Best Practices of Web Tool Integration in School

Web Technology Integration Strategies in Education
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An overview of three web tools which currently offer the best potential advantages for impacting teaching and learning are discussed—Google Docs, Wikis, and Twitter.

There are many Web tools available for teachers to use in their classrooms. This large selection leads to the dilemma of which web tools to use for teaching and learning. Another issue is the lack of time teachers have to thoroughly research strategies and advantages for a web tool. This time constraint often leads to misinformation, confusion, and frustration.

However, a good window of opportunity to explore Web tools is during the last couple of months of a school year. As the school year begins to wind down, students need to experience new learning strategies and challenges to keep them focused. These new challenges help avoid the typical end of school year fever, which often undermines learning.

Planning for Information Integration with Web Tools

Each tool requires a review of basic capabilities, along with a research of best practices for each. One approach to accomplish this is by enrolling in either a distance learning or local continuing education technology integration course. Often, distance learning courses offer opportunities to learn integration techniques local courses may not offer.

A good approach is to select a lesson and practice integrating the three Web tools discussed. This strategy provides the opportunity determine technology knowledge and integration weaknesses. Next, take these lessons learned and integrate these technologies in another lesson or two to determine if new strategies work. Once the bugs are worked out, the path is set to begin full scale integration next school year.

Web Tool Information Integration Techniques

Three specific Web tools addressed are Google Docs, Wikis, and Twitter. Best practices for integration strategies for each tool are discussed, along with advantages each tool offers.

Google Docs – is an online word processing, presentation, form, and spreadsheet program provided free by Google. This tool provides students with a readily available place to complete homework, projects, and other class assignments. Google Docs is ideal for any subject to support writing, data collection and analysis, and communication skills.

The primary advantage of Google Docs is during group work and group assignments. Student groups can access any document, from anywhere with internet access, and all students in the group at the same time. This leads to greater collaboration, along with an increase in quality of finished products. Google Docs provides teachers the opportunity to provide comments in the document.

Wikis – allow teachers to create a professional looking webpage for engaging students. Wikis allow uploading of curriculum materials such as documents, pictures, podcasts, links to appropriate websites, student resources, presentations, and more. Teachers can build their entire curriculum in their Wiki webpage, along with adding pages for students.
The main advantage with Wikis is that teachers can keep their curriculum updated with the latest data information, online materials, and resources. The ability to readily adapt curriculum and resource changes is an advantage traditional methods lack.

Twitter – is real-time networking for teachers, allowing teachers to communicate beyond their classroom walls for support from other educators, 140 characters at a time. This can occur when a teacher requests assistance for curriculum support or shares a teachable moment with colleagues. The main advantage of Twitter is improving teacher professional knowledge, collaboration, self-reflection, and ability to remain current with the latest news and trends in education. The second advantage is when students use this tool to collect information and data from other students around the world.

Making Connections with Web Tools and Data Integration
Learning information integration using the three Web tools discussed takes education, planning, and practice. The processes of working out problems that develop, both technological and pedagogical, are part of integrating new technological tools in a teacher’s curriculum. However, the potential of improving students’ understanding of concepts, not just learning, are worth overcoming these problems.

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