

# VITALNews

Virginia Initiative for Technology and Administrative Leadership



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## VITALNews

Virginia Initiative for  
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Administrative Leadership

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## Your Inner 18<sup>th</sup> Century

Right now, my favorite television commercial comes from Colonial Williamsburg. Three people in the laundry room of their apartment building are discussing the injustices perpetrated by their landlord. One of the tenants, dressed in 18<sup>th</sup> century garb, struggles to get the washing machine to accept his change. His frustration growing, he finally erupts into a long tirade about the tyrant that is the landlord. He exhorts his fellow apartment dwellers to rise up against this injustice. “Who’s with me?” he asks. When one of the tenants agrees to join him, he nods appreciatively, and we discover that the freedom fighter is really a college student in baggy shorts and flip-flops. “Connect with your inner 18<sup>th</sup> century,” says the voice-over.

What lesson does this short commercial (which you can view on [the Colonial Williamsburg website](#)) have for us as educators? I think a profound one. We need to make history—and all the other subjects we teach—

relevant to students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Even with the pressures of the SOL, NCLB, and AYP, we cannot lose sight of the fact that these students will be living in a world in which the lessons of history—not just the facts—will be more important than ever.

What freedoms are we willing to sacrifice for homeland security? How has the single sentence in the Constitution that deals with copyright played out over the past two centuries? Why is it so important who is on the Supreme Court? And just what is a filibuster anyway, and why are the Republicans thinking about banning it?

The majority of the history I learned came from textbooks, huge tomes with tiny print, that made history seem like something quite far removed from me. Now, students can learn history from a multitude of sources including oral histories, photo collages, and multimedia presentations. As history comes alive for them, they can take their rightful place in the never-ending story that is the history of the world.

*Happy surfing,  
Karen*

## On the Edge with VSTE

While you are at the [Virginia Society of Technology in Education website](#) learning more about the conference in March, be sure to click the Communication link. VSTE has two publications: *VSTE Journal*—a twice-yearly scholarly journal—and *VSTE Edge*, an electronic newsletter that is published multiple times per year. It is free, and subscribers receive an electronic mail containing descriptions and links pointing to useful web sites, insightful articles about technology use in the classroom, or “how-to” tips concerning educational technologies. It is perfect to share with teachers who are looking for new ways to integrate technology in their classrooms.

Both publications welcome submissions from the educational technology community, and you can learn more about the guidelines for submissions at the website. For the journal, the Fall/Winter issue is published in December or January with submissions due in early October. The Spring/Summer issue is published in June or July and articles are due in early April.



*The best place to look for educational technology conferences is at [T.H.E. Journal](#). Their [searchable calendar](#) is a comprehensive guide to national and international conferences. In this space, we'll be featuring conferences of particular interest to Virginia educators.*

### [Educational Technology Leadership](#)

[Conference](#): Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education and held at the Hotel Roanoke Conference Center in Roanoke, VA, December 5-7, 2005. This conference caters to school division leaders and provides lots of opportunities to network with administrators from across the state.

### [Virginia Society for Technology and Education Annual Conference](#)

Hotel Roanoke Conference Center, March 12, 13, and 14, 2006. This gathering of educators just keeps getting bigger every year and is perfect for classroom teachers. Plan on sending a team!

### [Florida Educational Technology](#)

[Conference](#): Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL, March 22-24, 2005. This state conference has become something of a national and international celebration.

### [National Educational Computing](#)

[Conference](#): San Diego, July 4 - 7, 2006. Thousands of educators come together once a year to talk about technology. Just amazing!

# Elementary SOL Aligned Websites at PortaPortal

By Wanda Walters

Virtually all Virginia educators are aware that there are wonderful interactive websites available that directly support the Standards of Learning. As a former elementary classroom teacher, technology specialist, and technology project manager for Fairfax County Public Schools, I have often heard educators lament that while the resources are indeed “out there,” teachers do not often have the time to find, and then store, all of the hundreds of links that support their various units of study.

In December of 2003, I attended the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Technology Conference in Roanoke Virginia. While there, I participated in the “Locating Web-based Educational Resources” session led by Paul Barron, Library Manager, Mary Washington College.

One of the featured resources was [portaportal.com](http://portaportal.com), a free, web-based bookmarking utility that allows its members to store links to

their favorite websites online. This web-link repository allows users and their guests anytime/anywhere access to archived links.

Shortly after the conclusion of the conference, I began to toy with the idea of aligning websites that support the SOL within portaportal. I printed out the four-core elementary SOL and decided to begin with math.

As our division’s School-based Technology

begin developing such a site.

Please feel free to contact me:

[wanda.walters@verizon.net](mailto:wanda.walters@verizon.net) if you would like to submit websites to be included on this site and/or discover already listed websites that are no longer active so that I may quickly make the needed modifications.

The sites can be reached by going to [portaportal](http://portaportal.com) and using one of the following guest logins: solmath; solscience and solss.



Specialists became aware of my ongoing project, I was prodded with requests to develop sites for Science, Social Studies and Language Arts. Because I was building these sites primarily during the evenings and on weekends, completion of the Math, Science and Social Studies sites took almost a year!

Since the Language Arts SOL involve mostly reading and writing, I decided not to build a LA portaportal site. However now that I have retired, I may, if there is interest,

Also, other schools and districts have begun SOL-aligned portaportal

sites. Use your favorite search engine to discover them all!

*Editor’s Note:* Wanda is our newest volunteer at [Virginia’s Community of Learning](http://Virginia’s Community of Learning). She is adopting the Classrooms section. Lucy and Ethel---AKA Meg and Joanie—are our two volunteers in the Resources section. Come by and see what all these experts have to share! We would also encourage you to put some of the great sites you find in to the searchable VCOL database.

## Why ARE Marshes So Important? A Focus on Wetlands



### CBF.org

The [Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#) has been doing bay monitoring and conservation work for decades. The website is just full of information and includes a section for each the Bay states. In addition, the Foundation sponsors a variety of Bay education programs that help get students out into the Bay to see this marvelous natural resource first hand.

While you're at the website, be sure to visit the [Bay Bound section](#) that chronicles the adventures of 16 Turner Ashby high school students who spent 30 days this past summer studying the bay and the relationship between land use and water quality. Turner Ashby is located in Rockingham County, Virginia, and all the students are part of the FFA program there.

### Wetland Watch

The Ontario Science Centre's online [Wetland Watch](#) website is a fun, fact-filled, interactive introduction to wetlands. The site includes a webcam that shows the real marsh at the Science Centre. There's a lot of good information about the creatures of the wetlands.

By far, the best part of the site is the *Secrets of the Marsh* game in which students create a food web and learn about how species in the marsh are related. *Croaker Concentration*, in which students match frogs by their crooks, is also fun and informative.

In addition to the section of wetlands, the Science Centre has several other [Electronic Exhibit Extensions](#) related to events at the center. Strange Matter, which focuses on atoms, is particularly interesting.



### EPA Water Site

The [US Environmental Protection Agency](#) has a website devoted to all things water. There are lots of government reports to read along with access to data about water quality all over the world.

The EnviroMapper for Water tool is a web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) application that dynamically displays information about bodies of water in the United States. This interactive tool allows you to create customized maps that portray the nation's surface waters along with a collection of environmental data. You can use it to find out about the health of a river near where you live.

While much of the information at the EPA is fairly advanced, the [Environmental Club for Kids](#) helps makes the issues accessible to young people.