

## **The Classroom Web Page: A Must-Have in 2008**

By Jim Moulton - 2/19/08

Every American educator needs to build and maintain his or her own teacher Web page.

Before you respond with arguments about how many non-Web-paged educators are among the best teachers you know, understand that I'm sure you're right. In fact, I bet many of those nonwired teachers run wonderfully holistic, project-based classrooms where hands-on activities abound and high expectations for all students are the rule rather than the exception. But I believe they could be doing so much more for their students if they did have a Web page.

In keeping with my commitment to put the why before the how whenever I advocate for technology integration, let me explain the benefits I see in a personally maintained classroom Web page before I provide some links to simple tools that allow any teacher, regardless of technical know-how, to create a live Web page for free:

**Efficiency:** A teacher Web page helps gain teaching time. When hyperlinks on that page are connected to high-quality resources, the students quickly become used to getting to the classroom page and moving on to the resources. Gone will be the days when you and your students get to the computer lab or take out the laptops and you begin the lengthy ordeal of getting everyone to the same Web site. You know the drill: "OK, everyone, look up here on the screen . . . up here, Juanita . . . Alice? Craig? OK, I want you all to open your browser and type in 'www . . .'" And far too often, the dialogue continues, "Careful, Billy, you only put in two w's" or "Come on, Sal, back to the page we are all headed to, and just wait for everyone to get there."

**Resources:** Students gain access to many more curriculum resources. By placing those hyperlinks to relevant resources on the classroom Web page, teachers not only can speed up access to materials but can also exponentially increase all students' access to high-quality curriculum materials that directly support content. Though placing resources one click away is no guarantee that students will use them independently, it goes a long way toward doing all that can be done to support all learners.

**Relevance:** Students will come to see the Internet as a personally relevant extension of school. Because the Internet is already an extension of so much of their nonschool life, failing to establish a classroom component on the Web can marginalize the perceived importance of school.

**Connection:** Students come to see their teachers as connected. Let's face it: In American culture today, if you're not online, you're not relevant. Just ask any business or entertainment effort. PBS now creates Web content concurrently with television content. The Internet is that important.

**Access:** Through the inclusion of an email address, a contact form, or another communication tool, students and their families gain extended access to their teachers. The teacher is the most valuable resource in the classroom, so it only makes sense to provide greater access.

**Experience:** Students will gain experience using digital resources in direct support of learning. This will be a twenty-first-century life skill, as virtually all professions now use online learning tools to provide services to employees, and colleges and universities are constantly ramping up their use of digital tools to support their students in myriad ways.

Now, let's move on to the how. The best way is for schools to install and support a tool that allows teachers to create Web pages easily. And schools should give teachers both the encouragement and the freedom to build their own sites. But if your school is not there yet, you can make use of some of my favorite tools for building free, live classroom Web pages. I know I may leave out your favorites, so please post a comment and add them to the list, or let us know what tool your school is using and what you like about it!

\* **Portaportal:** <http://portaportal.com> This free site has been around for a while, but it just keeps getting better. Just fill in the blanks to build a page. Though you have limited ability to add text, there are unlimited categories, which allows you to provide easy access to resources in an organized manner.

\* **Web Poster Wizard:** <http://poster.4teachers.org/> This tool allows you to create teacher and student Web pages. Like all the other wonderful 4Teachers.org tools, it's easy and powerful.

\* **Google Sites:** <http://sites.google.com> Google makes it easy and gives it away to everyone. Top dog. Sign up if you need to...