

MICHAEL K. BERG
michael.berg@eastern.k12.in.us

PRODUCTIVITY TIP #9

Microsoft Word offers a tool that can sometimes be helpful if you are reviewing a document but are in a hurry. If you are in a very lengthy document and you need to see a brief summary of the document Word can help to sort out some of the non relevant information. Simply open the document and then select the “tools” drop-down menu. From there select “AutoSummarize” which will allow you to read key points of the article. Realize however, Word is still a program and is not a substitute for actual reading. You may lose some important information along the way.

WHAT DOES WEB 2.0 REALLY MEAN

What is web 2.0 and what does it mean to you? Basically the phrase is just a “group branding” for a particular type of website that can be found on the Internet. Web 2.0 sites are dynamic and interactive giving individuals a chance to tailor the page to their taste or interact with tools provided by the site. Web 2.0 takes into account “cloud computing” allowing for applications to be run directly from websites rather than installing them on a computer. You probably reviewed an article sent by Dr. Caddell on Monday which lists some web 2.0 tools. Well, I thought I would take this opportunity to add to that list. You will find another list of sites that are categorized as web 2.0, which may be helpful in the classroom, attached to this edition of the TechTrainer. Many of these sites are specifically tailored to learning environments and provide tools that students can interact with. Please read through them, and if the blurb sounds interesting give the website a try.

ED SOFT

FREEMIND



Freemind is mindmapping software to help organize and visually link ideas together. The program can be used to create intricate webs to show the flow of thought processes, physical processes, or relations between separate subjects. Teachers and students alike can use the software to organize as they prepare lessons or homework assignments. Freemind is also a useful tool for project based work allowing individuals to define specific starting and ending points with goals along the way. Freemind is freely downloadable at <http://freemind.sourceforge.net>. If you like Freemind you might also try Webspiration, an online, collaborative mindmapping tool. To get started simply go to the site at the following address: <http://www.mywebspiration.com>. Once there, use your email to sign up for a free account. Start creating a mindmap and then invite others to join you in the process by sending an email invite from the site.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND TRAINING

*HS/MS Interwrite Session 1 training (for those with Interwrite boards) during Monday prep period.

*5th and 6th grade Mimio Session 1 training during Wednesday prep period.

HS/MS Interwrite Session 2 training during Friday prep period.

*I will be attending acuity follow-up/report training on 10/22 in the morning.

GET SITES

“Great Educational Technology” Sites
www.wolframalpha.com

WEB 2.0: BEHOLD THE SITES

Storybird.com—This unique, open site allows you to read stories created by others or create stories of your own. Simply create a free account, pick out your artwork from the provided artists, and begin putting together your story. You can even invite a friend to help you finish the story if you get writer's block. You can then share the story with others or peruse the stories others have already created.

Xtranormal.com—Ever want to write a movie. Well xtranormal.com allows you to create short 3D animations with movements and facial expressions. All you do is make the decisions and type in the dialog. Bring a story a student writes to life. The site asks you to sign up for an account and requires email access. Additionally it asks that users be over the age of 13 and that they respect copyright law.

Wordle.net—Wordle.net allows a user to enter custom or pasted text and create a computer generated word cloud. The creation is quite simple and the applications in a teaching environment are numerous. One idea is to have your students copy a short story they have written into the word box via cut and paste and then generate a word cloud. The words that show up the biggest are the words most used in the writing. This gives students a visible sign of the quality and quantity of words they are using in their work.

Animoto.com—Use animoto.com to create custom slideshows to music. Animoto asks you for pictures, video clips and a soundtrack and then composes a 30 second slideshow video for you based upon the beat of the track used. You can even create text overlays that appear on screen during your final video. The service is fast and free when you create an account. Final videos are able to be downloaded.

Timetoast.com—Timetoast provides an easy user interface to create custom made timelines to share with class, incorporating both pictures and words. There are also many community timelines on numerous subjects posted for use. Remember to preview content though, as the site is open to the public. Again you have to sign up for this free site.

Zamzar.com—Zamzar is an online file conversion utility. You simply upload the file, choose a new file format, and then enter your email. The converted file will be in your inbox in minutes.

Wolframalpha.com—Have you ever wanted a search engine that will answer specific questions? Well wolframalpha.com is just that type of search engine. Ask it a quantifiable question and it will give you a quantifiable answer. For instance, if you were going to Europe and needed to know how much money to take you could ask it how much \$100 is in euros. It will bring up a chart showing the previous years conversion rates and automatically compute what \$100 is at the current exchange rate.

Diigo.com—The diigo.com site allows you to annotate web pages, create a learning community, and create online bookmarks so that you can access them from any computer in the world. There are some other neat features with this site as well. You may want to check it out.

Wallwisher.com—Wallwisher.com allows you to create a collaborative stickynote board online that you can share with others. It also allows them to add their own notes to your board. The site asks you to login/register. It may be helpful to inform your family, friends, and coworkers of your schedule and what is going on in your life.

Prezi.com—This site offers a free or pay version of an excellent nonlinear presentation software. You may see one of these sites at a training session in the near future. I am very impressed and it offers a unique alternative to PowerPoint.

Polleverywhere.com—The final site I am throwing in right now probably applies to college classrooms but it is very interesting none the less. Polleverywhere.com allows you to create instant access polls with instantaneous feedback via a text message. The nice thing is that you can text from yahoo instant messenger, so you could theoretically use this tool from a computer as well.