Subject #11: Technology

Project #100: Integrating Web 2.0 into the Classroom. This lesson is a general overview of Web 2.0 tools, including blogs, wikis, class internet homepages, class internet start pages, twitter, social bookmarks, podcasting, photo sharing, online docs, and online calendars. Every educational year, these tools become more and more integral to a thriving, effective class.

Higher-order thinking skills	Technology-specific	Subject Area/ Learning-specific	Standard: NETS-S
Assess value of theories, generalize from facts	*Internet, research, critical thinking*	*Research, problem-solving*	*5.a, 5.b, 5.c*

Grade level: K-8
Prior knowledge: Project 99: *Internet Basx*
Time required: Varies
Software required: Internet browser
Vocabulary: blog, digital citizen, wiki, social bookmarking, photo sharing, podcasts, plagiarism, digital footprint, twitter

Lesson Description

- A **digital citizen** refers to people who interact with others via "digital" tools such as blogs, email, webpages, wikis, twitter, social bookmarking, photo sharing, podcasts, online docs, and more. With that comes obligations:
  - o To treat others and their property with respect (for example, plagiarism—even undiscovered—is still immoral and illegal)
  - o To act in a responsible manner
  - o To look after your own security

  According to MIT's Henry Jenkins, children are natural information "hunter-gatherers", making them instinctive digital citizens.
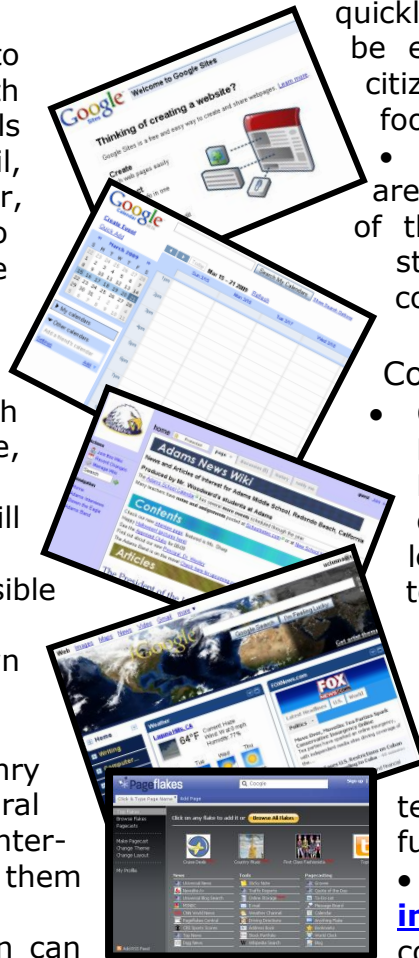- Because digital information can be copied and communicated so quickly and so widely, you need to be extra-careful. You, the digital citizen, leave a vast digital footprint.
- The hurdles to "going digital" are not a technical understanding of the tools but the hutzpah to step out of your zone of comfort, into the unknown.

Computer Activity

- Create a **classroom blog** (see Project 27: *Online blogs*). Blogging has quickly become one of the most effective learning tools in education today. It introduces students to new methods of communicating, improves their writing, and motivates them to find their voice. You ask students about it, they'll tell you—blogs make learning fun.
- Create a **classroom internet** (if you have a digital copy of this book, click the link to see mine)**.** When students log

onto the internet, invoke a start page with relevant information for them—news, weather, a To Do list, RSS feeds, search tools, email. Ask them what should be on it. Maybe they'd like sponge websites to fill extra minutes.
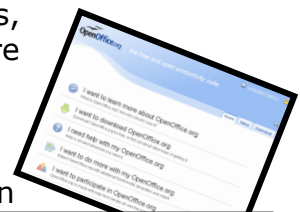
You decide. The class decides, but make it exciting! Start pages are seen by some as an outreach of the ever-more-popular social networking. You might like one of these three: http://www.google.com/ig, http://www.protopage.com or www.pageflakes.com. They both have a huge library of custom fields (called 'flakes' on Pageflakes) to individualize any home page.

- Want more? Build your own **classroom webpage**. Make it a learning portal open for business twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It will engage your students while facilitating authentic real-world activities. You can make a free page through Scholastic teacher.scholastic.com/homepagebuilder/index.htm , School Notes at www.schoolnotes.com/ , Webs (used to be FreeWebs—different name but still free) at www.webs.com/ or Google Sites at www.google.com/accounts/ServiceLogin?service=jotspot&passive=true&continue=http%3A%2F%2Fsites.google.com%2F .

- Create **online calendars** for students. These can replace the traditional planners each student carries with them to classes (and loses who knows where, which becomes a traumatic event in young lives). Create your own on Google Calendars with viewing privileges to
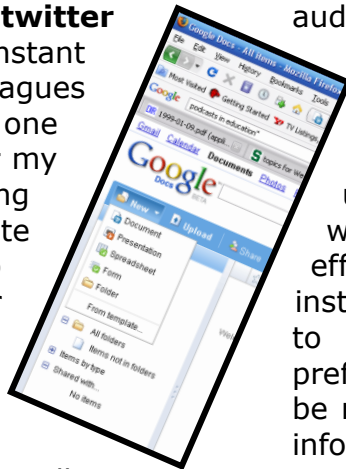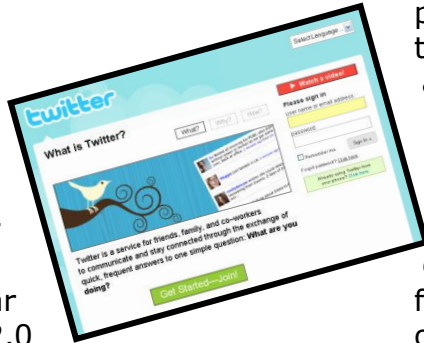
theirs. You'll see what they've included or forgotten.

- Create a **wiki—**what's a wiki? It's a web page or collection of pages designed to enable registered users to contribute or modify content. The most famous example is www.Wikipedia.com. Wikis can communicate school news, information on a research topic, terminology—whatever you want (see my fourth grade wiki here. I have one for each grade). One elementary school teacher and her students use it for studying and reviewing. For example, after teaching a lesson, her students go to the class wiki and summarize what they understood, making it easier to take in the information. Then, when test time arrives, they work collaboratively in the wiki to study. During this process they all add their notes, correct what's wrong, and review. For more examples, go to www.wikispaces.com/site/for/teachers for free wiki space.

- Set up a **social bookmarking** account to enable students to save links to webpages they use for research, sports, music, and share them with others. Imagine the vast database you can compile by having students investigate a

topic—say the American Revolution— enter the sites they visit to investigate this question into the classroom favorites making them available to everyone in the class. What an amazing tool! *Web 2.0* by Gwenn Solomon suggests www.backflip.com , blinklist.com, www.furl.net, or www.spurl.net. A popular one you might also consider is del.icio.us.

- Twitter is a free social messaging utility that allows you to stay in touch via short messages. Faster than email, it is much more popular to the Web 2.0 generation. Set up a **twitter** account (twitter.com/) for instant communication with colleagues and parents. I have one account for parents, one for my PLN (personal learning network). You can incorporate twitter widgets into webpages, add it to your Google desktop/ smartphone/ iPod, even your blog. What's another reason to get comfortable with Twitter? Everyone's talking about it. Might as well know the jargon if you're a computer teacher.

- **Photo sharing** through www.flickr.com, www.webshots.com or zoto.com. These are free photo sharing sites and have made their way into education by providing teachers and students with an easy way to upload and share photos on the web.

Students can search for photos to help with research, and educators can upload photos for classes, school events, and so on. At my school, students had to complete a photo journal after a field trip. Everyone uploaded their pictures, creating a huge pool to use for the follow-up project. Flickr's good for that because it allows individuals to add not only pictures but videos, organized by tags.
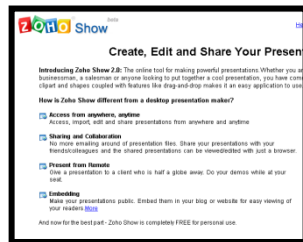
- **Podcasting** is a powerful medium that not only delivers rich educational content, but enhances student/teacher communication. With a nominal amount of equipment, anyone can create audio files and post them to the internet for others to listen to at any time. These audio files can be accessed from a personal computer or handheld device such as an iPod.

Podcasts have become as ubiquitous as classroom webpages. They're a much more efficient method of sharing lectures, instructions, information and appeal to those multi-intelligences that prefer visual and audio. And, they can be replayed over and over to confirm information. Accessible, 24/7, student-centered—what's not to like? Visit those made by other educators at http://epnweb.org. For more examples, visit kinderteacher.podomatic.com/ , www.dreamextreme.us/podcast/ by a fifth grade class, or http://www.webcastacademy.net/.

- Everyone should adopt **online docs** as the standard at school. They're free, which addresses the equity issue of computers for only certain people. They've come a long way from the original Linux approach. Now, some (OpenOffice, Office 365)

have the feel of Microsoft—the industry standard—and are compatible with this world leader. Even if you don't use it in your school, share it with parents. You'll be surprised how much you'll help. Here are some examples:

- **Writely**: Online Word Processor allowing users to create and edit documents, collaborate online, import Word documents, share documents publicly or privately, publish to a blog, and more.

o **Zoho Writer**: Similar to Writely, Zoho Writer is an Online Word Processor where you create, share, and collaborate on documents, publish to a blog, and import/export documents.

o **Zoho Show**: (in place of MS PowerPoint) Web-based presentation tool to create, edit, publish, and show presentations. Zoho Show is packed with features allowing users to create presentations with text, images, shapes, lists, from pre-formatted templates. Users can also import their existing PowerPoint and OpenOffice (the free and open productivity site at www.openoffice.org/) presentations, view presentations online, and export as HTML.

o **Google Spreadsheets**: (In place of MS Excel) Create, store and share spreadsheets on the web. Includes real time editing and chatting with others as well as import and export options. Google Spreadsheets is my web-based spreadsheet application of choice, although on the negative side, it does not provide chart functionality.

o For more, try docs.google.com, sourceforge.net/, www.openoffice.org/ or others.

Extensions

- If you purchased a digital version of this book, just click any of the blue links.
- Read *Web 2.0: New Tools, New Schools,* from ISTE Publications.
- Read *IT's Elementary! Integrating Technology in the Primary Grades*. Also from ISTE Publications.
  - See an open letter to readers about how I use Web 2.0 tools to communicate more effectively with parents and students (at end of this lesson's attachments).
  Troubleshooting Tips
  - *I can't find the website for these apps. (If you purchased a digital version of this book, click on the link and it'll open in your browser.)*

How Blogs and Wikis Make Students Better Writers

Wikis, blogs, social networks and a whole lot more Web 2.0 tools are the most exciting thing to happen to education since public schools. Kids love them. They're drawn in, want to get involved, thirst to share their thoughts. Here's the interesting part to us teachers: If students want anyone to read what they write, they have to do it correctly–and they're willing to make this effort for a blog.

That's right. There are rules to follow. You'd think people would tire of posting to oblivion. No readers. No comments. They'd give up and try something new. But they don't. They buckle down and try to follow the unique rules inherent in blogs and wikis that, if followed, will draw readers. The effort is worth the reward, which seems to be the joy of gaining a following (it sure isn't the money).

Check out One Cool Site by Timethief. She has post after post of suggestions for increasing the popularity of your blog. It covers mundane, ancient topics like grammar, pithiness of content, exciting headlines. Then scoot over to Problogger for more on the right way to write blogs (different ideas, same message).

As a teacher, I originally thought blogs (and social networks) were way too modern for rules. Look at texting. It's developed its own neologistic vocabulary, complete with spelling and new letters (i.e., emoticons). I was wrong. My blog didn't get read until I checked it for:

- pithy content
- correct spelling and grammar
- **knowledgeable information**. There are so many bloggers out there, students must come across as intelligent on their topic and smart enough to discuss it in that one minute the reader gives them. How do they do that?
    - Watch grammar and spelling.
    - Pick a topic they know about. If it's an opinion, pick something they have ideas about.
    - Don't tear down the other guy's opinion as a way to promote their own. This sort of mean-spiritedness turns people off.
- appeal to readers (a great lesson for students–make sure your voice fits your audience)
- interaction with readers via 1) questions in the blog, and 2) answering comments
- the three paragraph structure (just like students learn in school): first to attract search engines with a scintillating synopsis, second to appeal to my audience, third to tie everything down to a conclusion (and maybe leave them wanting more)
- no mistakes, redundancies—proof everything. I had to verify point of view, confirm facts–just like when students write an essay or story

So get over it, parents. These Web 2.0 tools are not going away, which is a good thing. They're student-centered and authentic. They sneak in volumes of lessons on good writing, and are full of the five-second info kids love.

3 Ways Twitter Makes You a Better Writer

It's not just Blogs and Wikis that make students better writers–Twitter does, too. Here are three quick ways:

You learn to be concise.

Twitter gives you only 140 characters to get the entire message across. *Letters, numbers, symbols, punctuation and spaces all count as characters on Twitter.* Wordiness doesn't work. Twitter counts every keystroke and won't publish anything with a minus in front of the word count.

At first blush, that seems impossible. It's not, though. It challenges you to know the right word for every situation. People with a big vocabulary are at an advantage because they don't use collections of little words to say what they mean, they jump right to it. All those hints your English teacher gave you–-picture nouns and action verbs, get rid of adverbs and adjectives–-take on new meaning to the Twitter aficionado.

You learn to be focused

With only 140 characters, you can't get off topic or cover tangential ideas. You have to save those for a different tweet. Tweeple like that trait in writers. They like to hear what your main topic is, hear your thoughts, not your meanderings. When you force yourself to write this way, it really doesn't take a paragraph to make a point. Use the right words, people get it. Consider that the average reader gives a story seven seconds before moving on. OK, yes, that's more than 140 characters, but not much.

Here's an idea. If you feel you must get into those off-topic thoughts. write them in the tweet and then cut cut cut.

Writing short messages helps you perfect the art of "headlining".

Fiction writers call this the title. Bloggers and journalists call it the headline. It has to be cogent and pithy enough to make the audience keep reading, but it also has to grab them. That's a tweet. if you can't grab tweeple in 140 characters, they won't come back to your profile.
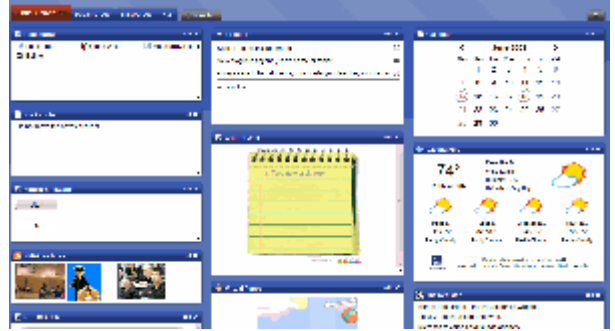
Tweets need to be written knowing that tweeple can @reply

Yes. This is the world of social networks where people will read what you say and comment. That's a good thing. It's feedback and builds an online community, be it for socializing or business. Develop a thick skin and take comments with a grain of salt and two grains of aspirin.

Tweet me at #askatechteacher with your thoughts.

Using an Internet Start Page

An internet start page is the first page that comes up when students select the internet icon. It should include everything students visit on a daily basis (typing websites, research locations, sponge sites) as well as information specific to the current project, class guidelines, the day's 'to do' list, and a calculator. It is one of the great ways teachers can make internetting simple and safe for their students.

Mine includes oft-used websites, blog sites, a To Do list, search tools, email, a calendar of events, pictures of interest, rss feeds of interest, weather, news, a graffiti wall and more. Yours will be different. I used protopage.com, but you can use netvibes or pageflakes.com. Each comes with its own collection of installable 'widgets' to personalize the page to your needs.

Start pages are an outreach of the ever-more-popular social networking. Most search engines offer them also (try iGoogle at www.google.com/ig). They all have a huge library of custom fields (called 'flakes' on Pageflakes) to individualize any home page. And, they're all simple. Don't be intimidated.

When you get yours set up, on the To Do list, put what the child should do to start each computer time. This gives them a sense of independence, adultness, as they get started while you're wrapping something else up.

41 Websites for Teachers to Integrate Tech into Your Classroom

This list has a little bit of everything, and will kick-start your effort to put technology into your lesson plans:

1. 10 Tech Alternatives to Book Reports
2. Analyze, read, write literature
3. Animations, assessments, charts, more
4. Biomes/Habitats—for teachers
5. Create a magazine cover
6. Create free activities and diagrams in a Flash!
7. Create free activities. No signup
8. Creative Tools
9. Crossword Puzzle Maker
10. Easy Techie Stuff for the Classroom
11. Easy Web 2.0 tools
12. Environmental footprint
13. Flashcards or Worksheets
14. Free online tools (Web 2.0)
15. Geography Activities—for teachers
16. Glogster—posters
17. Hollywood Sq/Jeopardy Templates
18. How to Videos for Web 2.0
19. Jeopardy Games in PowerPoint
20. K-8 school-related videos. Tons
21. Mapping ideas with a tag globe
22. Newspapers around the world
23. Online quizzes you create, online grades
24. Online tools (Web 2.0)—all free
25. Password creator
26. Posters—8×10 at a time
27. PowerPoint stuff
28. PowerPoint Templates
29. Print Large Posters in 8×10 bits
30. Print Posters One Page at a Time
31. Publish the magazines
32. Pupil Tube
33. Puzzle maker—for study guides, etc.
34. Shelfari—share books with students
35. So many Free online tools (Web 2.0)
36. Tag clouds
37. Teach vocab–prefixes/suffixes, word lists, more
38. Training videos
39. Turn pictures into Videos–Easily
40. Turn short stories into page-turning books
41. Vocab, prefix/suffix, word lists and more

Do you have any to add to this list?

<u>How I Use Web 2.0 Tools in My Classroom to Communicate with Parents</u>

I've been teaching for over twenty years in different schools, different communities, but one factor transcends grades, classes, and culture: Parents want to be involved with what's going on at their children's school. Parent-teacher communication is vital and in my experience, the number one predictor of success for a student. But parents can't always get in to the classroom as a volunteer and see what's written on the white board. They can't always make the school meetings to hear the comings and goings of the school. Why? It's not lack of interest. More likely, they're working; doing that 8-5 thing that insures the future of their families and pays for their children's college education.

Knowing the importance of parent involvement, I feel that my job as a teacher includes not just the lessons I share with students but keeping my parents informed on classroom happenings. I need to be as transparent as possible, get as much information as I can out to parents in a manner they can understand and a format they can access. If I could tape my classes and post them on YouTube, or offer a live feed during class, I would. But I can't, so I try other creative ideas.

Class website
This is teacher directed, but gives me a chance to communicate class activities, pictures, homework, and extra credit opportunities–all the little details that make up a class–with parents. This is a first stop to understanding what's going on in class.

Class wiki
This is student-directed, student-centered. Students post summaries of their tech class, examples of their work, projects they've completed on the wiki for everyone to share. This way, parents see the class through the eyes of the students. And so do I, which is my way of assuring that what I think happened, did.

Twitter
I love tweets because they're quick, 140 character summaries of activities, announcements, events. They take no time to read and are current.

Emails
I send lots of these out with reminders, updates, FAQs, discussion of issues that are confusing to parents. I often ask if I'm sending too many, but my parents insist they love them.

Open door
I'm available every day after school, without an appointment. Because I have so many other ways to stay in touch, my classroom rarely gets so crowded that I can't deal with everyone on a personal level.