

Using Technology in the Elementary Classroom By Marilyn Western

Cool Web Stuff for your Classroom Use – Part II

More wonderful (and FREE) resources on the Internet. Add these to your magic bag of online teaching tricks.

If you haven't explored **Discovery School** <http://school.discovery.com/teachers/index.html> yet, take some time this weekend to check this site out. This site is a one-stop guide to all sorts of neat resources for teachers of any grade level.

Puzzlemaker <http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com> will allow you to create your own crosswords, math squares, word searches, and more. You can introduce or review unit vocabulary, spelling words, or story vocab words. Better yet, have students input their words, create their own puzzle to print out, then exchange their puzzles for another student to solve the next day! I often create a word search with student names for a 1st day of school project.

Quiz Center <http://school.discovery.com/quizcenter/quizcenter.html> guides you in making online quizzes that can give students instant feedback, or you can set the scoring up to correct and email you the results! You can set up short answer quizzes, true-false, multiple choice, essay, or you can combine all of these into one quiz. There are a lot more options available here. Great way to add a little variety to your end of the week assessments, or have students review their work by creating a short quiz!

Worksheet Generator <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/worksheetgenerator/index.html> gives you vocabulary and math templates to create your own worksheet, or you can browse through the library of 300 ready-made worksheets.

Brain Boosters <http://school.discovery.com/brainboosters> features a weekly challenge, but also has a wonderful archive of boosters in the areas of reasoning, logic, categorization, word and letter play and more. Try starting out your day with one of these.

Science Fair Central <http://school.discovery.com/sciencefaircentral> Just in time for those spring Science Fairs, this area has project ideas for students and a 'Soup to Nuts Handbook' containing great tips for creating a stellar project. There is also a science fair organizer for teachers and tips for parents on helping, not hindering, the fun and learning aspects of a project. Keep this site on file.

Also available is the **Custom Classroom** which gives you the ability to save documents in your own personal (free) account. You can create and save puzzles with Puzzlemaker, create, save and administer quizzes with Quiz Center, and create and save worksheets with Worksheet Generator. A nice place to store your materials to use again next year.

Gaggle.net <http://gaggle.net> Want to set up an email project with students, but most of your kids don't have accounts? GaggleNet basic service is free and will provide you with filtered, teacher monitored email service for each student in your class or school. You can view any message which your students have sent or received, suspend the students account, change their password and screen name, decide which words or phrases you want to block and which emails you want to block or allow. Any student email that looks questionable is sent to the teacher's 'Blocked' folder for you to review and either delete or send. How would you use this in your classroom? Students can learn email etiquette by sending messages to other students in the classroom (you can limit your students to sending/receiving mail between other students in your class or within the school), or have them send you their stories, or ideas, or homework!

ePals <http://www.epals.com> Once you have students' email accounts in order, you'll need a class to exchange email with. ePals has a database of over 62,000 world wide classes that are looking for another class to exchange email with. ePals also supports email projects for you to join in which you pick your partner class and you set the timeline that's right for you. You can also create an email account through ePals which may be a good idea if you are a heavy user. If you set up a classroom account to use, you can leave your personal email out of the classroom loop. With elementary students, it's best to exchange email from class to class rather than between individual students. ePals web mail is monitored and uses filtering software to make sure exchanges are safe. For older students, there are moderated discussion groups based on projects such as Book Talk clubs,

the Unsung Heroes discussion group where students tell about people in their schools and communities who make the world a better place, or the Thoughts and Letters group where you can share an essay, a story, a reflection or a poem for others to read and comment upon.

Teach-nology <http://www.teach-nology.com> If you haven't visited this site before, make sure you have a couple of hours to explore. Lesson plans, tutorials, webquests, cartoons, games, downloads, worksheets, and more.

Teach-nology Web Tools page http://www.bestteachersites.com/web_tools has a nice assortment of useable and free resources such as an online calendar, graphic organizer generators (kwl, concept web, venn diagram, etc.), classroom materials generators (bus passes, lesson plans, award certificates, student contracts, bingo cards, progress reports, learning contracts, etc.), create a free web site, or sign up for free email, crossword puzzle maker, rubric generator, screen savers, and more are available on this page.

Free School Fonts http://desktoppub.about.com/library/fonts/bl_schoolfree.htm can be used to create copy sheets for handwriting practice. Downloads for pc and mac. Print, cursive, and dotted formats (for tracing). Students can use these fonts to publish their stories. You can create student nametags, or labels for notebooks, lockers, or desks.

Web Washer <http://www.webwasher.com> will prevent those annoying pop ups, pop overs, pop unders, and all the other ads that can make your loading time longer. Free download for home users, schools, and public educational facilities for pc and mac. An easy way to filter unwanted advertising banners, animated images and java scripts so you (and your students) see the material you want them to see.

Homeworkopoly <http://www.teachnet.com/homeworkopoly/index.html> If you are looking for a clever way to get those homework papers turned in on time, check this out! Print out this gameboard (in Adobe pdf format), tape the sheets together to form a 35" square which will fit just right on a bulletin board, and let your students know the rules of play. In order for a student to play the game, s/he must complete their homework from the night before and hand it in to you. This is how the student moves around the game board. If the student does not have their homework finished, they don't get their chance to shake the die and move for the day (with exceptions, of course). The download includes a gameboard with street names, a download without street names (you can put your own on this board) and Chance cards. Prize suggestions are also offered. Start this game at the beginning of the school year, and by year's end, students will be handing in their homework on a daily basis.

If you don't have time to look at these sites now, save them for summer exploration. Add them to your Fall plans and start off your year with a tech bang!

Note: There are several resources that are now for fee. Before crossing them off your list, take a close look at what the fee is for use. Often, it's well worth the minimal cost. For example, **KeeBook Creator** <http://keeboo.com> (pc only) is now available for \$49. Still a bargain for what you get!

Marilyn Western is a member of the MACUL Board of Directors, an MTIP Scholar, and a Mt. Pleasant Public Schools elementary teacher. Outside of the classroom, she has worked as the 1998-99 MDE Technology Using Educator on Loan, an Ameritech Technology Academy Instructor, and Technology Trainer for Gratiot Isabella RESD.