

WEBWATCH

Educational Uses of Blogs and Wikis

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HOW THE world communicates is changing every day. Two new tools that educators across the nation are integrating into their classroom instruction are blogs and wikis. A blog (the term is a contraction of “Web log”) is a form of online communication most often described as an online journal.

Wikis combine features of websites and word processors to create a new kind of application that allows multiple authors to write and edit content. A blog is usually created and maintained by a single individual and does not allow visitors to change the original posted material. Instead, visitors add their comments to the original posting and to one another’s comments. Both of these tools can be used by educators to engage students in digital discussions and to create a workspace for collaborative projects. The following websites offer a plethora of information and support to educators, allowing them to define, create, and implement blogs and wikis.

<http://blogsavvy.net/how-you-should-use-blogs-in-education>

Blogsavvy, a blog created by James Farmer and powered by WordPress, bills itself as “your professional blog consultant.” It offers tips for educators who want to incorporate blogs in their instruction, as well as tips on blogging for business, for a cause, and for cash.

<http://edublogs.org>

Edublogs is a blog-hosting site that allows professors, K-12 teachers, and students of all ages to easily host their own blogs, even if they’re not technologically inclined. Also a creation of James Farmer, the site offers some advanced options such as accommodation for multi-user blog sites. The forums section features discussions regarding both content and technological developments in the implementation and design of blogs.

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<http://thwt.org/historyblogs.html>

Created by the Center for Teaching History with Technology, this site is designed for educators without prior experience using blogs in the classroom. It provides reasons to blog, suggestions for content to be included, and links to sites that will host your blog.

http://opencontent.org/wiki/index.php?title=Using_Blogs_and_Wikis_in_Education

Set up to facilitate the use of blogs and wikis in education, this site, an offshoot of the Open Content Project, is complete with explanations, videos, and links to examples of the use of both blogs and wikis in the classroom. One subtopic helps educators to determine whether to use a blog or a wiki.

<http://teachersteachingteachers.org>

Primarily the creation of four teachers, this site is run by teachers for teachers and includes information and links to examples of skyping (Internet telephoning), webcasting, podcasting, and blogging as they are being used in classrooms by teachers. It provides an avenue for professionals at various levels of technology integration to contribute stories of success and failure in an effort to help one another.

www.det.wa.edu.au/education/cmiseval/curriculum/ict/weblogs

Sponsored by the Department of Education and Training of Western Australia, this site offers teachers who wish to create blogs in their classrooms the resources and applications they will need. It also features a variety of search tools and links, along with postings by its creators on the potential uses and benefits of blogs.

<http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/Articles/wikis/index.htm>

Hosted by San Diego State University, with beginners in mind, this website defines the term *wiki*, gives reasons for using such a tool, and suggests educational applications for this new technology. An intriguing feature of this page is the opportunity to watch an example of a wiki in action as the information posted by users is altered and made richer by the contributions of others.

www.scienceofspectroscopy.info/edit/index.php?title=Using_wiki_in_education

A wiki itself, this simply designed site, sponsored by Ocean Optics, dispels any notion that wikis are too complicated to use. It demonstrates a new form of online writing and shares by example how it can be used in education.

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