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Short Article

Time-Savers for Managing Teaching Strategies that the Internet in your Teaching

Here is a list of methods that can streamline the use of the Internet in your teaching. Method #1: Create and Use Templates Creating templates really saves time.

Any item that you believe will be used again is fodder for the template mill.

Look for items that don't change much, and convert them to templates.

Feel free to add other methods to this list, and share them with Classroom Toolkit readers. What tricks and techniques have you found to be helpful?

You can do this with: Test Formats

Lesson Plans

Assignment Formats

Student Project Formats

Journal Pages

Portfolio Contents and Portfolio Conference Format

Parent Letters

Discipline Reporting and Tracking Forms

Rubrics

About Anything

Setting up templates (and keeping track of them) takes a tiny bit of time in the beginning, but really returns the investment in the long run. Create Memory Joggers: "Cheat Sheets" that Help you Recall Information. Teachers must remember lots of information to be successful. There are subject to learn and remember, color commentary items to research and recall, and countless bits of information.

All this information can lead to a "paralysis" that is commonly referred to as "information overload."

Develop a strategy for capturing and retrieving this information.

Sidebar Check the Classroom Toolkit article, Let Google™ Manage Personal and Professional Briefings for You for more information on how to store and use Google's saved searches.

Techniques that work well (depending upon your skill with technology include: Linking materials to a hierarchy of folders with "shortcuts" that lead to each resource

Using a Mind Mapping program that allows inserting hyperlinks to launch any of these resources (This is a visual method for the same process as linking materials with shortcuts) These programs include: MindManager, MindGenius; Education (high-end, expensive programs) and Inspiration;

Using Word Processing Documents and Spreadsheets with embedded hyperlinks to connected resource, briefing and stored information. With Word Processing documents, if you create the document as an outline, and you will have a built-in menu system whenever you view the document from the "Document Map" view

Using a hand-held computer such as a Palm Pilot or Pocket PC to carry your information

Using a program such as InfoSelect to store information and a program such as Surf Later to capture Web site's (with all links active)

Again, this may take time to set up, but the payback in time saved is huge.

Create a Personal Start Page

This strategy is similar to the previous strategy, but instead, you create a personal desktop Website, or Web page that is a portal to the rest of the information on your computer, and on the Internet.

Just about anything can be included and accessed in this way.

Online resources that you can access include: E-mail Accounts

Resource Websites

Search Pages and Saved Search Terms

Forum Accounts

Blogs that you Frequent

Free Online Storage Areas

And so on...

The benefit for the online launch pad Web page (or Website) is that it is portable and quick.

For a free, Open Source, and easy to Use HTML editor, use Nvu;

Link to download the Nvu program; Some drawbacks include: You need a basic knowledge of HTML, or you need to know how to use a HTML Editor

The form can not remember all the passwords that you use. And, although you could list the log in name and password for each link, the Web page would not be secure.

One way to overcome the login and security process is by using a program such as RoboForm. The RoboForm software will create the links for you, and integrate these into the menu system of Microsoft's Internet Explorer or Mozilla's Firefox browsers. One drawback to this solution is that the RoboForm software must be purchased, and to use the software on multiple computers, a second version of the software, for USB Drives, must also be purchased.

However, if you spend a lot of time accessing Internet resources, RoboForm would be worth the money because of the time it saves you, even if it were ten times as expensive as its \$30.00 USD price tag. The USB program costs \$20.00 USD. Add-Ons for the Palm and Pocket PC hand-helds cost \$10.00 USD.

You can also use the Web page technique for managing a portal to all the files and programs on your desktop computer. This launch page or personal portal also works for a personal Web page on your school district's Intranet or Internet site. Using a personal portal, you can ensure that your students focus upon selected sites and approved resources since you can provide the links and search terms that you want them to use.

This approach can be used when your students are in your classroom, in a computer lab, in the library, and even from home (if the launch page is accessible from the Internet).

This approach saves time that would be wasted by having to repeat multiple Web addresses (URLs) to your students. Build FAQ pages or Wikis. Any information that you have to share over and over is ripe for inclusion in a FAQ page or Wiki.

This means writing once, and referring forever so that you don't have to keep answering the same question.

The FAQ page is similar to a Web page, but you can use a no cost Blogging program to set these up.

Sources of zero-cost Open Source FAQ Generators and Scripts include:

A Wiki program allows entry and searching for answers, but, often these programs allow others to edit, add to, subtract from or delete information.

Link to Open Source Wiki programs …

The negative issues surrounding FAQ and Wiki approaches to time saving are the amount of technology know-how that are required to get these strategies to function.

If you have the technology background, make these strategies work for you.

Plan and Choose Implementation based upon the "80/20 Rule"

The "80/20 Rule" is simple. Most of your results, benefits, measurable outcomes (the 80%) will be the result of a minimum amount of work and effort (the 20%).

So, as a time saving task, you just have to identify those "20%" tasks that pay off with greater outcomes.

Then, just do more of the 20% tasks and less of the other tasks.

Of course, teachers must teach 100% of their students, and each of these students is worth your investment of instructional time and effort.

But, the idea here is to find those high payoff tasks and to eliminate the low-payoff ones. Of course, the low-payoff tasks can also be considered to be "time-wasters." Summary Implement some of these strategies and and increase your efficiency in management of the Internet resources that you use to support your teaching efforts.

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