

A Teacher's Guide To Using Social Media And The Internet In The Classroom



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Introduction

“How can you squander even one more day not taking advantage of the greatest shifts of our generation? How dare you settle for less when the world has made it so easy for you to be remarkable?”

— Seth Godin, *Seth’s Blog*



Internet usage in the classroom has come a long way in the last decade. Today’s teachers are expected to be proficient with new technologies and implement new teaching strategies that are designed around the Internet-based lessons. While students in

elementary and middle schools around the world have never known a world without the Internet, the same cannot be said for all classroom teachers.

Technology can be intimidating and figuring out how to use it effectively with the ever-changing curriculum can be difficult. *A Teacher’s Guide to Using Social Media and the Internet in the Classroom* is designed to help teachers understand the potential that social media and the Internet can have in daily lesson planning. Resources are ever changing and web tools can come and go, but the same basic ideas and principals remain the same.

In this guide you will find everything from how to set up a classroom blog to how and why virtual visits from authors and experts should be a part of your lesson plans. Ideas for practical classroom use and ways to enhance lessons are included with each topic. For those websites that are frequently banned in schools and districts around the country, alternate site suggestions are also included.

Whether you are new to using social media and the Internet with your lessons, or brand new at it, this guide offers easy-to-implement ideas with resources to help you

be successful. There are many ways that social media can benefit your students and your professional development. Let the ideas and suggestions below inspire you to step outside of your comfort zone and explore sites that can enrich your life and enhance your effectiveness in the classroom.

Blogs

The class blog or website is, ideally, the place where your students’ parents visit for important updates, class announcements, and information about what is going on in class. Blogs come in all sizes, designs, and platforms, so finding what works for you and your class is necessary. If you teach in a very low-income school where 99% of the parent population does not have access to the Internet, creating a class blog may very well be a waste of time and energy. However, if your students’ parents travel with smart phones on their hips and tablets in their purses, a class blog is an excellent tool to quickly disseminate information and stay in touch.

What to Put on the Blog

Classroom Updates

A class blog can be a useful tool for sharing what is going on in the classroom. Post updates about upcoming projects, when permission slips are due, and other reminders that may get lost in the shuffle of everyday travels from home to school. Parents can check the blog weekly or daily for updates. You can even post a poll or question on the blog to encourage parents to interact with you and with one another.

Homework Reminders

Make your classroom blog a resource for homework reminders. Post the daily homework assignment on the blog, so that parents and students can refer to it at night. This may cut down on missed assignments and help students stay on track.

Class Collaboration

Want to make a class story even when your students are not in class? Encourage them to participate in a class blog story. You start the process by posting the beginning

of a story and students leave a comment continuing it. For example, you can begin with a post that says, “While walking around the playground, Sean found a brightly colored disk on the ground. He picked it up, turned it over and there on the back was....”. Students then build the story based on their own imagination and what has been written before their comment. It is a great way to build rapport and encourage creative thinking even while at home.

Tips for Setting Up Your Class Blog

1. It must be easy to set up.

Realistically, you do not have much time in your busy schedule to spend working on setting up a class blog. If you are going to do it, you need a blogging platform that offers ease when setting up. Some of the easiest platforms include: [WordPress](#), [Blogger](#), [EduBlogs](#), and [KidBlog](#).

2. It must be easy to protect.

You want your students’ families to see the blog, however, you do not want unauthorized access. A password to protect your class blog is especially important if you are going to post pictures of your students or videos that they have made. If you plan on using fake names and including no pictures or details about where you are located, what events are coming up, etc., you can get by without a password, but that is rarely the case. You are the gatekeeper of the blog and you must take your students’ privacy and safety seriously.

3. It must be easy to update.

In between third and fourth periods, when you are gulping down your diet soda and a pack of crackers, may be the only time you have during the day to update your blog. That is why it is so important to choose a blogging platform that is easy for you to update. Some platforms have mobile apps that can be downloaded to your smartphone where you can actually update your blog no matter where you are. This can be particularly helpful if you want to make use of the time outside of school when you are waiting at the doctor’s office, or standing in line at the post office. If updating is a major concern for you, you may want to check out the different apps before you select the platform you will be blogging on.

4. It must be visually pleasing.

Even if you love bright pink and your classroom theme is frogs, try to avoid a blog that is visually bold. You want the class blog to showcase your students’ work and the learning that is taking place – not your love for pink and frog green. Choose one font and stick to it. It is also a good idea to limit the number of different font sizes that you use in any given post. It is okay to accent a particular part of a post, but there is no need to bombard the senses with five different sizes of font in any article. Remember, less is more when it comes to colors and fonts.

Other Considerations

Thou Shall Not Use Children’s Photos

Basic blogging etiquette and safety protocol suggest that no pictures of children are included on the classroom blog. It is important to remember that even if parents sign a waiver saying they are okay with their child’s image being on the class blog, they may not quite understand what that means. Not only can they see pictures of little Billy, but so too can everyone from the Jones family, the Smith family, etc. If you really feel the need to include children’s pictures, try to get shots that do not show their faces directly. Safety has to be your first concern.



Engaging Parents

Figuring out how to engage parents and families on the class blog is a valid concern. You may wonder what good making a class blog will be if you cannot get parents to read it. Instead of lamenting the fact that you are not successful at motivating their readership, embrace the possibilities that a blog can bring to your students. Chances are that if you engage students in creating, maintaining and updating the class blog, they will be excited about showing their parents when they get home. What better way to get parents excited than by letting children spread the word. If not all of your parents are reading it, do not worry or take it to heart. You are creating the blog primarily for your students; parental involvement is just a bonus.

Alternate Types of Blogs

Say you want to let your students create something online, but a blog seems like too much trouble. What do you do then? One option is to use [Glogster](#). It is a platform that allows them to create visual or text “posters” that can chronicle their work all year. Students can save their posters and have an online portfolio of them when the school year comes to an end. It is a great way to integrate technology into your lessons in a practical way that lets students become technologically savvy.

Letting Students Blog

Blogging is a great way for students to practice writing. Kidblog is a platform wherein a password protects students’ blogs and makes them private, accessible only to the teacher and other students in the class, by default. It gives students the opportunity to practice journaling and expressing themselves through their writing in a way that is both relevant and conducive to learning.

Twitter

Why restrict your thoughts to 140 characters or less? Get professional development from the comfort of your sofa to expand your Personal Learning Network (PLN), and to share real-time data and network with your students, of course! [Twitter](#) is a social networking site that challenges users to express themselves in 140 characters. While it may seem an odd place to be able to share ideas and collaborate with other teachers and classes, Twitter has become a mecca for those who want real-time help and conversation with other educators.

Many of the conversations based around education use specific hash tags to distinguish themselves from the main Twitter feed. Really Good Stuff hosts an education chat under the hash tag [#TeachChat](#) on Wednesday evenings at 9pm EST, for example. Teachers share thoughts about a predetermined educational topic and offer resource links, material ideas, and encouragement. Everything from classroom library organization to the Common Core Standards can be addressed. Participating teachers often lament that they learn more by sharing in an informal [#TeachChat](#) than they do during day-long professional development classes at their schools.

Other popular education hash tags include: [#edchat](#), [#ntchat](#), [#elemchat](#), [#ecechat](#), [#mathchat](#), [#sschat](#), and [#gtchat](#). Other chats, such as [#6thchat](#), focus on a particular grade level and offer advice, support, and ideas for educators of that grade. Each chat meets at a different time and day, offering multiple opportunities each week to engage in direct conversation with other teachers.

What value does Twitter have for my classroom?

Many schools and districts ban social networking sites, but for those that allow Twitter, there are endless opportunities for worldwide, real-time feedback. After setting up an account that you use only for your class inquiries, brainstorm questions that



you can integrate into your lessons. For example, if you are studying the weather in your fourth grade science class, you could create a [Google doc](#) survey that you link to on Twitter. You would then ask your followers to fill out the quick survey with the current temperature in their location. That data could then be graphed by your students who might consider the local time of day that each temperature was reported. You might also follow television or radio stations from different cities around the country that post the local weather to gather the data. Public opinion polls and other surveys are also examples of how Twitter can provide your students with a broad audience for data.

The process of composing “tweets” or messages on Twitter can facilitate composing clear and concise thoughts. Students must get their message across without going over the 140-character limit.

This encourages them to be creative with their word choice while making sure that their opinions or thoughts are expressed correctly. During composition of tweets,

there is also an opportunity to discuss how what is said online stays online forever and can be incorrectly interpreted.

Authors, astronauts, scientists, and more also use Twitter to chat with teachers and classes throughout the school year. If the author of a book that your students are reading in class has a Twitter chat scheduled, participate with your class by following the author's feed or the associated hash tag. NASA Astronauts frequently use Twitter to post updates about their current missions which makes their feeds a great tool during a unit on space exploration or astronomy.

Alternatives to Twitter

If the thought of using Twitter appeals to you, but your district has banned it, there is another site called [Twiducate](#) that offers a safer alternative. Developed for teachers, by teachers, the website allows educators to monitor who students are interacting with and how they are interacting. While it may still require district approval, this site is a good alternative for classroom interaction.

[Edmodo](#) is another social media site alternative for teachers, students, and school districts. It integrates the best of social media and safety to provide educators with a platform designed with performance and student safety in mind. In addition to the collaboration function with other educators and classes, teachers are also able to upload documents and provide students with access to class materials, calendars, and grades. Downloadable smartphone apps also make this a go-to site for secure virtual classroom interactions.

Virtual Visits

Have you been reading and discussing a special book with your class or school book club? If so, you may be interested in the opportunity to have an author visit and talk with the students – via [Skype](#). Skype is a free, Internet conferencing system that allows people to connect digitally using a computer, webcam, and microphone.

Some school districts have restrictions on using Skype, so be sure to check with your IT department before scheduling a virtual visit. Other options for online visits include [Google's Video and Voice Conferencing](#), Apple's iChat, and FaceTime that can be downloaded on Apple devices. Whatever platform you choose, your virtual guest most likely will also be using the same one, so be sure to coordinate beforehand.

While not all authors are available to do visits, those who are usually book up quickly. Plan ahead and see if the author of a book that your class will be reading later in the year is available. For an extensive list of authors who will do virtual visits with classes and book clubs, free of charge, check out [Skype an Author Network](#). If an author is also available on another social media network (i.e. – Twitter, Linked In, etc.) it is usually indicated on their author's page.

Authors are not the only ones who will do virtual visits. Professionals in just about every field are willing to talk with you class over the Internet. If you are studying astronomy, contact an observatory or even an astronaut to see if someone would be willing to spend 15 minutes answering questions from your class. Graduate and doctoral students are also a great resource for virtual visits and are happy to share their knowledge on everything from meteorology to veterinary medicine.



The key to a successful virtual visit is planning, but knowing what to plan for can be daunting if it is your first experience with online visits. Follow the checklist below

to help you get started and ensure that your virtual guest can be seen, as well as heard.

Virtual Visit Checklist

- Get parent permission for students to participate in the virtual visit. Some parents are against their child being on camera and, even if they are not, it is a good idea to make them aware of the activity being planned.
- Decide what platform is going to be used. *Tip: Remember that both you and the visitor must be using the same one.*
- Is a special authorization or access code from the district's IT department to successfully download and connect to the platform needed?
- Confirm with the virtual visitor if she will be calling your class or if you should call her at the prearranged time. Make sure you indicate what time zone, as you would not want to arrange a visit for 9am EST if your visitor is on the West Coast.
- Test the software ahead of time from school using the same computer/microphone/camera that you will be using the day of the visit. *Tip: Do your test at least a week in advance. That way if there are any complications there is time for the IT department to assist you. Do not wait until the morning of the visit to test your program and equipment.*
- Discuss protocol with your students ahead of time. No calling out, no talking to your neighbor, etc. are good reminders. Be sure they know that they will be on camera!
- Have students prepare questions for the virtual visitor and assign them an order in which to ask them. If you will be having a microphone, be sure that it has a long enough cord to reach students in the back row or fresh batteries for a wireless mic.
- Relax and be prepared (and expect) for technological glitches. Even the best-planned visits can experience connection losses and camera issues at the last minute or during the chat. Make sure that your students know what to do and how to behave while you are taking care of the problem, so that their behavior is one less thing to worry about.

Cultural Exchanges & Pen Pals

Teachers are always on the look out for new ways to connect social studies and geography with other core subject areas. Setting up class pen pals and doing cultural exchanges is one of the best ways to integrate the subjects in a way that is both exciting and meaningful for students. The benefit to doing them is that students learn that while people may have different customs, habits, and be in different geographical locations, everyone has something in common.



Social media and the Internet can help you connect with other classrooms around your state, country, and the world.

[Skype in the Classroom](#) is an education project that is geared toward connected teachers and students all around the world. You can post what you are looking for in terms of a cultural/class exchange, as well as collaborate with others on projects throughout the year. Other sites that also give you access to virtual pen pal possibilities are [ePals](#) and [Monster Exchange](#).

ePals encourages educators and students from all around the world to sign-up for their free pen pal exchange program. One of the benefits to their service is that you can be very specific about the type of class you are looking to correspond with. For instance, if your class is studying Brazilian tree frogs, you can search specifically for a class in Brazil.

Monster Exchange is a short-term project with a goal of making students better writers and integrating technology. Paired classes each create a picture of a monster and then write descriptions of it for the other class. Each class must then try to draw the monster based on the descriptions provided. The images are then uploaded to a remote server and feedback is given on the drawing about how similar it is to the original. It is a

fun way to make students think about word choice and descriptions while connecting them with other students around the country.

[Flat Stanley](#) projects and local residents in senior living communities are also really good options for pen pal projects. If you are active on Twitter and have been building your PLN, you can also reach out to those educators to see if they would be interested in taking part in an exchange. Once you start looking for class pen pals, you will find that there are many different options to accommodate your time frame and class studies.

Keep in mind that while you can still have your class handwrite letters to their pen pal class, you can also make use of email and video conferencing to bring technology into the lesson. The more relevant you can make the experience, the more impact it will have on students' in both classrooms. If you have never tried having class pen pals, take a look at some of the Do's and Don'ts below to get you started.



Pen Pal Do's

1. Try to connect with other teachers who you know first. While it may be exciting to have a class of pen pals who are around the world, it is equally as exciting to get mail from a class across the state or in another part of the country.
2. Set clear guidelines with your partnering teacher as to the frequency of correspondence and what the format will be for student letters. For example, do you want to pair students up individually or have the class write

a letter as a group? How often will you write and how quickly should you write back once your class receives a letter or letters? By setting up guidelines before you begin, neither class will be disappointed about not receiving letters on time.

3. Get your students excited about the project by mapping out where the pen pals are located and finding out more about that area. If possible, dedicate a yearlong bulletin board display to your pen pal project.
4. Help students generate ideas for writing to their new friends. Talk about letter structure and possible topics that would be of interest to both parties.
5. Make a big deal out of receiving a class letter or individual letters. The more excited you are about the project, the more excited your class will be also.

Pen Pal Don'ts

1. Don't become class pen pals with someone who you cannot verify is a teacher in a school. There are many predators out there who will happily become pen pals with your class and even create phony personas to gain personal information about students. Always be cautious and use your intuition. If something does not seem quite right, trust your instincts and decline the invitation to become pen pals.
2. Don't give out your students' full names or other personal information. Make sure that students do not give out this information either. If there are children in class with the same first name, use the first initial of their last name to distinguish them. Home addresses should also never be given out. While this project is a fun way to connect and get students excited about learning, you need to be vigilant about their safety.
3. Don't post students' pictures on your class website. It may be tempting to post pictures of your students or their pen pals on your class blog or photo site, but by putting children's pictures online, you expose them to risks that you may not be aware of. If you want to exchange pictures with the other class, be sure that the other teacher is in agreement about not posting student pictures.

Adopting a Soldier as a Pen Pal

Another option for connecting with a pen pal is to adopt a soldier or a platoon. These pen pals not only write, but also give students real life examples of bravery, valor, and patriotism. While they are similar in many ways to the pen pal options above, they do have unique considerations that you will need to be aware of before beginning.

Finding a Military Pen Pal

If your school is near a military base, chances are that someone's mother or father is currently deployed. Your class can adopt that soldier, or the entire platoon, for the length of their deployment or the school year. Having that personal connection to a soldier can make all the difference for both your class and the pen pal. If you are not near a military base, there may still be someone in the school who has a parent who is deployed as part of the National Guard, or a teacher's son or daughter who is currently serving overseas.

If you cannot find anyone, there are some great organizations who pair up soldiers and platoons with pen pals. Adopt-A-Platoon is one of the most well known and organized groups.

They require extensive verification that your request to be a pen pal is legitimate to ensure the safety of the soldiers. Due to their verification process and limited staff of volunteers, it may take some time to hear back from them.

What to Expect

Most soldiers who are adopted by your class will make every effort to embrace the pen pal relationship to the best of their ability. Keep in mind, and explain to the children, that their letters may be rare. This is not due to a lack of interest, but rather to their very demanding reality of keeping our country safe. One of the best ways to explain this to your students is to emphasize that their job, as student pen pals, is to bring a smile to their

soldier pen pal's face with their letters and cards. By preparing students for the inevitable delays between correspondence, disappointment is minimized. Commit to continue writing throughout the school year, even if you do not hear anything for a few months.

How to Organize Letter Writing

There are many different ways that you can organize your class' letters to your soldier pen pal. One way is to have each student write an individual letter on a sheet of paper and staple them together. Another clever way to make the letters and notes easy for the soldier to keep together, is to use a blank, soft cover journal. Students can write and edit their rough drafts and then copy them into the journal. Use students' [chair pockets](#) to help facilitate the passing of the journal. As each student finishes copying in his letter, he can tuck an American flag on a stick inside the journal at the next available page and place it in his neighbor's chair pocket. This not only ensures that the journal gets passed around the room, but the flag helps you keep track of where it is at all times. If your students are emailing their soldier pen pal, you can group the typed letters together in one zip folder.

Virtual Visit

Some soldiers will have access to email and video conferencing. If yours does, arrange a time for him to chat with your students live by way of an online video conferencing platform if possible. As with virtual visits from authors and other visitors, be prepared for lost connections and technical glitches.

Make a Movie

Writing and reading can be challenging for struggling students, ESL/ELLs, and young learners, which can make the use of social media tools difficult. Instead of abandoning all social media and Internet tools, use them in a creative way by making videos.



Video production encompasses all aspects of learning and is ideal for your kinesthetic and visual learners.

Everything from storyboarding to script writing to directing and running the equipment is involved with making a video. Students learn how to work cooperatively, problem solve, use technology, and turn an idea into a production. By taking the bulk of the written language component out of many of the tasks, you create a lesson that allows all of your students to succeed no matter what their skill level.

If you are concerned about how to incorporate the use of video making into your curriculum, do not be. There are endless ways to teach, practice, and reinforce the skills that your students need to learn. If you are working on measuring liquids in math class, for example, have students produce a short cooking segment that details the steps to make an ice cream soda. When talking about reading with inflection, create a video of students doing a reader's theater production. Encourage students to read aloud and produce videos of each other reading their favorite picture books for a younger grade.

Get your administrators onboard and have your middle and high school students produce a morning television show for the school. They can include important school-wide announcements, grade specific activities, the weather, and anything else that is relevant to the day. Interviewing guests or career mentors on camera is also another way to get your older students involved with video production.

While many schools block [YouTube](#), there are alternatives for where you can post your class' videos. [SchoolTube](#) and [TeacherTube](#) are two different sites that offer a more school-friendly atmosphere. You can post videos there or post them to your password protected class blog. As always, your students safety must be your first priority so make sure that the posts are protected and visible only to those who you want to see them.

There are also a variety of online sites that help with video creation and editing. [One True Media](#) and [Vimeo](#)

are two examples of sites where students can upload their short videos and edit them online. Desktop based editing software is also available and for some students, [iMovie](#), a popular Apple based application, is already pre-loaded on their iPads and laptops.

From planning to production to editing, video creation allows students to excel and experience learning in a unique way. Grade videos based on a rubric that encourages creative thinking and attention to detail to ensure that students take the assignment seriously. With the proper tools and resources, there is no limit to the types of videos your students will be able to create.

The World in Pictures

If you were asked to develop a lesson for a student who is struggling with written language, what would you create? Chances are that it would be an assignment that is rich in visual components. For those visual learners, it is essential that you provide them with exposure to the Internet and social media in a manner in which they can be successful.



Websites like [flickr](#) and [Photobucket](#) encourage users to share their photographs and videos with other users. To use such a site in the classroom, create a class account where students can post their pictures, videos, or photo collages. Encourage the use of photo editing software or websites to enhance the learning experience. [Picnik](#) is a web-based program that offers free photo editing, but desktop applications such as iPhoto and [Picasa](#) also work well. If sharing photos online to an open database like flickr is not feasible, consider having students create slide

shows and share them through email or as an embedded collage on your class website. Other photo sharing sites, such as [Kodak Gallery](#) or [Snapfish](#), might also be better suited to your class' needs and your school district's website policies.

For a class project that requires students to imagine and design a unique habitat on an imaginary planet, let them "pin" pictures of things that would be found in the new environment on a [Pinterest](#) board. Pinterest is a website that allows users to "grab" pictures from websites and "pin" them to virtual bulletin boards. You could use the idea with any assignment and any subject. For educators, the site is also a treasure trove of really good teaching resources and ideas from around the web. Other educators pin their finds to boards under the "Education" tab and create bulletin boards of their favorite finds.

Whether your students are using a picture on flickr as a journal writing prompt or surfing the web for photos to pin on a virtual bulletin board, they are learning to visually discriminate and infer based on the images they find. For your students who need a creative outlet that does not involve a lot of writing, picture-based projects are ideal. Finding the right balance between written work and the visual component can then be individualized for each student.

Apps

Mobile applications for today's smart phones and tablets are for more than just game play. App developers realize that learning can take place no matter where you are and have created a wide range of applications for teachers, students, and parents. Whether you are searching for an app that helps students practice math facts or want something that makes anecdotal assessments easy to record and store, there is an app for you.

As with all technology, apps are constantly evolving and new applications get added to the web each day. The ten apps below are versatile and can be adapted for any grade and ability level. The majority of them are also free to download and use. Not all apps are available on all platforms, so be sure to check your device's requirements and compatibility.

Evernote



Keep files organized, download and view PDFs, take pictures as memos, and store anecdotal assessments right at your finger tips using [Evernote](#). Use it with your tablet or smart phone and sync it with your computer for streamlined integration. You can also email directly from the app which saves you valuable time.

BrainPOP



Much like the main website, BrainPOP's [mobile app](#) offers learning fun that students enjoy. Use the app on a tablet at a center or share it with students while waiting for classes to switch, during bathroom breaks, and more. The daily BrainPOP video comes complete with a comprehension quiz that allows you to check students' understanding in a fun way. BrainPOP's [main website](#) is also worth checking out for classroom use.

HootSuite



There are many different Twitter apps, but [HootSuite](#) offers accessibility to multiple accounts. If you have a personal Twitter account, as well as one for your class, HootSuite allows you to switch back and forth between the two with relative ease. Do a search for #TeachChat and create a stream to follow Really Good Stuff's Wednesday night teacher chats.

Pandora



[Pandora](#) is music app that is perfect for exposing students to various types of music for free. Whether you need a fun pick-me-up song to get the wiggles out or classical music when studying Beethoven, Pandora is the app of choice. Connect your smart phone or tablet to external speakers so that everyone can hear the music.

Kindle, Nook, iBooks, OverDrive

The three most popular e-book readers are all very similar in form and function. They make downloading, reading,

and storing digital content easy. Download a book for your students and read it during transition time, cleanup, or whenever there is a free moment. Search for free books by sorting by price on [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), or the iBook store. You can also download OverDrive and borrow books directly from your library. Public domain classics can be found at a variety of sites for free download in PDF and ePub formats that are compatible with most e-book reader apps.



Math Mago

[Math Mago](#), a fun, timed math fact app, gives students great practice with multiplication, division, addition and subtraction. Students enjoy trying to beat the clock and master the app. While not available for all platforms, there are comparable programs for other devices.



Dragon Dictation

[Dragon Dictation](#) is a computer program and an app. It allows teachers or students to turn their speech into text. While it is not always 100% accurate, it is a valuable resource for those with learning disabilities such as dyslexia.



TeacherPal

Available for both the iPhone and the iPad, [TeacherPal](#) helps educators organize students, assignments, and more. Track attendance, work on grades, and even create custom information for student IDs to make the administrative side of teaching run much smoother. The developer is even working on a new facial recognition feature to make it easier to group student activity.



Flashcards

Create [flashcards](#) to help you study anything at anytime while anywhere. Spelling words, math facts, vocabulary, and foreign language phrases can all be added to the program to create instant flashcards. For students on the go, flashcards can be an easy way to keep study information in front of them without fear of it

getting lost.



Common Core Standards

Quickly reference the [Common Core Standards](#) (CCS) by grade and subject level with this free app for teachers and parents. It provides an easy to read display of the state standards. Use it while planning lessons or suggest it to parents who have questions about the CCS and how they will impact their child's education.

More Great Ways to Use the Internet

Google Docs

Teachers are always scouting for inexpensive and free tools that will help them in the classroom, especially with massive budget cuts in place. Thankfully, one such teacher tool is right under your nose and you may not even know about it. If you have not checked out [Google Docs](#) recently, or ever, it is time to start.



Google Docs is part of Google Apps, which also includes Gmail, Sites, Calendar, Video and Groups. In fact, Goggle just recently opened up Google Apps to schools allowing teachers to have instant access to all the available resources directly in their classroom. States and school districts are slowly taking advantage of the program and recognizing the potential that Google Apps has in the classroom.

When focused solely on the Docs aspect of the application, there are some great resources that are readily available. You can create a new document, form, presentation, drawing, or spreadsheet all online. The advantage to this is that the information is then accessible no matter where you are and not limited to your class computer. Whether you are at home, the coffee shop or on vacation, if you want to work on your documents, you can. You can also share those documents, if you choose, with your students, their parents or other teachers. This is very beneficial when planning presentations or programs with other teachers throughout your district.

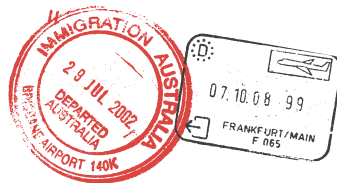
You maintain control of who has access and you can also see who has visited the documents.

Besides creating your own forms and spreadsheets, Google Documents also has a search option that allows you to access templates and other user-created documents. There are lesson plan templates for everything from high school music to substitute plans to everyday 2nd Grade classroom lessons. Need a new grading sheet? There are templates for recording homework quizzes, yearly grade books, subject grading logs and much more. The best thing about these resources is that they are completely free. You can upload your templates to the database and share them with fellow teachers if you choose to.

To access Goggle Docs and begin taking advantage of the amazing resources right at your fingertips, go to Google.com and register for a free account. You will then be able to access Google Docs from your main page no matter where you are. With so many free teaching resources available, you are sure to find something amazing!

Google Lit Trips

Imagine for a moment that you are reading Robert McCloskey's classic story Make Way for Ducklings to your class. You read about their journey and, while the students get a vague idea about the setting, it is not a place that they would recognize. Insert [Google Lit Trips'](#) Make Way for Ducklings download and, suddenly, your students will be transported to the very same streets in Boston, MA as the ducklings.



Geared toward a variety of ages, Google Lit Trips can be found for everything from picture books to young adult novels. The trips are completely free and all that is needed is a free Google Earth download on your computer. Some of the trips are even student created which makes for a fantastic high school or middle school project idea. Interested in a trip not listed? You can suggest that it be included.

Expand the idea behind the website and have students create their own Google Earth Field Trips.

They can map out the locations around their city, state, or country where they would like to visit and see the areas up close. It is an ideal way to combine geography, literature, and technology instruction all in one lesson.

RubiStar: Rubrics on the Web

Create a rubric for any lesson and any grade using [RubiStar](#). This online rubric creator allows you to work from a template of common projects or create your own. Each rubric can be customized to suit the ability level of your class to help them succeed by giving clear and concise guidelines for completion.

Curriki

Stumped for ideas about how to teach antonyms to your second graders? Search [Curriki](#)'s database of lessons, resources, and printable materials. Free to join, this site offers teachers an alternative to the same lesson plans they have used for years. If you have an idea, lesson, or template that you would like to share, you can upload it to the site for review and inclusion in the database.

25 Social Media & Internet Lesson Ideas

1. Use flickr images as journal prompts.
2. Create a video explaining how to do a science experiment.
3. Write a multiplication facts rap and record it.
4. Use GPS coordinates to study specific locations in Colonial America.
5. Create a class newspaper using a blog platform.
6. Produce a daily morning announcements television show.
7. Collect weather data from all over the world on Twitter.
8. Create an advertisement or video for your school using persuasive advertising techniques and video/photo editing.
9. Record a presentation of Reader's Theater and have students reflect on and critique their performances.
10. Become pen pals with a class in another country and visit them virtually.
11. Have a visit from an author via Skype.
12. Create a virtual poster for an upcoming school event using Glogster.
13. Follow the tweets of government leaders and political candidates when studying government and elections.
14. Use Monster Exchange to teach detail writing.
15. Collect data on Twitter for a graph in math class.
16. Teach about Internet safety and cyber-bullying.
17. Collaborate with group members on an assignment using edmodo.
18. Have students create photo collages entitled "A Day in the Life of Me."
19. Practice concise writing by using a 140-character limit similar to a tweet.
20. Post a book review as a blog entry.
21. Support a cause (i.e. – raising funds for a new school playground, supporting a can drive for a local food closet, etc.) and garner support for it using social media.
22. Create virtual flashcards to help study for a spelling test.
23. Video tape and edit an interview with an expert in a job field you would like to pursue.
24. Create a photo collage treasure hunt around the school.
25. Record a reading of a favorite children's book for a lower grade.

Resources

Adopt-a-Platoon – <http://adoptaplatoon.org>
Amazon – <http://amazon.com>
Apple – <http://apple.com>
Authors Who Skype – <http://kmessner.livejournal.com/106020.html>
Barnes & Noble – <http://bn.com>
Blogger – <http://blogger.com>
BrainPop – <http://brainpop.com>
Common Core Standards (App) – <http://masteryconnect.com>
Curriki – <http://curriki.org>
Dragon Dictation (App) – <http://nuancemobilelife.com>
edmodo – <http://edmodo.com>
EduBlogs – <http://edublogs.com>
ePals – <http://epals.com>
Evernote – <http://evernote.com>
Flashcards (App) – <http://orangeorapple.com>
Flat Stanley – <http://flatstanley.com>
Flickr – <http://flickr.com>
Glogster – <http://edu.glogster.com>
Google Docs – <http://docs.google.com?>
Google Lit Trips – <http://googlelittrips.com>
Google Voice & Video – <http://google.com/chat/video>
HootSuite – <http://hootsuite.com>
KidBlog – <http://kidblog.org>
Kodak Gallery – <http://kodakgallery.com>
Monster Exchange – <http://monsterexchange.org>
One True Media – <http://onetruemedia.com>
Pandora – <http://pandora.com>
Photobucket – <http://photobucket.com>
Picasa – <http://picasa.google.com>
Picnik – <http://picnik.com>
Pinterest – <http://pinterest.com>
RubiStar – <http://rubistar.com>
SchoolTube – <http://schooltube.com>
Skype – <http://skype.com>
Skype an Author – <http://skypeanauthor.wetpaint.com>
Skype Education – <http://education.skype.com>
Snapfish – <http://snapfish.com>
#TeachChat instructions – <http://blog.reallygoodstuff.com/?p=8071>
TeacherPal (App) – <http://teacherpal.net>
TeacherTube – <http://teachertube.com>
Twiducate – <http://twiducate.com>
Twitter – <http://twitter.com>
Vimeo – <http://vimeo.com>
WordPress – <http://wordpress.com>
YouTube – <http://youtube.com>