

VITAL News

Virginia Initiative for Technology and Administrative Leadership



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Getting Organized

Recently, one area of technology use that I have been exploring deals with organizing digital content and using technology to be more productive.

In fact, there's a whole movement out there called "GTD." It stands for "Getting Things Done," a work-life management system and book by David Allen. His website offers lots of tips and tricks for being more productive. I found the article [Keeping Your InBox Real](#) to be very helpful with organizing my own email.

I also discovered a whole new crop of software designed to help organize not just content but also ideas and inspirations. They fall under the general category of creativity software and can be used for taking notes at meetings, making to do lists, jotting down brainstorm or inspirations, and clipping email and websites. I have been experimenting with Notebook ([Circus Ponies Software](#), \$50) for the

Macintosh and been impressed with its ability to link all the pieces of different projects together by adding notes, links to websites, and snippets of email. While it is not made for Windows, there are plenty of other software packages that are, and the Innovation Tools website has [a comprehensive list](#).

Finally, some of you probably have a personal digital assistant (PDA) while others are considering purchasing one. PCWorld has [a great article](#) for those who are in the market for a handheld with general information and buying tips. Of course, like any organizer, PDAs only "work" if you actually use them. You can [browse the information at About.com](#) to find new and better ways of putting your PDA to work for you.

Be sure to read the article on the last page that discusses online organizational tools. If "getting more organized" is at the top of your to-do list, technology can help!

*Happy surfing,
Karen*

School Tech Leadership Blog Monitors the Web

The [School Technology Leadership blog](#) is sponsored by the School Technology Leadership Initiative at the University of Minnesota. The goal of the blog is to be a clearinghouse for information related to instructional technology.

The blog utilizes a distributed authorship model to accomplish its goal of being the "one-stop information source for school technology leadership issues." The volunteers who post to the blog monitor just a few information sources. Readers, however, get a wide variety of news and information. What follows in this article is a sample of some recent postings on the blog.



NCES Report: From the National Center for Educational Statistics, [Rates of Computer and Internet Use by Children in Nursery School and Students in Kindergarten Through](#)

[Twelfth Grade: 2003](#) describes the percentage of students in grades 12 or below who used computers or the Internet in 2003. One finding is that computer and Internet use is commonplace and begins early. Even before kindergarten, a majority of children in nursery school use computers and, and 23 percent use the Internet.

Digital Divide Report:

From The Children's Partnership, [Measuring Digital Opportunity for America's Children](#) is a new research report. It is the first-ever look across four key areas to see whether Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is helping children 1) improve educational achievement, 2) lead healthier lives, 3) increase economic opportunity, and 4) participate in their communities. Key findings of the year-long study show that the Internet and other digital tools are beginning to increase success-related outcomes for millions of America's children. However, disparities have resulted in an "opportunity gap" for millions of other low-income and ethnic minority children. The

report includes information about the impact of technology on children.



Technology Counts:

Education Week's annual report on technology and education, [Technology Counts](#), is now available. This year, the report focuses on the shift in the way schools spend money on technology, moving from spending on classroom computers to investing in data management systems that help them meet the reporting requirements for No Child Left Behind.

As always, the report includes lots of state and national data related to educational technology. For the first time, the report includes state rankings in the areas of access, use and capacity. In each case, Virginia ranks very high, claiming the number one spot when it comes to capacity and state policy support for innovation.

It's All About the Kids: Technology Success Stories

I must confess that many of the stories in this newsletter begin with a Google search. This time, the search term was “education technology success stories.” With all the gloomy news about the federal government cutting the ed tech money and state governments facing their own budget crunches, I thought we could use some inspiration. Technology is making a difference in the lives of our students in many ways. Here are just a few examples.

Leadership Principles: The Knowledge Loom from the Education Alliance at Brown University relates leadership principles to technology issues and offers examples of each principle in practice.

For instance, as [an example of the principle of vision](#), they describe the [Gereau Center for Applied Technology and Career Education](#) (CATCE) in Rocky Mount, VA. It was

the Superintendent who led the way to the creation of this innovative school.

The [Poquoson City Schools](#) are featured as an example of [the principle of professional development](#), describing the Teacher Technology Competency Project developed to help Poquoson teachers meet the Technology Standards for Instructional Personnel.

Fun With Handhelds: The [palmone website](#) features lots of schools that are using personal digital assistants (PDA) in innovative ways. These school snapshots provide insight into how PDAs can be implemented throughout the school from [the principal who uses his Treo Smartphone](#) to keep in touch with faculty, staff, parents and students, to [the 4th graders in Illinois](#) who are using PDAs to stay more focused and organized.

Certainly, the guru of using PDAs in the

classroom is Eliot Soloway from the University of Michigan. You can visit his website or [watch a video](#) of him giving a presentation at MIT's Media Lab.

Education Profiles: From Apple, the [Education Profiles website](#) features stories of successful technology integration efforts. For instance, they recently chronicled the efforts of [Saint Agnes Academy-Saint Dominic School \(SAA-SDS\)](#) in Memphis, TN, to implement a laptop initiative. School administrators and teachers have found that classroom instruction is changing as a result of the computers with teachers employing a more inquiry-based approach. And, while you're at the Apple website, be sure to check out [the student-created digital videos](#). They are always fun and amazing and, I think, demonstrate real success! Enjoy!



Organizing Your Life Online: Tips and Tools

I don't know about you, but more and more of the information I access everyday is online. I read the newspaper and professional journals, listen to books and radio programs, and occasionally even tune into C-Span to watch Congress at work. So, I need a place where I can readily access those daily links. In addition, I am collaborating with individuals throughout the state and looking for an easy way to share information and documents. Fortunately, there are several new tools on the Web that make this kind of organization and collaboration easier.

[wURLdBook](#): Yes...it's spelled correctly. Describing itself as your web memory, this free online tool provides a place to store websites, link to news sources, and share information with others. You'll need a free login and then you can get started with adding your favorite links and news feeds.

WURLdBook also makes it easy to add sites to your page and email pages to others by providing bookmarklets for your Links bar. With one click, you can put a new site into wURLdBook or email a

good educational site to some of your faculty members. The best way to learn more about this online tool is to [take the guided tour](#).



[Backpack](#): This tool lets you easily build pages with lists, notes, images and files. Action items can be set up as reminders that appear on the page at a designated time.

You can share your Backpack pages with others in two ways.

First, if you are working with several people on a project, you can each have a login and editing capabilities. You can use the features of the site to share ideas, make decisions, and post files.

Second, if you just want others to be able to see the pages you've created, you can provide a URL for guests to visit. Here's a [link](#)

to my Backpack site for guests. I am using it to plan a summer workshop with some colleagues.

Backpack offers a free account that allows you to have five pages and ten reminders. Pay plans range from \$5 to \$19 per month and allow users to upload files and images.

[Wikindx2](#): A free tool for creating and sharing lists of resources. Users add bibliographic information along with quotes and notes. Wikindx2 is an open source software program that can be installed on your own computer for single user use. However, it's also perfect for use with groups of students working on projects together as a place to store shared resources and notes. The program allows bibliographies to be exported for use in word processing programs.

You can learn more about the program and give it [a test drive at its website](#). I installed a copy on my website to use for collecting articles and resources related to—what else?—educational technology. Please feel free to browse and add your own resources so you can see how this tool works. You can get to my Wikindx by clicking this [link](#).