

ALTEC NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE

SKYPE IN THE CLASSROOM

Use free video conferencing software to enhance the learning experience in your classroom.

PAGE 1

WHAT'S A PLURK?

This month we've explored the meanings of popular Internet terminology. Plurk, Twitter, Wiki, Moodle, Today's Meet. What are these things and how can you use them?

PAGE 2

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

Meet ALTEC staff at the following spring conferences. PAGE 3

ALTEC SUPPORTS YOUR EXISTING PROJECTS

Find out how ALTEC services can provide valuable support to your existing projects.

PAGE 3



in the classroom:

... discover the possibilities

Skype is free video conferencing software that can be downloaded to any computer and used with a Web cam that can be purchased for as little as \$20 at any store that sells computer accessories. Although it has been around for years, the recent widespread use of Skype on the Oprah show has allowed teachers to see its ease of use demonstrated and find creative ways to use it in the classroom. Schools who thought that incorporating video conferencing into their classrooms would mean incurring expensive equipment and training costs are now finding that Skype software can easily be implemented by teachers or students in a matter of minutes.

Here are some of the ways teachers are using Skype in the classroom:

- ♦ Collaborative research projects with students in other schools
- ♦ Question and answer sessions with experts or presenters
- ♦ Speech and communication projects to a remote audience
- ♦ Practice foreign language skills with a class in a country that speaks that native language
- ♦ Professional development and collaboration sessions with other teachers
- ♦ Conduct parent teacher conferences
- ♦ Allow students who are absent or have special needs to participate in class activities
- ♦ Virtual office hours for homework help

The great thing is that Skype can be combined with other free software such as Google Docs or wikis, which allow users to store a document online and make changes to it simultaneously, to really enhance collaborative projects. Here are two links to schools that are using Skype in creative ways; visit these sites to find inspiration for your own classroom:

Arisley School

<http://crosbyclass.wikispaces.com/Video-Conferencing>

CoolCat Teacher: Using Skype in the Classroom

<http://coolcatteacher.blogspot.com/2006/10/using-skype-in-classroom-or-just.html>

Go to <http://skype.com> to download Skype and get started!

WHAT'S A PLURK?

... uncovering the meanings of Internet Terminology

It seems like new Internet terms are being coined everyday: Wiki, Plurk, Moodle, Today's Meet, Twitter, Jog the Web, Web 2.0. Some of these terms are the titles of specific Web sites, others are tasks you complete at a Web site, and others describe a type of Web site. If you've ever heard one of these terms in a conversation and thought to yourself, "What's a plurk?" You are not alone. This month I decided to explore the meanings of some of these popular Internet terms so that we can all get up to speed.



What's a Wiki?

Most of you have heard of the popular Web site Wikipedia, but you may have also heard people talk about creating a *wiki* about a topic or for an event or organization. If you're like me, aside from Wikipedia, I didn't really know what a wiki was or that I could create one myself for free. The term wiki is the Hawaiian word for *fast*. A wiki is a Web page that can be modified and updated instantly by anyone with access to it using simple Edit and Save buttons. It's a simplified way to publish information on the Web. Similar to a word processing document, it requires no knowledge of html code, but because it's on the Web, users in any location can

access the page and modify it. Wikis can be used for collaborative writing, brainstorming, writing documentation, coordinating meetings, planning and documenting events, meeting agendas and notes, translating documents together, and almost any working collaborative project you can think of. Here are some popular Web sites where you can create your own wiki.

<http://www.pbwiki.com>

<http://www.wetpaint.com>

<http://www.wikispaces.com>



What's a Plurk?

Plurk is a social networking site that educators and other professionals are using to share resources and stay in contact with colleagues. Plurk is generating quite a buzz in educational circles because it's a terrific way to find high-quality resources on the Web. The site is set up like a timeline where you post short updates about your day, great Web sites you've found, and questions to colleagues and friends you are connected with. To get started, just go to <http://plurk.com> and create a free account. Once you have an account you can search for colleagues, great presenters, or teachers by name or e-mail address and become a "fan" of their plurk. This

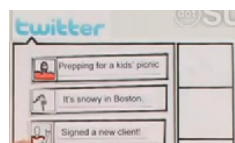
lets you follow along and read their daily posts. Unlike Facebook or MySpace, Plurk is not a site where you post pictures and music. Because the updates are short, it's less time consuming than other sites. It's a simple and easy way to share ideas and communicate with friends and colleagues. Several AL-TEC presenters heard about plurking at a conference and decided to check it out. They now are finding at least 10 great new resources to share each day! The next time you're at a conference or a meeting and hear someone mention plurking, you'll be in the know. Visit <http://plurk.com> to get started.

What is ?

Moodle is an open-source learning management system that allows teachers to create online courses and learning experiences to enhance and supplement traditional face-to-face classes. Moodle allows teachers to extend the learning experience to include online interaction, so learning can take place both in and out of the classroom. Moodle is free and the application must be downloaded to a Web server such as a school server. Teachers can then use the application to conduct full online courses, deliver content to students, or supplement classes with several tools such as forums, wikis, and databases. Visit <http://moodle.org> to view sample Moodle courses and see if Moodle is right for your school.

What do you do at Today'sMeet?

Have you ever been in the middle of a presentation and wondered what the audience is thinking? There are always notes, whispers, comments, and questions going on in the background of any presentation. Today's Meet is about that "backchannel" of communication. It allows audience members to post those short comments and questions during a presentation so the speaker can tailor the information and answer questions as he/she goes along. Today's Meet makes it simple to connect with your audience. This mode of audience participation helps your audience stay focused, content, and more willing to participate. As a speaker you benefit from the immediate feedback and the sound of typing helps you to know you're keeping the audience interested. You simply go to <http://todaysmeet.com>, name your room and the amount of time you'd like the data to stay online and you're ready to go!



What is Twitter?

Twitter is a fairly new application on the Web. It's made to answer the first question everyone asks when they call you on the phone: "What are you doing?" It allows colleagues, friends, and family to stay connected to you throughout the day. This is especially helpful in a work environment where you need to be able to contact people frequently. Twitter recognizes that life happens in between phone calls and email. Instead of a blog or an email or a phone call to find out what colleagues are up to, you go

to Twitter, create a free account, connect with other friends who are on Twitter, and start posting short updates about where you are and what you're up to. It's also a great way to share great books and resources. Twitter is extremely popular because it's a simple way to stay in connected with your friends and colleagues. You can update Twitter using software on your browser, your cell phone, or just going to your account on <http://twitter.com>. All your "friends" updates post to your page immediately so you just go to your own page and see what they're up to. You're having coffee, your meeting ran late, you're reading a great new book, you're working on a project, you're at a great presentation, you found a great new Web site. Colleagues, family, and friends get a chance to learn more about you and it gives you a chance to stay connected and learn more about what their daily lives are like. Visit <http://twitter.com> and click "Watch a video" for a quick demonstration of the benefits of Twitter.



How do I Jog the Web?

Jog the Web is a site that allows you to capture a collection of sites about one topic and create a Track. You then have a link to the beginning of your Track and people can click the arrow keys to click from one site to another. It's a great way to organize a long list of your favorite resources about a topic quickly. Recently a colleague saw a question posted on Plurk asking for resources that had good online math games. The

teacher received so many great resources she created a Track on Jog the Web to organize those links and share them with others. Visit <http://www.jogtheweb.com/play/1NJhMR6H1CSD> and press "Play" to toggle through 39 great math game sites for grades K-6.

What is WEB 2.0? Is there a new Internet?

Most people have heard the term Web 2.0 and wondered, is there a new Internet? How do I access it? Do I have to buy special software to get it? The answer to all of those questions is no. The Internet used to be a reading and research tool, a read-only resource like a newspaper or a book. Web 2.0 is actually a term that refers to dynamic Internet Web sites that allow participants to write, post, publish, tag, subscribe, and contribute. Examples of Web 2.0 sites are Wikipedia, Delicious (a social networking site), Flickr, The Library Thing, NewsGator, Google Reader, and many of the teacher tools at 4Teachers.org such as TrackStar, RubiStar, QuizStar, and Web Poster Wizard. Chances are you're already actively involved in Web 2.0 in some form or another. A simple way to think of it is: Web 1.0 is a read-only version of the Internet and Web 2.0 is a read-write version of the Internet.

While I'm sure there are many new Internet terms out there that we have not yet covered and that are yet to come, we hope we've clarified some of the more popular terms being mentioned in professional circles and that you might be inspired to try one of these free resources yourself!



Conference Calendar

Meet ALTEC Staff at these Upcoming Conferences!

KSDE Annual Conference

Kansas State Department of Education

Date: April 30 & May 1, 2009

Location: Hyatt Regency and Century II Convention Complex, Wichita, KS

Web site:

<http://conferences.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=2762>

TechNet

Date: March 12, 2009

Location: Raymore-Peculiar High School, Peculiar, MO

Web site:

<http://education.umkc.edu/kcrpdc/technetconf09.pdf>

MACE

Mid-America Association for Computers in Education

Date: March 5-6, 2009

Location: Kansas State University Alumni Center, Manhattan, KS

Web site:

<http://www.mace-ks.org/maceconference.htm>

RCET-SW

Southwest Education and Technology Conference 2009

Date: March 3-4, 2009

Location: Missouri State University, Springfield, MO

Web site:

<http://associations.missouristate.edu/RCET/conference.htm>

NECC 2009

National Educational Computing Conference

Date: June 28-July 1, 2009

Location: Walter E. Washington Convention Center, Washington, D.C.

Web site:

<http://center.uoregon.edu/ISTE/NECC2009/>

ALTEC PROVIDES SERVICES TO SUPPORT YOUR EXISTING PROJECTS

If you have an existing or proposed project, ALTEC can develop and host your Web site, support your online community with discussion boards, set up your video conference, or custom-design a software application to meet your needs. Propose stronger projects and programs using ALTEC's over 15 years of expertise in educational technology, special needs, professional development, and evaluation. Please call us at 785 864 0699 to set up a free consultation. We're happy to assist you with all your technology needs.

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