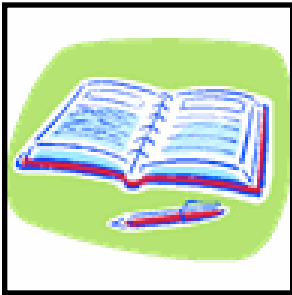




The Turn of the Year

New Years' Resolutions: the annual ritual of making then breaking promises to ourselves. Can technology be a tool to help us actually keep those resolutions to get more organized or lose weight?



I started thinking about this when VITAL director, Chris O'Neal, emailed me [an article from CNN](#) about [Futureme.org](#), a website that allows users to send emails to themselves in the future, the digital version of writing a letter to yourself.

The site allows users to make their postings public, and I found it fascinating to read random emails, eavesdropping on some very personal conversations. Hopes and dreams, advice and reminders, some in English, many in foreign languages...funny, poignant, bittersweet. Some are dated to be sent in a year while others have 10 or 15 years to wait. I sent one to myself dated December 31, 2006, a reminder of the resolutions I made this year.

Futureme helps build in some accountability to a process that often has no follow up at all. But is that accountability enough to make the difference between success and failure? We still have to do the hard work in between. Tools like Futureme still rely on us to be used successfully. Just buying a PDA doesn't lead to better organization. Just joining Weight Watchers and tracking points online isn't going to lead to weight loss. While they may facili-

tate these activities, we must first make and then resolve to keep the resolutions.

I can picture teachers using Futureme with their students. What are we going to learn this month? At the end of the month, the email from Futureme could be used as a benchmark. Did we learn what we said we were going to? Before beginning a project, students could use the service to track their completion of each step. So, rather than being nagged by the teacher, they get friendly reminders from themselves, a digital take on the project checklist.

Getting Organized in 2006

If getting organized is a priority for 2006, you may be thinking about buying a PDA or just making better use of the one you have. For the buyers, start at [ZDNet's PDA guide](#) for purchasing information. Then, PDA in hand, browse some of the many websites related to using your PDA effectively. [Bruce Keener's site](#) was easy to use. And the [Getting Things Done forums](#) has lots of helpful ideas along with user reviews of different gadgets.



Conference Calendar

Upcoming Conferences

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.

[Virginia Society for Technology and Education Annual Conference](#): Hotel Roanoke Conference Center, March 12-14, 2006. This gathering of educators just keeps getting bigger every year and is perfect for classroom teachers. Plan on sending a team!

[Society for Education Technology and Teacher Education](#): Orlando, FL, March 20-24, 2006. While the primary audience for this conference is higher education, many of the sessions would be of interest to K-12 educators as well. Besides, it is the same time as FETC so you could get two conferences at the same time...that's what I'm doing!

[Florida Educational Technology Conference](#): Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL, March 22-24, 2006. This state conference has become something of a national and international celebration. I'll be doing a presentation so why not come?

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

Conference Feature: Education Technology Leadership Awards

The Virginia Department of Education honored eight outstanding educators with the Education Technology Leadership Award for their advocacy and use of educational technology in the commonwealth's public schools. The awards were presented during the department's Educational Technology Leadership Conference held December 5-7 in Roanoke.

The Education Technology Leadership Award, presented annually, acknowledges outstanding school division leadership in education technology planning and implementation. The 2005 winners are Jerry Canada, Region Six; Danny Dixon, Region Seven; Thomas DeWeerd, Region One; Mitzi Fehl, Region Two; Dan Hopper, Region Three; Maribeth Luftglass, Region Four; Harley Miles, Region Five; and Bobby Waddell, Region Eight.

Danny Dixon was also recognized as the state award winner.

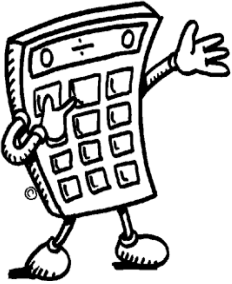
In addition, the Virginia Educational Technology Advisory Committee (VETAC), which advises the Virginia Board of Education on educational technology, presented its 2005 VETAC Leadership Award to Zahrl Schoeny, an associate professor of administrative technologies at the University of Virginia.



Math in Real Life

Why do we have to know this? The universal cry of students everywhere...but with math the answer is easy. You'll use it every day. This month, we feature three websites related to math and its daily use. So, when the students ask, the web provides the answer.

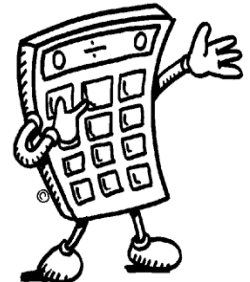
Math in Daily Life



From the Annenberg/CPB website, [Math in Daily Life](#) asks the question, How do numbers effect everyday decisions? It answers it in a variety of contexts from gambling (the odds are against you) to saving and borrowing money (should I lease or buy a car) to cooking and home decorating (how much carpet do we need). Each section includes an interactive learning module that focuses on a particular mathematical topic. The website was inspired by a series of instructional television programs called [For All Practical Purposes: Introduction to Contemporary Mathematics](#). Designed for high school and adult learners, these videos, which can be watched for free online, introduce math concepts in the context of daily life.

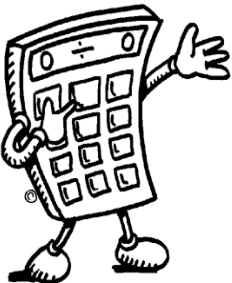
Math-Kitecture

This website combines math, architecture and computers. [Math-Kitecture](#) has a number of activities, including "Floor Plan your Classroom," which offer engaging ways for students to study mathematics by doing real-life architecture. Students learn estimation, measuring skills, proportion, and ratios by hand-drafting a floor plan of their classroom to scale. They then use existing classroom software to create a computer-aided design (CAD) version. All submitted student work can be displayed in the online gallery.



Ethnomathematics Snapshots

We often hear that math is the universal language. This website--[Ethnomathematics Snapshots](#)--features mathematical thinking from a variety of cultures. It includes lists of African words related to the human body, math principles from the Native American petroglyphs, and three-in-a-row games from around the world. Pages also discuss Amish quilts, Maori strip drawings and Angolan sand paintings. The site was created by John H. Kellermeier, a mathematics instructor at Tacoma Community College.



Happy New Year from VITAL News

Good Reads



We can't be good technology ambassadors if we aren't well-informed. And with the Internet, keeping up to date has never been easier. Each month, I'll be highlighting interesting, relevant sources from research projects to government reports and ezines to bloggers. This month, a series of videos from *Edutopia* that describes high school students creating their own schools of the future.

Schools for 2050

[This article](#) from the George Lucas Educational Foundation features high school teacher Eeva Reeder, who because she wanted her geometry students to have a real-life experience, she asked them to design a state-of-the-art high school.

Working in teams, the students worked on the project from start to finish including cost estimates, building scale models, and drafting site plans. They then developed presentations which were delivered to professional architects. You can watch the general video about the project and also view three of the teams' presentations. Outlines of the project and assessment tools are also provided.

Just for Fun

Cool Math For Kids

"Mathematics is the alphabet with which God has written the universe."

-- Galileo Galilei

I take issue with the title of this website. It is not just for kids...I played a fast and furious game of Lemonade Stand, did a few brain benders, and completed a jigsaw puzzle. If you want to know your age in dog years, this site has a calculator for that...along with lots of other converters and calculators. Whoever said math can't be fun, hasn't visited this website. It is--as it claims--an amusement park of math. [Cool Math 4 Kids](#)



Podcast Available from Virginia's Community of Learning

Don't have time to read the newsletter? Then, you can listen to it as part of the new podcast at [Virginia's Community of Learning](#). According to Wikipedia, "a [podcast](#) is simply a web feed of audio files...that is placed on the Internet for anyone to download. It's usually possible to download the files directly from the website, just as one would normally do; however, special programs called podcatchers exist that let users subscribe to podcasts in order to automatically download and store the media files for later playback." Virginia's Community of Learning podcast began at the DOE conference in December. We will be podcasting the newsletter each month as well as occasional other broadcasts related to technology and education. [VCOL Podcast](#)

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