



Cool Ideas for Grownups

Since we're educators, we usually think about how we can use technology to support our students' learning. But technology also has much to offer to us, too. In fact, I would argue that one way to encourage technology use in the classroom is to encourage its use among teachers first. If they can see the affordances of technology to support their own learning, it may lead to some "lightbulb" moments for how to make better use of technology in the classroom.

One way I would encourage this use is to get teachers involved in the upcoming K-12 Online Conference. In its second year, this conference started with what seems like a simple but powerful idea: can we have a conference on the Internet? The answer, if last year's conference is any indication, is a resounding "yes." Building on last year's success, this year's conference will commence on October 22 and proceed for the next two weeks. Just like a face-to-face conference, there are keynotes, presentations, and opportunities for live, synchronous discussions.

Unlike typical conferences, however, there is pretty much no cost for attending the K-12 Online Conference (no registration, hotel or travel costs required), so presumably every faculty member could attend. In addition, because the presentations are archived online, everyone can attend every presentation in their own good time. (In fact, thanks to the College of William and Mary, all the presentations from last year's conference are still available at the website.) Rather than having to be in a specific place at a specific time and having to make choices between different presentations, conference participants are able to view the presentations when they are ready and could "attend" all the presentations if they wanted to. Using the comments feature of the conference weblog, participants can ask questions of the presenters and have an ongoing conversation about the issues and ideas raised in the presentation.

There is a down side that I discovered last year when I tried to show off the conference website to a group with whom I was working. It is built on a weblog architecture and many of the presentations make use of Web 2.0 tools such as wikis and YouTube. All this may mean that the conference gets filtered by schools. I would encourage you to find a way to open these resources to the grownups in your organization for at least the two weeks of the conference. You might even consider having an event related to the conference to introduce it to your faculty and staff. Visit the website to get started: <http://k12onlineconference.org/>.

Conference Calendar

The best place to look for educational technology conferences is at T.H.E. Journal (<http://www.thejournal.com/>). 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. This month, I've added a few online events, often called "webinars."

Educational Technology Leadership Conference: December 5-7, 2007, Roanoke, Virginia.

Now in its 13th year, the Educational Technology Leadership Conference is co-sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Society for Technology in Education. This year, the conference will provide a wealth of presentations designed to align with and explore the goals and objectives of the five major components of Virginia's long-range educational technology plan: integration, professional development, connectivity, educational applications, and accountability. Presentations related to Internet Safety will also be included. Presentation proposals are still being accepted. Visit the website for more information:

<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Technology/OET/conf.shtml>

Virginia Society for Technology in Education, February 24-27, 2007, Roanoke, Virginia.

Come see how technology rocks in Virginia! This state-wide conference is now in its 22nd year. With over 1,200 attendees and a full two-and-a-half days of presentations, hands-on workshops, and the always popular extravaganza, this conference is high energy. Co-sponsored by the Virginia Society for Technology in Education and the Virginia Department of Education. Learn more at the website:

<http://www.vste.org/conference.html/>

T&L Conference, October 17-19, 2007, Nashville, Tennessee

T+L is an educational technology event for district leadership teams. Presented by the National School Boards Association (NSBA), T+L provides a truly unique learning experience for teams of technology directors, superintendents, school board members, district administrators, principals, and lead teachers. This year, the conference focuses on six big ideas including professional development, one-to-one initiatives, tools for the classrooms, 21st century skills, using data, and open source initiatives. Visit the website for more information:

<http://www.nsba.org/t+l/>

K-12 Online 2007, October 22-26, 2007. Online

The second annual conference will be held in October and feature keynotes, podcasts, and more. I'll be doing a presentation on copyright. All online...so you can attend a conference without getting out of your fuzzy slippers. Learn more at <http://k12onlineconference.org>.



Good Reads



We can't be good technology ambassadors if we aren't well-informed. Each month, I'll be highlighting interesting, relevant sources from research projects to government reports and ezines to bloggers.

Visions 2020.2

We talk a lot about the digital natives or millenials, who are moving into our classrooms with certain expectations about how technology should be used for teaching and learning. This report--produced as a collaboration between the US Department of Commerce, the US Department of Education and Netday--lets readers hear the voices of these students. The report explores four themes: digital devices, access to computers and the internet, intelligent tutor/helper, and ways to learn and complete school work using technology. It discusses current uses of technology in these areas and also asks the students to envision how technologies might be used in the future. Over 55,000 students answered the question, "What would you like to see invented that you think will help kids learn in the future?" Their answers are lively and insightful and a must read for anyone who works with young people today.

Just for Fun (and maybe some learning, too!)

USGS Learning Web

*We learn geology the morning
after the earthquake.*

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

So, you may not think about the United States Geological Survey (USGS) when you think about having fun on the Internet. But, when I googled "fun learning stuff," their Learning Web was in the top ten. And, fun it is. The site includes links to lots of images to use for multimedia projects from clip art to photos to webcams. (That's where my otters came from.) There's a map wizard with links to contemporary and historical maps. There are geology-related quizzes about earthquakes and amphibians and more. Finally, specific parts of the website are organized especially for students, teachers, and researchers. Here's the link: <http://interactive2.usgs.gov/learningweb/fun/index.htm> Happy Surfing!

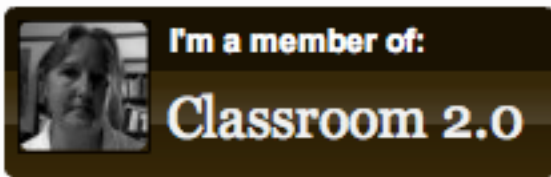


Other Tools for Grownups

The K-12 Online Conference is only one of many online tools to further professional development. This month, we feature several others--all our free and available 24/7 for teachers to learn and share with others.

Social Networking at Ning.com

Ning is a free social networking tool. It provides an easy-to-use platform for creating networking websites that include built in collaboration tools such as discussion forums, weblogs and wikis. While there are a variety of sites that might be of interest to teachers and you could create your own, I would suggest starting with Classroom 2.0, a group of mostly educators who are interested in Web 2.0 and collaborative technologies in education. They are most welcoming to newcomers, so if you've always wanted to explore social networking but were put off by MySpace or FaceBook, then this is the place for you. Visit the Classroom 2.0 webpage to learn



more and get started: <http://classroom20.ning.com>

Yahoo for Teachers

Yahoo is building a free social networking site for educators. While it is not quite ready for prime time, the site includes a short video describing its organization and purpose. It focuses primarily on helping educators locate classroom-friendly resources and facilitating project and lesson collaboration. Teachers are able to both share their own materials and save links and resources to an online folder for future use. It was developed with the help of dozens of teachers who have been doing beta-testing for Yahoo. Visit the site to learn more and sign up for email notification when it does go live:

<http://teachers.yahoo.com/home>



Teacher Tube



Almost everyone has heard of YouTube, the funky video sharing site that includes everything from lectures by academics to parodies of commercials and other videos to just downright silly videos, including inmates in a Phillipino prison performing Michael Jackson's Thriller. Because it is such a mix, it often gets filtered for schools. However, a version for teachers, appropriately called TeacherTube, is designed with K-12 educators online. It is a great place to

find videos related to different content areas and technology tools; in addition, you and your students are welcome to upload your own videos. <http://www.teachertube.com/>