



EDUCATOR SPOTLIGHT

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Next-Generation Tools Come Home

Parents can use many of the same Web 2.0 tools kids have in school for family projects and organizing. **by Vicki A. Davis**

“**M**om, I have to go blog my homework.” “Dad, can I watch YouTube a little longer?”

Parents who hear this type of talk know that their children have entered the world of Web 2.0. This is not the Internet of the '90s or Web 1.0—where we merely found information. It is instead a fluid network called the read/write Web or Web 2.0, because users can create the Web itself. Here are a few examples of new Web 2.0 tools and how your classroom or family can use them.



Calendaring services:

Calendaring services allow families to have a centralized online place for everything. My family of five uses AirSet, which synchronizes with Microsoft Outlook, PDAs, and cell phones. Simply add events to the calendar and mark off who is participating. Family members receive a daily e-mail and text message with the next day's calendar. You also can insert special reminders, letting AirSet become a virtual nag.

GETTING STARTED: www.airset.com



RSS feeds:

Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is a tool that lets Web users see the latest content on a site and who made those changes. Parents and teachers can monitor where kids participate online by using free RSS readers, such as Bloglines and Google Reader. A parent with an RSS reader can click on the RSS subscribe button on his or her child's blog or MySpace page (not all pages have them) and receive every change made to that page.

GETTING STARTED: coolcatteacher.blogspot.com/2006/07/easy-way-to-monitor-your-child-on.html



Blogs:

Short for weblogs, blogs are online journals in which people write, share notes, and post links. Most blogs are updated daily, with the newest postings at the top of the page. Through blogging, teachers can connect their classrooms with experts and authors, and students can feel that their work has meaning, as parents are able to read and comment on their child's work.

Some teachers use blogs for note taking. "We move quickly in our advanced-placement English class," says Betsy Caldwell, an English teacher at Westwood Schools in Camilla, Ga., "so we use a class blog where daily scribes post notes. It is an invaluable resource."

Many parents are starting blogs to leave a legacy for their children with thoughts, opinions, photos, and quotations. These virtual, searchable scrapbooks can be converted easily into printed books at websites such as LuLu.

GETTING STARTED: www.classblogmeister.com; youthvoices.net/elgg; www.lulu.com



Digital storytelling:

Digital storytelling combines telling stories with multimedia, such as images, audio, video animation, and web publishing. Children can produce educational videos, write scripts, or simply view and comment on others' offerings. My students have a channel on YouTube where they share tutorials they created.

Some classrooms use Google Video to share videos, and teacher-friendly sites such as TeacherTube and Uth TV let people flag inappropriate content for prompt removal.

Families also are getting into digital storytelling, combining recorded podcasts and photographs to make movies. By using free movie-making programs such as Movie Maker or Photostory for the PC, or iMovie for the Mac, families can create and burn DVDs to stay in touch with distant relatives or to keep for future viewing.

GETTING STARTED: www.teachertube.com; www.uthtv.com; www.youtube.com; video.google.com



Wikis:

Wikis (Hawaiian for "quick") are websites that let people edit, add, or remove content. They are the definitive cooperative-learning tool, and can be used for promoting critical-thinking skills, creating graphic organizers, group note taking or writing, global projects, or lesson planning. Because they are easy to work with, families are finding great uses for wikis, such as planning reunions and vacations or building family trees.

Jeanne Simpson's seventh-grade math class at Decatur City Schools in Decatur, Ala., created a math wiki with a class in Manitoba, Canada, that included several student-created slide shows about converting currencies. For my classroom wiki, we analyzed Thomas Friedman's *The World Is Flat* with a classroom in Dhaka, Bangladesh. For our next wiki, we are collaborating with classrooms in Austria, Bangladesh, Australia, and China.

GETTING STARTED: www.wikispaces.com; www.pbwiki.com; www.wetpaint.com



Online bookmarking:

Since students use computers in several locations, more schools are encouraging the use of online-bookmarking services, such as del.icio.us and Google Notebook, for term papers or collaborative projects. With one click, kids can save a link to the Web pages they are using as resources and add comments. They can retrieve the bookmarks from any computer, share them with others, and easily cite them when the term paper is complete.

Teachers use online bookmarking to share links with their students, and families are creating and sharing bookmarks to plan trips or to save all of the websites that they use to pay bills.

I have an online-bookmarking site for all the presentations I've done and another bookmarking site with links to all the sites I've mentioned in this article. It is an easy way to share and record information.

GETTING STARTED: del.icio.us; www.google.com/notebook



Podcasts:

Podcasts are electronic recordings that are posted on the Internet. Re-listening to lectures helps students boost academic achievement, and many people are recording podcasts to stay in touch with friends and family.

Cheryl Oakes and Bob Sprinkle, technology integrators for the Wells Ogunquit Community School District in Wells, Maine, record podcasts about creativity, Internet safety, and ethics for elementary-age students, and present lesson summaries.

Services such as Evoca or Odeo let people record onto the Internet using a computer microphone or telephone. Young children can record podcasts for their grandparents and traveling parents can check in from their cell phones.

I took my digital recorder on vacation and recorded my children's thoughts after each site. I added it as narration to our photos using Windows Photo Story and burned it onto a DVD.

GETTING STARTED: www.evoca.com; www.odeo.com; www.youthbridges.net



Communicating:

Brian Crosby, a fourth-grade teacher for the Washoe County School District in Sparks, Nev., uses the free online phone service Skype with a webcam to include a student who became homebound during chemotherapy. "When we work in groups, we just turn the laptop around and the students in her group point the webcam at whoever is talking, and she becomes a working member of that group." Family members can use the same tools to stay in contact when traveling or when a child goes going off to college.

GETTING STARTED: www.skype.com; www.meebo.com ■■

Vicki A. Davis is an award-winning teacher and blogger in Camilla, Ga.

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Google Notebook: CIC
tinyurl.com/23o95y
The author's Google Notebook site.

How to Keep Up with All of this Blogging Stuff Using Bloglines
coolcatteacher.blogspot.com/2006/04/how-to-keep-up-with-all-of-this.html