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JENNIFER GONZALEZ:

“Try something and you build confidence from there and suddenly you find yourself becoming tech savvy.”

VICKI DAVIS:

The Ten-minute Teacher podcast with Vicki Davis. Every week day you’ll learn powerful practical ways to be a more remarkable teacher today.

VICKI: Happy Five Idea Friday, teachers. We have one of my favorite Ed tech gurus, Jennifer Gonzales with us today and she has her new teacher’s guide to tech for 2017 <http://cctea.ch/2017-teacher-tech> . Now, Jennifer, you have some tools that you mentioned that kind of need to be on the radar of some teachers that maybe they haven’t heard of or tried yet. And you’ve picked out five for us today. So what’s your first one?

JEN: The first one is called Peergrade <https://www.peergrade.io/> and what I love about this is that a lot of teachers want to have their students give each other feedback but there’s a lot of problems with it. For example, we have to hand things out and match kids up and then we aren’t sure who’s done the feedback, we can’t see all the feedback, it’s really time consuming. What Peergrade lets you do is collect the student’s work digitally, sort of like you would with Google Docs. Actually, I think it’s integrated with Google Docs <http://docs.google.com> and Google Drive so it’s perfect to use with that. Then you automatically redistribute that work for peer review. You can make it anonymous, the kids give each other their feedback, you can give them a rubric to go by, however you want them to get that feedback.

And then as the teacher you can see who’s done it, you can see the feedback and what’s really great about it is that students not only score each other’s work but then the kids who receive the score can rate the feedback in terms of did this person give me helpful feedback? Are they a good helper? They can flag inappropriate feedback. So it really kind of solves a lot of the problems that we have and inconveniences with having students give each other feedback.

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VICKI: It sounds like it’s not technically a grade, it’s really more feedback. Is that right?

JEN: Yeah. You can actually set it to give them a grade, you could average those grade into the student’s final grade if you wanted to or you can just use it as a feedback tool. So it’s pretty flexible.

VICKI: Awesome. Okay, what’s your second one?

JEN: Second one is called CommonLit <https://www.commonlit.org/> and I just love this. This is a free online library of literary and informational text and it's geared towards grades 5-12. We're always looking for great test for students to read and we don't always have them. So CommonLit has put this all together and kind of indexed them. These are public domain texts, these are donated works from really highly regarded publishers. And they've got them organized by subject, by genre, by Common Core standard. They put text-dependent questions with them, if you want to monitor student comprehension. Also with each one they will pair other text within the library. And these are hand-selected, they're not just automatically generated by the platform. They also pair them with videos and images to really make it a very media-rich experience. And it's completely free. It's a fantastic site, CommonLit.

VICKI: Awesome. And it's free. And we do love free, don't we?

JEN: Yeah.

VICKI: Okay. What's out third? Number three is MySimpleShow <https://www.mysimpleshow.com/>, this is also free, it's a video creation tool where you write a little script for what you want your video to be about and then their search engine looks for images. They have all these little cute hand-drawn kind of clipart and they match it with the scripts so that these images will appear in the video, they're timed with the script. Then you can get MySimpleShow to generate a computer voice to actually narrate it or you could upload your own voice reading it. It's a very fast way to create videos that are pretty cute and pretty simple and it'd be great for tutorials, for flipped lessons, it would be great for student projects. It's just a really good kind of low tech tool for creating videos really quickly.

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VICKI: And I love that one too. It's fantastic for explainer videos, you know, having kids explain something.

JEN: Yes.

VICKI: Okay, what's number four?

JEN: Number four is Adobe Spark <https://spark.adobe.com/> and Adobe is a giant in terms of design and technology. And what they're doing is offering these free suite of tools that allows people to create images, sort of short web pages and videos that are really professional looking with almost no tech skills at all. They give you a library of fonts, they give you a library of Creative Commons Images, they give you templates. And it really is just sort of like click, click, click and then you have this beautiful image that could be used to support student project. If your kids are making a podcast, it could give them a cover for their podcast for example. Or if they're creating a website or writing a blog post that they need an image for, it would be a great thing for that.

It's similar to My Simple Show, in that you don't need a whole lot of tech skills and you can get things that are beautifully done very, very quickly. So this one really is a brand new tool that is worth a look for sure.

VICKI: So what platforms is Adobe Sparkle?

JEN: It's web-based, these are all web-based tools.

VICKI: Cool. Okay, what's our fifth?

JEN: The last one is called eLink <https://elink.io/> and this one is really simple. So imagine if somebody said to you, Vicki, I need a list of really great makerspace website and you said, oh yeah, I know a couple. You wanted to give them a few links, you could either just email them a list of links. Or with eLink what it allows you to do is sort of create this – it's like a single webpage that has the links to these pages but it will pull up an image, you can write your own description for it but again it's a really nicely designed way of delivering a collection to somebody.

So I could see people using this as an assignment for students, if they have to find five resources about the Civil War, for example, and they've got to pull it together in this eLink page.

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It would be a great way to deliver resources to parents. You know, if you wanted to have them find ways of helping their students with homework and you've found five great articles on that, you could package them together in this really nice image. It's almost like – what is the website where you put those newsletters together?

VICKI: Smore <https://www.smore.com/> ? You think it's Smore?

JEN: It's sort of the like with Smore where you've got this single webpage but it's interactive and you just pull in whatever you need. So it's similar to Smore but I think it's more designed for – just like content curation for sharing content with other people.

VICKI: Okay. So, Jennifer, as we finish up a common problem that I know you and I both have when we speak at conferences is that teachers get so overwhelmed. How many tools do you think teachers really need in their tool kit to really be successful in their classes? I mean, do they need to know a hundred tools or how many?

JEN: No, I don't think, I would take a guess that every teacher probably has about 10 to 15 tools that they use regularly for different things. And this would even be tech savvy teachers. I think the misconception among teachers is that those who are tech savvy are using all of the tools all of the time for everything. And I just think that that's a myth. I think if you would have talked to any teacher, they would have their favorites and they would be using them in different areas. That would be my guess. What would you say?

- VICKI: I would say that 10 or 15 is about right. My strategy is innovate like a turtle, move forward a little bit every day and not to get overwhelmed because I think that's such a mistake teachers make. They say, I can't understand it all so I'm just not going to do anything. And they're doing themselves such a disservice.
- JEN: Absolutely. I cannot agree more. You just try something and you build confidence from there and then suddenly you find yourself becoming quite tech savvy.
- VICKI: Okay, teachers. So you have gotten five fantastic ideas. Check the show notes. I love Jennifer's Teacher's Guide to Tech. I had it last year, I'm recommending it again this year, so I'll share it in my newsletter in the show notes. And there's many more different technologies that you can use. But remember, innovate like a turtle. You don't have to use a lot of them, just pick a couple that solve a problem in your classroom or meet a need and just use those.

Thank you for listening to the Ten-minute Teacher Podcast. You can download the show notes and see the archive at coolcatteacher.com/podcast. Never stop learning.

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