Being able to store documents in the cloud as opposed to on our server has made life much easier for everyone. We can work from anywhere as long as we have access to the Internet.

Teaching in a small school where I only have ten to twelve students at a time has some distinct advantages when it comes to incorporating technology. My students understand that when I want to try something new we will dive in head first and I will tweak the lesson or project along the way as needed. Since I have such small classes it is easy for me to change directions quickly when the need arises. Small class sizes also helped convince my administration that we needed to loosen the restrictions on our Internet filter. Six years ago our policy called for our filter to block nearly everything. As it became more apparent that our policy was too aggressive, we made some major changes. Now our filter only blocks sites which we are required to block according to [law](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/cipa.html) (<http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/cipa.html>).

Another area we emphasize is written and oral communication. Web tools have helped us expand our audience from beyond our classroom to around the world. During the 2008 elections my students replied to questions I asked on our class blog. I invited my online colleagues to reply to my students and engage them in a deeper conversation. There were people from around the world who took me up on my request. In the matter of a few days my students had a global audience with whom they were discussing world events.

# Using Technology in Alternative Education

Another way that we help our students connect to people outside of their classroom walls is through the use of [backchannel chats](#). A backchannel chat is a chat room set up by a teacher where students go to discuss a particular topic. For example, I have set up a backchannel chat during videos. During the video, I facilitate the discussion and ask questions that will help get a discussion going. My role is to make sure the discussion does not end and that the students are focused on the topic.

Technology has brought many great opportunities to my students, but it has presented some challenges for both students and staff. While many of our students have the latest cell phones and mp3 players they rarely have anything beyond the most basic computer skills. We have discovered that we must teach skills such as working in multiple windows, creating folders, attaching files to emails. I know in many places students are called on to teach teachers how to use web tools, but that is definitely not the case with my alternative education students. Most of my students enjoy using technology, but it takes them a long time to get to the point where they are comfortable using it.

One of my favorite quotes is from Chris Lehmann, principal of the Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia. He said, “Technology should be like oxygen: ubiquitous, necessary, and invisible.” My alternative school is on the right path to achieving this goal.



# Social Media for Educators

*Editor's Note: Steven Anderson is best known as @web2oclassroom on Twitter. He is a technology integration specialist for Stokes County, North Carolina Schools. He has presented at numerous notable education and social media conferences including ISTE and 140 Characters conferences.*

For a short video introduction to Social Media watch Social Media in Plain English (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpIOClX1jPE>)

I began using social media over 2 years ago as a way to communicate more quickly and effectively with my teachers. At the time, I was an Instructional Technologist for a very, small and rural district. To travel from one school to another might take me an hour. And since I was over 19 schools I had to get creative with the ways that I shared resources with my teachers. I was finding all sorts of great websites, lesson plan ideas, and more for teachers but had not found a great way to share. I had done email, newsletters, even a website of links, and it seemed that none of it was working.

I had heard about this site called Twitter. I had actually used it for a few months and quit because I hadn't seen a purpose for it. I was following mostly random people and thought what most people think when they hear the word Twitter. That it is a place where people ramble on about what they are eating or to be just really narcissistic. And I had quit. But then it dawned on me. I could use Twitter to share the resources with my teachers. If it was something they were interested in they could click the link to learn more and if it was not something for them they could skip it. We had also learned all about RSS so they could subscribe to my feed without joining Twitter but still keep up with all the posts.

I would share a few resources a day. I knew there were good people out there who were doing the same thing as me but I had to find them. I did a quick Google search and came across a great wiki called [Twitter4Teachers](http://twitter4teachers.pbworks.com). On this site there are over 40 categories of educators, each with a list of people, their location and their Twitter name. So I picked a few from each category, some close by, others in different parts of the world, added my name and almost instantly my Personal Learning Network began to grow. (<http://twitter4teachers.pbworks.com>)

# Social Media for Educators

Social Media transformed the way I teach and the way I learn. Education can be isolating. Depending on your situation, where you teach, the other teachers in your building, the leadership, etc, it is easy to get in a rut and begin to doubt your ability to teach. It happened to me many times when I was in the classroom. But through the use of social media, educators from across the country and the globe can connect to learn, share and grow from one another.

As I mentioned before through the use of Twitter my Personal Learning Network (PLN) began to grow. My PLN is my network of educators that I learn from and share with. They are people, some I have met face-to-face, some I have not. They live close by across the country and on the other side of the world. They are people that I can ask questions of, get ideas from and collaborate with on various projects. They are my network of people that gets bigger and bigger each day.

PLN's existed long before social media. The teachers that you collaborate with in your building and district are a PLN. But when you take the same ideas of collaboration, sharing, learning and growing online you exponentially expand the possibilities for those things. I never would have been able bring students in from other parts of the world in to the classrooms I work in without the use of social media. Nor would I be able to meet so many amazing educators doing really great things in classrooms all over.

## **Getting Started:**

You might be asking yourself where do I start? You want to connect with other educators but need some ideas on how it will all work. Here are some steps to get you started.

1) Join Twitter. I train lots and lots of teachers to get started with Twitter and how they can better use it for not only resource sharing but for their own professional development. I created a [Livebinder](#) with over 150 different resources for getting started. Take a week, a month, however long you need and read through all the information there. Start thinking about how you might use it. (You can also check out this [open course](#) to get started with Twitter.)

# Social Media for Educators

## Getting Started (continued):

2) Once you get an account set up be sure to visit [Twitter4Teachers](#) and add your information to the appropriate area or areas. And look around, and find some new people to follow. Before you follow them check out their profile and their Tweets. When was the last time they tweeted? Last hour or last month. What have they been tweeting about? Pick and choose. You don't have to follow everyone all at once. Find a few and start there.

3) Twitter is often described as a river. Some like to just sit on the bank and watch the information flow by. Some like to get their feet wet and add something every now and again. Then there are some who get in their raft and brave the rapids full force. The choice is yours on how you want to be. There is no right way or wrong way. I do suggest though that you will learn so much more from connecting with people. After all it is social media. Ask questions, comment on blog posts. Engage with people. Grow your network.

4) Check out the [Educator's PLN Ning](#). (<http://edupln.com/>) This is a great site for educators who want to have conversation long than 140 characters. There you will find groups for just about every subject area, technology idea, and grade level (and they tell people that if there isn't a group there to fit your needs, start one!). There are also forums to get questions answered and places to start and engage in conversation. ([Classroom 2.0](#) (<http://www.classroom20.com/>) is a similar site that has been around for a while.)

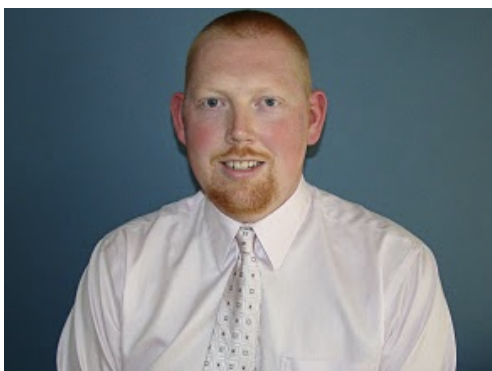
5) Once you get a feel for how Twitter works, grow a little bit of following, have a better understanding of how you will use social media for your own professional development, you might want to look into some Twitter chats. One of the main one's for educators is #edchat. Taking place each Tuesday at 12pm EST and 7pm EST educators discuss a range of topics, each voted on by the participants. Participating is as easy as following the hashtag and jumping in. You can read [this post](#) to learn more about #edchat and watch [this video](#) (<http://screenr.com/iCO>) to learn more about how to keep up.

Take as much or as little time as you need to learn this stuff. If you ask my wife, I spend too much time. Finding a balance will be something you will have to discover on your own. But be sure to find one. Some people are plugged in all day, others for just a few moments each day. The point is to plug in, engage and learn, share and grow with educators from around the world.

# About the Authors

Just who are these people anyway?

## Steven Anderson



Steven Anderson holds a [Bachelors of Science in Middle Grades Mathematics and Science Education](#) from [Western Carolina University](#) and a [Master of Arts In Education In Instructional Technology](#) from [East Carolina University](#). He is currently persuing an Add-On Licsenure in Administration from [Appalachian State University](#). Steven began teaching in 2003 the [Gateway Prep. Academy](#) at the [Kennedy Learning Center](#) in the [Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools](#) in Winston-Salem, NC. There he worked with 7th and 8th grade students who were more than 2 years off of grade level in the hopes they could return to their regular school to be

successful. He then moved to [Clemmons Middle School](#) in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools where he taught 7th and 8th grade Science for 5 years. He was part of a pilot program that "looped" his 7th and 8th grade students. While at Clemmons he served as Team Leader, Grade-Level Chairman, Department Chairman, School Improvement Team Member and School Improvement Team Chairman. He left Clemmons Middle to serve as the District Instructional Technologist for [Stokes County Schools](#). There, he was responsible for all technology professional development programs in the district. In January, 2010, he returned to Clemmons Middle School as the Instructional Technologist, working with teachers and students on technology integration. Currently he is a District Instructional Technologist, working with district and school administrators on how to harness the power of technology to enhance learning.

He has been a presenter at several area technology conferences and meetings including [NCTIES](#), North Carolina's largest educational technology conference. Most recently he was selected to be a panelist at the [#140 Conference](#) in Los Angeles, organized by Vonage founder, [Jeff Pulver](#), where he discussed the impact of Twitter and other social media on education. As part of the conference he was one of the first recipient of the [NOW Award](#), recognizing the "Movers and Shakers" in the world of Social Media. He returned to the #140 Conference in 2010 as a featured speaker, this time in New York City. Also in 2009 Steven was voted the [Most Influential Tweeter](#) as part of the Annual [Edublog awards](#) and was a co-recipient of the [Most Influential Series of Tweets](#) for his part in helping to create #edchat, a weekly education discussion on Twitter that boosts over 500 weekly participants.



# About the Authors

Just who are these people anyway?

## Adam Bellow



Adam Bellow, Founder and President of eduTeacher, has had an interest in technology since he was in grade school. Adam began his career in education as an Assistant English Teacher at a High School for students with learning disabilities in New York City. After earning a Master's Degree in both General and Special Education at Hunter College, where he taught a graduate level course on integrating technology into the special education classroom, Adam became an English teacher at a High School on Long Island for several years. Then his two passions collided- Technology and Education as he became a Technology Training Specialist for a school district on Long Island. Currently, Adam works as the Director of Educational Technology for the College Board Schools. This job allows Adam to work with educational leaders, teachers, and students to help them infuse technology successfully in the classroom. Adam was recognized in 2010 as an Emerging Leader by ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) as well as a finalist for 2010 Totally Wired Teacher of Year. Adam is happily married and has an amazing baby boy and another son on the way.

Adam enjoys participating and presenting at conferences around the world and has had the distinct privilege of having been asked to speak at ISTE, NECC, FETC, ICE, TECH Forum, TSETC, NYSCATE, BOCES, ASSET and many more. For information about having Adam speak as a Keynote or Spotlight conference presenter please contact him here. Presentations can be tailored to fit any audience, but areas of expertise are Web Tools, Digital Literacy, Educational Technology Best Practices, SmartBoard integration, Social Media in the Classroom, and Motivational Speaking. You can see clips and examples of recent presentations here. Adam's presentations are carefully planned, engaging, and packed with current information and a good sense of humor.

# About the Authors

Just who are these people anyway?

## Richard Byrne



Richard Byrne is a high school social studies teacher in Western Maine, USA. When not teaching he's busy writing the award-winning blog Free Technology for Teachers. Free Technology for Teachers received the Edublog Award for Best Resource Sharing Blog in 2008 and 2009 and has been nominated for the same award in 2010. Richard was nominated in 2009 and 2010 for an Edublog Life Time Achievement Award. He was a finalist for the 2010 ACTEM Educator of the Year Award. Richard is a Google Certified Teacher.

Richard is a frequent contributor to the School Library Journal. He is also a contributor to a forthcoming book about technology for school administration. You can find Richard presenting at conferences all over North America where he often makes weird faces while talking about his favorite free technology resources for teachers.

When not teaching, writing, or presenting, Richard enjoys fly fishing, hiking, and volunteering at Harvest Hills Animal Shelter.

*This eBook was Richard's idea, but it couldn't have come together without all of the contributors who not only wrote for the eBook, but also are an active part of Richard's personal learning network.*

# About the Authors

Just who are these people anyway?

## George Couros



My name is George Couros, and I am currently a school principal at [Forest Green School and Connections for Learning](#), located in Stony Plain, Alberta, Canada. The schools are from ages K-12, and I love working with kids of all ages. I am passionate about distributed leadership within my school, and believe that creating a collaborative environment with all stakeholders, will help to ensure that we meet the best needs of all children.

Personally, I am someone who is passionate about all of the things that I do. I believe that we must continuously “sharpen the saw” by taking part in other pursuits, so I am actively involved as a fitness instructor with [World Health Edmonton](#), along with being an [ACAC](#) Basketball Official with the Edmonton Basketball Officials’ Association ([EBOA](#)). I love running and sports, and am a HUGE fan of the [Los Angeles Lakers](#). In fact, I have two dogs now that are named after a current and former Laker (Odom and Shaq). I do miss my dog [Kobe](#) who was my first pet ever ([miss you buddy](#)).

Music is also a passion of mine. If you are ever interested in hearing what I like, check out my [#georgegtunes](#) that I post on Twitter for the world to hear. The more well rounded we are as educators, I believe, the more our students will see us as real people that they can [connect](#) with in the classroom.

I am originally from the small town of [Humboldt, Saskatchewan](#) and my parents are originally immigrants from [Greece](#). I am the youngest of four, and my brother, [Dr. Alec Couros](#), is also in the field of education. We work closely together through our social networks to help build environments that best meet the needs of students in a continuously changing environment. I believe in the power of students, and that all of the children we can teach can be leaders if we help them find their passion. My parents came from a country that was going through a war and did not have the resources or same opportunities that we had for education. They stressed the importance of education for their kids, and are my inspiration in my career as an educator, as detailed in [this post](#) I guest wrote for another educator’s blog.

It is important to me that we always work to get the “best ideas” for our students, and I appreciate discussion when talking about meeting the needs of students with all stakeholders, especially that of students. I know that as principal, I am only a part of the learning process, and I work hard to give everyone the opportunities to become leaders in our school community.

# About the Authors

Just who are these people anyway?



Larry Ferlazzo teaches English Language Learners and mainstream students at Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento, California.

He writes a [popular resource sharing blog](#)

(<http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org>), and is the author of two books:

[Building Parent Engagement In Schools](#) and [English Language Learners: Teaching Strategies That Work](#). His third book, *Student Self-Motivation, Responsibility, Responsibility and Engagement: Practical Answers To Classroom Challenges*, will be published by Eye on Education in the spring of 2011.



# About the Authors

Just who are these people anyway?

## Lee Kolbert



I have been an educator in Palm Beach County, FL for 25 years. I spent 20 years as an elementary school teacher and five as a district technology program specialist. My primary focus as an administrator has been engaging teachers in new conversations to help them take that next step towards technology integration. Over the last year, teaching students directly began to pull at my heart, so I chose to return to teaching and am now once again a classroom teacher. Also a [blogger](#) and hockey mom, I love everything about bringing the benefits of social

networking to the classroom. I co-host a local cable TV show, [PalmBreeze CAFÉ](#). My segments focus on online tools useful for educators and the community.

I have also presented at various local and national conferences and have recently started consulting. Conference info can be found [here](#).

- Class Blog: <http://weblogs.pbspaces.com/mrskolbert/>
- PalmBreezeCAFÉ: <http://palmbreezutube.notlong.com>
- Twitter: [TeachaKidd](#)
- FaceBook: [Lee Kolbert](#)
- Skype: Teachakidd
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# About the Authors

Just who are these people anyway?



[Patrick Larkin](#) is the Principal of [Burlington High School](#) in Massachusetts where he is in his 14th year as a high school administrator and seventh as a building Principal.

Under his direction, Burlington High will become a 1:1 school next year.

[This initiative was recently highlighted in the Boston Sunday Globe.](#)

Patrick has also been featured in a recent article in [Converge Magazine](#) entitled [Principals Learn Through Social Media](#). In addition, he was asked to participate in the recent [140 Conference held in Boston as part of the Education Panel](#). Due to the talented staff and students at Burlington High, the school has been highlighted in a few other prominent publications in the last year, [including Edutopia](#) and [T.H.E. Journal](#).

Patrick is also an avid blogger and a proponent of social media to better engage teachers, students, and parents in the education process. [His blog](#) was recently nominated in the category of [Best School Administrator Blog in the 2010 Edublog Awards](#). In addition, he is a proud contributor to the Connected Principals Blog which was nominated in the category of Best Administrator Blog and Best Group Blog for the 2010 Edublog Awards.

Patrick is also honored to serve as an expert voice for [Powerful Learning Practice for leadership in schools](#).

“I have earned more learned more from my Personal Learning Network (PLN) in less than two years than I did in my previous decade in education,” says Larkin. “This is the most exciting time in history to be involved in education and I am enjoying every minute of it!”

Prior to serving as a school administrator, Patrick was a high school English teacher at [Nipmuc Regional High School](#) in Upton, MA. As an Assistant Principal at Nipmuc Regional, Patrick was named Assistant Principal of the Year in the state of Massachusetts. He also is a former Executive Board member in the [Massachusetts Secondary Schools Administrators Association](#) (MSSAA) and he recently completed a two year term as a member of the [New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Public Secondary Schools](#).

# About the Authors

Just who are these people anyway?

## Cory Plough



I teach Social Studies and Web 2.0 courses online at a large charter high school in Nevada. Over the years, I have begun to take on more and more jobs as they provide interesting opportunities in this new and changing education landscape. I have developed and facilitated courses for the State of Idaho's online professional development program. I have taught Beginning Online Teaching for Boise State's Education Technology

department. I teach high school social studies for both New Mexico and Connecticut's state online programs. I was also hired to work for the first ever GLBTQ online high school in the country.

My main goal as an online teacher is to individualize instruction for all of my online students and provide opportunities for a more personalized education experience.

In 2009, I completed my Masters in Education Technology at Boise State University.

# About the Authors

Just who are these people anyway?

## Beth Still



My name is Beth Still and I teach Social Studies in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. I am passionate about finding ways to help my students get engaged in learning again. So many of my students have been disengaged for so long that it is hard for them to get back on track. I believe that by creating a safe, welcoming environment it will help my students succeed.

I am a self-proclaimed edtech evangelist! I love finding Web 2.0 tools for my students to use that will help them express their creativity. I believe that by giving students options it empowers them and drives them to succeed. I use Skype and Twitter to help connect my students to the world. I am trying to teach my students how to collaborate using Google Docs. Many of the digital projects they complete are published on the web.

I am a huge proponent of professional networking. I learn new and exciting things from people in my PLN every day. Collaborating with other teachers in my PLN on various projects has been very rewarding.



# About the Authors

Just who are these people anyway?

## Kelly Tenkely



**Kelly Tenkely**

Specializing in Classroom Technology Integration

Educational Consulting  
Curriculum Design  
Professional Development  
Training

**Teaching History:** 1 year as a 2nd grade classroom teacher, 6 years as a k-5 technology specialist/teacher. 5 years as a technology integration specialist offering mentoring, training, and professional development.

**Current Work:** I am not in the classroom, you can learn more about that decision [here](#). I am now offering freelance technology training, social media consulting, professional development, curriculum design, and technology integration consulting, virtual classroom. If you are interested in working with me, you can contact me [here](#).

I wasn't always the computer geek I am today...I kind of fell into the computer teacher roll and found out that I love it and that I have a passion for technology (particularly Apple!!) who knew? My goal is to help teachers fall in love with technology the way that their students have. I believe that technology reaches students in a way that few other mediums can. It ignites a fire, a desire to learn, and gives them the ability to express themselves in meaningful ways. I have never had a student who didn't love my class...I am a good teacher but I am not THAT good, what they love is using technology to learn. So with that in mind, I set out to give teachers a resource where they could find easy-to-implement ideas for using technology in their own classrooms. I hope that iLearn Technology is a great resource for teachers but also that they would find even one piece of technology that they are passionate about. I have found in my own technology walk, all it took was one really great website ([www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)) and I was hooked. My belief is that technology meets students needs, engages them, and helps them to be the best learner they can be.

# About the Authors

Just who are these people anyway?

## Silvia Tolisano



My name is Silvia Tolisano. I was born in Germany, raised in Argentina and am living in the United States. I hold a Bachelor's Degree in Spanish with a Minor in International Studies and a Masters in Education with an emphasis in Instructional Technology.

If you're interested in reading more of Silvia's work, please visit her blog [LangWitches.org](http://LangWitches.org)

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