**[ITEC 7400 Reflection](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7400-reflection)**

12/8/2014

[0 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7400-reflection#comments)

Reflecting back, my first semester in the Ed.S. Instructional Education program seems to have flown by.  This course on 21st century teaching and learning has really made me reevaluate my knowledge and understanding of some of the foundational concepts that are teaching in the classroom today.  Roblyer & Doerring emphasize in their text the use of not only the basic productivity tools and web 2.0 tools in the classroom, but also the use of online projects.  While I have been familiar with many of the basic tools used in the classroom and continually search for new ones to integrate, I had not been exposed to the use of online projects like The Human Genetic Project that I explored and used in my engaged learning project for this course.

One of my biggest revelations this semester as a teacher and future technology coach has been making sure that the technology I use and suggest others use in the classroom truly has a purpose other than to just be using technology in the classroom.  From my studies on TPACK and some of the articles we read and videos we viewed, I have begun to do more serious reflection internally to decide the intention behind each piece of technology I choose to use with my students and other teachers.  For example, I work with my colleagues at school to introduce new technologies that are available to them, but if they do not serve a specific purpose for their particular class it may not be useful information.

 After all of the readings and videos this semester I feel more prepared to sit down with other teachers in my school and district and guide them as they use strategic planning and design to develop learning experiences with the performance indicators of engaged learning and levels of Technology Implementation at the forefront of my mind.  The students in today’s classroom are surrounded by technology everywhere but the classroom it seems.  It is time for the teacher leaders who are comfortable with technology to find a way to step up and start filling in the gap so that we as teachers are providing our students the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in the 21st century.

Roblyer, M.D., Doering, A.H., (2013). *Integrating educational technology into teaching*(6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

[**Web 2.0**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/web-20)

1/18/2015

[2 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/web-20#comments)

 Today’s classrooms are filled with students who are constantly surrounded by technology. It is the decision of the teacher to choose to embrace that fact and teach the students how to use it as a learning tool, or to shy away from a powerful tool that has been presented to them because of fear or uncertainty. Richardson (2010) writes in the preface of his book, [*Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms*](http://www.amazon.com/Blogs-Wikis-Podcasts-Powerful-Classrooms/dp/1412977479), "In order for us to prepare our students for what is without a question a future filled with networked learning spaces, we must first experience those environments for ourselves. We must become connected and engaged in learning in these new ways if we are to fully understand the pedagogies of using these tools with students. We cannot honestly discuss twenty-first century learning skills for our students until we can make sense of them for ourselves." (p.x) This statement is one that can be argued either way, but the truth to me lies in the old adage, they won’t care what you know until they know you care. Part of caring about your students is knowing and understanding their likes and dislikes and incorporating them into their learning of your content. A student may not care much for the idea of learning about genetics, but when you allow them to use their powerful search skills on YouTube or Vine, the things they can learn is exponential. If YouTube is gaining more than 20 hours of video a minute, why should we stop students from using online videos to learn (Richardson, 2010, p. 2). Why not teach the students how to make their own educational videos and post them online. The tools our students need to be successful surround them every day.  As teachers, it is our job to show them how technology can benefit more than just their social needs.

 As Karl Fisch states in his video, ﻿[Shift Happens: Di﻿d You Know?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmwwrGV_aiE)﻿, most of the jobs we are preparing our students for do not currently exist. The constant change and forward propulsion that is found in our world requires that we as educators not only stay on top of the “cutting edge” of technology, but also teach our students how to do the same. Throughout this course, and program of study I am particularly interested in learning more about some of the Web 2.0 tools that are available for use in the classroom. While they are not new, weblogs, podcasts, and Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds are three of the things I'd like to better understand not only for my students learning, but also my own professional development. I have taken note of the RSS feed button or option on many of the sites I visit frequently, but I have not been sure how to pull it all together to work for me. Through this course and Richardson’s text, I hope to become more proficient with them so I can use them in my classroom as well. As Warlick (2006) shows in his article [A Day in the Life of Web 2.0](http://sddial.k12.sd.us/events/laptop_institute/Files/monday/warlick_harnessing_the_new_shape_of_information.pdf) there are so many possibilities out there for teachers and they are changing so quickly that it becomes hard to fathom everything we have access to on a daily basis.

 My school district is one that likes to take pride in the fact that they are always looking for the next step technologically for our staff and students. For the past two years, I have been blessed to work on a team where my students have 1:1 devices at all times. The option to rent the computers and take them home is even offered. Due to this constant access, my class, team, school, and district have been on the prowl for as many Web 2.0 tools as possible. Some of the many Web 2.0 tools we are using currently are Google Docs, Glogster, PowToons, Kahoot, and of course the basic productivity tools such as the Microsoft Office suite. It is imperative that we recognize and embrace the fact that the internet is not just a read/write space anymore, but a collaborative environment where anyone can be the author of a new and novel thing (Richardson, 2010, p. 6). The sky is no longer the limit. There is no limit. It is time we stop limiting the potential for digital learning and embrace the world we live in.

References

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[**Blogging in the Classroom**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/blogging-in-the-classroom)

1/25/2015

[1 Comment](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/blogging-in-the-classroom#comments)

**Blogging about Blogging…**

I think back to my education in schools and the thought of computers in the classroom didn’t exist until high school.  My seventh grade teacher having an Apple IIe in her office just astounded all of us.  I used the actual card catalog to do research until I reached college.  Times have changed.  The reading and writing that we are asking of our students in today’s classroom needs to change as well.

The increasing presence of things like e-books and blogs has opened a new door for readers and writers.  Instead of asking our students to take out their writing journal and reflect on the day’s topic or learning, the students can be instructed to go their blog and post about the topic.  The ability of blog writers and readers to interact with one another has started to create a new genre of writing sometimes referred to as “connective writing” (Richardson, 2010, p. 28). The audience has expanded and each person who writes or comments on a blog post is now contributing to the larger body of knowledge that is accessible to the world.  While the words in a blog still belong to the writer, any reader has the opportunity to go back and question or clarify the words of the author.  The writing is no longer stagnate and can be continued or updated at any time.  It becomes difficult to separate online reading from online writing because they are so intertwined with one another (Richardson, 2010).

**To Blog or not to Blog…**

While blogs have become popular in mainstream social media, what purpose do they or could they serve in the classroom?  This is a question I have wrestled with for my classroom.  I enjoy conducting online discussion posts with my students, but the idea of posting my students’ thoughts and writings for the world to see caused me to hesitate.  The more I research blogs in the classroom, the more I am convinced that there is a true place for them.

As I stated above, blogs have expanded the audience that students can reach with their writing.  By providing this authentic writing experience the students are able to see how they can personally make an impact on the greater body of knowledge.

Before using a blog in the classroom it is important to have a clear understanding of what type of blog platform you will use such as [Wordpress](http://wordpress.com/) or [Blogger](http://blogger.com/), how you will use the blog for educational purposes, and how you plan to evaluate the students’ blogs.  Some basic tips to be considered about how to do these things can be found in the Chronicle of Higher Education's blog post, [Integrating, Evaluating, and Managing Blogging in the Classroom](http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/integrating-evaluatingmanaging-blogging-in-the-classroom/22626).  The biggest key for successful blogging in the classroom according to this post is preparation and forethought.  If the students have a clear picture of what is expected from the very beginning the process is smoother and the results are more in-depth, thoughtful posts and comments by all involved.

Below is a sample rubric I am going to be integrating in my classroom with my students’ blogging.  As I created this rubric, [Meg’s Blogagogy](https://blogagogy.wordpress.com/assessing-blogs/) steered me in narrowing my focus of precise items I wanted to be evaluating the students on.  She gives a great list of specific criteria that can be addressed as you work to assess a student's blog.



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[**Wiki Wiki**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/wiki-wiki)

2/1/2015

[0 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/wiki-wiki#comments)

**Wiki Wiki**

Wikipedia was my only exposure to wikis until just recently.  Like many other teachers, I questioned the reliability and credibility of Wikipedia as a source that my students would often try to site when they were asked to research a topic.  Thanks to further research on my part, my thoughts and ideas about Wikipedia and other wikis is starting to change.

A wiki (which means “quick” in Hawaiian) is simply a Web 2.0 tool used to allow multiple users to contribute and change a page instantly (Richardson, 2010).  Similar to the way a blog allows for individuals to contribute to the greater body of knowledge available to its readers, a wiki allows for numerous users to add to the content of the page or make edits at any given time.   So while Wikipedia may have users who give incorrect information, it is often quickly resolved due to the millions of people constantly checking and correcting any inaccuracies they may notice (Richardson, 2010).

Wikis are not something I have used in my classroom before and I am seeing several different options as I move forward.  Here are some of the basic uses of wikis I have discovered.

**1.    Helping students connect with others outside the walls of their classroom.**

Just as Mr. Monson has done with his class wiki, [Thousands Project](http://monsonclassroom.wikispaces.com/), teachers can allow students to post discussions or stories and see how many people they can get to respond and track the usage and locations of people who edit the wiki.  His goal has been to post a new entry or question each month and get a thousand people to respond each time.  What a great way to show the global connectedness that exists.

**2.    Allowing students a place to create an e-portfolio of their work for the year.**

It is often times hard for a student to keep up with all of their work for a year in one digital place.  As a teacher I struggle with keeping an organizational structure in place for my own personal files.  Vicki Davis has done a great job with her classes, [Westwood Schools Computer Science](http://westwood.wikispaces.com/), in creating a wiki that all of her students have their own space to keep a digital portfolio of their assignments and creation.  She also keeps several years up at a time so others can see exemplar work. Love it!

**3.    Providing a location where the teachers and students can collaborate and pool resources.**

I love the fact that in a wiki, there is not just one person (typically the teacher) responsible for creating the content.  A learning community is created that allows any contributor to take on the role of the expert.  In this sixth grade science wiki, [Code Blue](http://codeblue.wikispaces.com/home), the students and teachers have organized a list of links and resources that will help them in their body systems unit.  I could see this being used as a culminating project for a unit or even an ongoing collection that could be used in a review type activity for end of the year testing.  In addition to a class combining resources, a team of teachers could also do this as an online filing cabinet almost.  Sounds like a great way to get teachers trying wikis for the first time who may be unsure about testing them with students!

**4.    Serving as a class website.**

One of the more common types of wikis I seem to be finding on the Internet is those that act as a class website.  The teacher uses it as a place to post assignments, have class discussions, and allow parents a place for communication with the teacher.  This seems like a much cheaper version of a learning management system that many districts pay mega bucks for.  An example of this would be the wiki that a teacher created for his fourth grade classroom, [Mr. Lindsay’s Wiki](http://community.saugususd.org/dlindsay/page/).  In this wiki the students and parents are able to see daily assignments, homework, starters, and any other important news or announcements needed.

The possibilities for wikis in the classroom seem endless and I cannot wait to start trying some of them out for myself.  I have created a wiki, [DMS 7R Science](http://dms7r.wikispaces.com/), for my students to use to start posting videos and resources that they find useful.  Since my kids have access to devices on a daily basis, I think I will test this out one day in class this week and see how user friendly this particular wiki is to use.  To encourage some of my students who are interested in graphic design and webpage layout, I will let some of them be in charge of how the wiki looks.  If all goes well, I see some team meetings happening in my future to encourage fellow teachers to either start building their own, or even start a wiki just for teacher use as I mentioned in number three above.  Looking forward to what is to come!

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[**Social Bookmarking**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/social-bookmarking)

2/8/2015

[0 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/social-bookmarking#comments)

**Now Where Did That Thing Go?**
Quite often I find myself looking for websites or blogs that I enjoyed and thought I had “saved” somewhere, but struggle to actually find them again.  Apparently this is also something many others have struggled with throughout time because now we have social bookmarking services.  Social bookmarking is a service where users are able to not only bookmark sites they want to save for later, but also tag them and share them with other users who may be looking for the same thing (Richardson, 2010). Sharing your Favorites tab with the world – not a bad idea.

Two of the basic social bookmarking services are [Delicious](https://delicious.com/) and [Diigo](https://www.diigo.com/).  I spent some time this week checking out Delicious. Here are some highlights of things I noticed:

**1.   Login using your existing social media account.**

To help streamline all of your social resources, you can login using your social media account and it will automatically link you with friends or followers who have done the same.

**2.   Bookmarking made simple!**

After logging in to your account, you add a button to your browser that allows for immediate bookmarking while you are searching the Internet.  When you go back to your Delicious account everything will be there waiting for you!

**3.   Follow what others are bookmarking.**

I did say this was a SOCIAL bookmarking site.  Not only do you get to save your own bookmarks that can be accessed from any device, you also get to follow what other people are bookmarking and gain ideas from them.  By creating a network, more brains are better than one!

**4.   Organize by tags or keywords.**

When booking marking a site, you can tag it using any keyword you want and sort your library using those keywords later. (Great for research or professional development!)

Think of it this way, if you have student trying to research a particular topic, they could go to Google and search for sites that meet their needs, or they could go to one of the social bookmarking services and search keywords or tags.  This would allow them to narrow their search to sites that others have already deemed to be useful or worth going back to.  It might also be handy to find a user who is an expert in the area they are researching and follow the sites they are bookmarking.  Possibilities are endless!

Another positive for social bookmarking is the network you are able to establish and build.  My team for example is currently in the process of implementing [Genius Hour](http://www.geniushour.com/) in our classrooms.  If all of my teammates also get Delicious accounts, we can easily find and share resources that will guide us in this adventure.  During my first few days I have already found several sites such as the [Engage Their Minds](https://engagetheirminds.wordpress.com/genius-hour-resources/) blog that is full of resources that I look forward to sharing in our next team meeting.

After all, it is becoming a world where it is more important to have the skills to find the information you need, than to know it on your own (Richardson, 2010).

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[**Flickr and Creative Commons**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/flickr-and-creative-commons)

2/15/2015

[3 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/flickr-and-creative-commons#comments)

Attribution – David Truss

Education is constantly evolving. Thanks to the Internet, this quote by Bruce Wellman in 2010 about having a 19thcentury curriculum is not necessarily true anymore. While not all schools are adopting a curriculum that embrace the needs of our 21st century students, the majority seem to be intrigued enough to at least try.

The Internet as evolved into a resource that is no longer read only, and as teachers we must find a way to allow our students to be producers of content and knowledge, not just merely consumers (Richardson, 2010). Many companies and individuals are taking note of this fact and helping to create Web 2.0 tools that make it easier for our learners to not only produce new content, but also share that material and connect with others in a school setting.

The Web 2.0 tool I want to address today is [Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/). In my school I am constantly seeing or hearing about students having smartphones out trying to take selfies and other pictures during the school day. Instead of scolding them for wanting to share what they are doing with others on social media, why not give them opportunities to use the smartphones and pictures for educational use so others outside of the school are getting a glimpse through pictures of what is happening in the classroom. Flickr is a great tool to allow individuals and groups to post and share pictures with just a select group or people all across the globe (Richardson, 2010). Using [folksonomies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folksonomy), users are able to tag and search for images and videos related to their topic of interest. They could take pictures of different traits in their classmates or family and post it on Flickr.

There is also a large push for creating savvy digital citizens in today’s society. When the internet emerged there was a large push for everything to be copyrighted and you had to obtain permission from the original creator to use or adapt any content. While it is understandable for people to want credit for their work, many are fine with others using their content without asking as long as they receive credit; hence the birth of [Creative Commons](http://creativecommons.org/). Creative Commons (CC) has created an online collection of content that allows for users to post original work and decide at the time of posting what type of use they would allow it to be used for. So for example, if someone uploaded an image to CC, they would have the authority to say if anyone could use it and change it, or if they wanted to exclude commercial use. This eliminates the step of having to contact the person for permission each time someone wants to utilize the content.

To make things for education even simpler, Flickr and Creative Commons teamed up and created an entire collection of images and videos available on [Flickr’s Creative Commons gallery](https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/) that are licensed by CC to reuse.

In the classroom Flickr and Creative Commons opens the doors for so many uses. Students have a safe place to search for material that they have permission to use and change as needed for assignments or personal use. Many students are programmed to immediately search Google images for any image they are looking for, and while Google does have a more extensive library of images available, it is important to teach students that just because it is posted on the internet does not mean they can take it and use it as their own.

Below is a slide show that I created using [Google Docs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Docs) and Flickr CC images to start a vocabulary lesson for my students on genetics and heredity. Instead of just having the students copy definitions from a book or website, the students will have to utilize the CC gallery on Flickr to capture images that represent each vocabulary term. The students will compile all of this information in their own Google Doc or [Padlet](https://padlet.com/) to present to a small group. The students will use a rubric to grade each other on the effectiveness of their image to represent the term.

There are so many Web 2.0 tools available, the search is on for more to incorporate in the classroom!

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[**Padlet & My Path to Paperless**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/padlet-my-path-to-paperless)

2/22/2015

[1 Comment](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/padlet-my-path-to-paperless#comments)

I love to measure my student’s engagement and learning on a regular basis. Giving the students a voice to give feedback on how they felt the lesson went and what they would change is invaluable information for me as a teacher when planning and redesigning lessons. One of the quick ways I like to do this is through a ticket-out-the-door. Normally I will give out notecards or have the students use a half sheet of paper and tell me what they learned, questions they may have, what they enjoyed most from the lesson, and any suggestions on ways to improve the lesson or activity. While I enjoy reading through the notecards, that means I have 135 notecards to take home and read if I am unable to read them at school before leaving.

In an attempt to go more paperless, I have found another solution using a Web 2.0 tool: [Padlet](https://padlet.com/). Padlet is a great tool that allows any user to post anonymously on a board that has already been created, or if the user has an account, create their own boards to post on. This is a great solution for my ticket-out-the-door issue because students can post their feedback and it is all saved in one place. I can save that board with the date or lesson title and go back to view it at any point.

Padlet is also a friendly Web 2.0 tool that can mesh with other Web 2.0 tools because it will give you an embed code. This works great with websites, blogs, or learning management systems that allow you to embed code. When you embed the code it shows up on the new site exactly as it would if you logged in straight to Padlet. This is a great feature when you are trying to train students how to use different Web 2.0 tools because if you embed the page there are fewer clicks and fewer opportunities for something to go wrong.

Padlet would also be a great tool for students who are working to collaborate on a project because they can upload any file, picture, video, or link that they want to share with group members. I appreciate that users can only edit boxes they add to the Padlet, but that could also be tricky if group members are working together trying to get something worded just right. I also wish that Padlet had a search feature. For my original idea of ticket-out-the-door, I would end up with a large amount of boxes to search through and it would be great to be able to look for key words. Maybe that will come in the future.

Thinking ahead to professional use with the other teachers at my school I see Padlet being used as a great collaboration site where teachers could upload files or links to useful resources based on topics or units. I am hoping to create a Padlet of useful Web 2.0 tools with a short blurb and link to each tool so teachers can view and add to the list at any point. 

[**Podcasts in the Classroom**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/podcasts-in-the-classroom)

3/1/2015

[1 Comment](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/podcasts-in-the-classroom#comments)

Visual learners are to blogs and blogging as auditory learners are to podcasts and video sharing, such as [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com/). . If we polled most students in our classrooms, they typically either have or have access to a smart phone, iPod, or some other type of device that acts as an mp3 player.

Podcasts, Personal On-Demand Broadcasting, have become overwhelming popular with a variety of generations over the last several years. Thanks to the read/write web, users are able to find podcasts that meet their interests or needs much like a blog and subscribe to the ones they enjoy most (Richardson, 2010). By subscribing the user is able to have the newest episode or podcast download immediately to their device using a podcatcher. There are several great options for podcatchers available, but I would recommend [iTunes](http://www.itunes.com/) or [PodOmatic](https://www.podomatic.com/). Both of these sites allow you to search for current podcasts and also save, or catch, any podcast you might be interested in so you can go back later and revisit or share it with someone else. This is great for someone with a busy schedule because thanks to portable devices such as iPods, these podcasts can be synced to your device and you can listen to them on the go. Many automotive companies are now making it even easier to connect or sync with the audio system in the car so you can play the podcasts through the speakers just like the radio or a cd.

With so many possibilities out there, there comes a need for organization and search-ability of the many podcasts available. As I said before, iTunes and PodOmatic have search features available that will do category searches or key word searches. To help narrow it down even more, there are search sites for particular types of podcasts such as [Ted Talks](http://www.ted.com/talks). TedTalks focuses on conferences where technology, education, or design are the main focuses and captures the speakers for non-conference attenders. This is a site that I have found to have wonderful K-12 education videos and educational technology podcasts. Below is a video of Tyler DeWitt speaking to science teachers about how to make science more fun and engaging for teachers.

While I created a podcast years ago in an educational course, this is not something that I have used as frequently for my own teaching purposes. The few times I use podcasts as a teaching tool is for students who are absent and need direct instruction on a topic they missed. Recently I created a podcast dispelling a few of the misconceptions my students have on [What does evolution mean in the science classroom](http://shari-amonett.podomatic.com/entry/2015-03-01T13_03_31-08_00). The way I see podcasts working best in the classroom is for the students to be the ones creating them. The joy of podcasts is that students can, but do not have to include the video of themselves speaking. While some students love to show off in front of others, the majority of middle school students I have worked with freeze up when asked to present in front of others. By using [Voki](http://www.voki.com/) or [Audacity](http://audacity.sourceforge.net/), the students are able to record themselves speaking through the material and then embed the audio in the digital presentation. It has done wonders for my shy students and by the end of the year, they are more comfortable speaking in front of others and do not feel like they have to pre-record themselves.

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[**Capture This...**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/capture-this)

3/8/2015

[1 Comment](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/capture-this#comments)

As a teacher who loves technology, I have moments when I wish I could just reach out and help students or fellow teachers be able to work through a problem on the computer even though I am not right there with them. While written words can be powerful, when it comes to technology most people prefer a visual demonstration of what they are supposed to be doing.

Screen casting was developed to solve these types of issues. By using a free program such as [Jing](http://www.techsmith.com/jing.html) or [Screencast-o-matic](http://www.screencast-o-matic.com/), a person can record exactly what they are seeing on their computer screen while talking through what they are doing.

For this blog I want to focus on Jing. Jing is a free program that was developed by the same company that offers [Camtasia](http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html) and other recording software. To use Jing you simply have to create an account using an email address and password. Once you are signed in, you will need to download the program to your computer. (If you want to do this with your school computer, make sure you put in a request to have this done if the district does not allow you to download freely.) After it has been downloaded you will notice a yellow semi-circle in the top center of your screen. By hovering over this icon you will be able to capture your screen. By selecting capture you can choose to capture just an image or capture with video. Using the free version of Jing allows you to record up to 5 minutes worth of video and audio and then save the video or share it using screencast.com. I like the screencast.com option because it will upload your video to their servers and immediately give you a link that you can paste in a message, email, document, or website so that others can view your screencast without having to download anything to their device. Jing also has some great [tutorials](http://www.techsmith.com/tutorial-jing.html) already created on how to use their software that both teachers and students could understand.

Screencasts are great for students or teachers who are using a new program or Web 2.0 tool and are not sure how to get started. Below is a screencast I created as part of a series in helping teachers in my district familiarize themselves with our learning management system, Canvas Instructure. While there are tutorials that have been created by the company, many of the teachers in my school found them to be overwhelming and confusing at times during the learning process. To help combat this issue, a small team of teachers, including myself, have started to break down Canvas in to small chunks and create screencasts that walk teachers through what is available to them and how to create it on their own. Since we began creating these screencasts, we have found that teachers feel more empowered to learn on their own without having to have someone directly beside them as they worked.

Creating video tutorials is not the only purpose for screencasting software such as Jing. As a teacher, I could have my students use a screencast to record a presentation or project. By having the students pre-record it allows them to focus on the quality of what they are presenting as well as help them stay on topic. I often ask my students to have a time limit when presenting as well and this helps them to see just how long or short their presentation is and adjust accordingly.

My students having access to a device has also opened the door for me to use screencasts for lessons when I am unable to be at school. Instead of leaving busy work with a substitute, I am able to record my lesson and send the link to students to view on their own. I have also utilized this feature for students who are absent or in our in-school-suspension room. This allows them to keep learning even though they cannot be in class. The same could be said of students who need additional help working homework problems. The teacher or a fellow student could create a screencast of a sample problem and send the link to the student needing help. The possibilities are endless.

[**Internet Safety**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/internet-safety)

3/22/2015

[0 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/internet-safety#comments)

Parents of young children enjoy capturing their child’s footprint as they grow to see how they change over time. While this is a sweet tangible memento to look back upon, many parents are unaware of the digital footprint their child is creating as they grow. As the read/write web has grown, so has the importance of teaching all users digital citizenship responsibilities for what they read and what they write to help ensure safety for all involved.

**Quality Approved Sites**

When the internet first became available for use in the classroom, teachers were focused on making sure to keep their students safe from inappropriate content such as foul language and pornography. As the internet has evolved, so has the approach of teachers to keep their students safe. Many districts, including my own, use system wide server blocks and filters that automatically weed out potentially inappropriate sites and images for their view. While these filters are a great first-line of defense, they are not perfect and it is always possible for students to happen upon inappropriate content they are not intended to see.

What do we as educators do to help navigate through problematic situations where students come across inappropriate content? Richardson (2010) argues that all teachers need to have in-depth conversations with their students before they embark on an online assignment or project. If students are prepped ahead of time how to properly navigate and search only for their intended content the learning activities tend to go more smoothly. For younger students who may not be able to easily navigate the internet, it might be necessary for teachers to preselect certain websites for the students to utilize. Although this can be more time-intensive for the teacher on the front-end of the assignment, it allows the student to focus their efforts on gaining the content from the internet, not just finding sites that have what they need. As students reach middle school and have had experience using quality sites, they are more able to become explores of the internet and find their own quality resources. This is not possible to do unless the teacher has spent time showing the students how to safely explore, what quality resources look like, and also what to do when you come across something that is not appropriate.

My school is fortunate to have four technology classes that all of our students cycle through as a connections course. These teachers have taken it upon themselves to make sure all students in our middle school are made aware of how to correctly search for content and how to quickly back out of a site that they feel is inappropriate. In addition to these classes I also like to spend time at the beginning of any internet assignment where I am asking the students to freely explore the web by giving tips and keywords that can be used when exploring.

As crimes increase that are linked to the internet, agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) are elevating their efforts to make people of all ages aware of the importance of internet safety. To help educate school-aged children the FBI has created the [Cyber Surf Islands](https://sos.fbi.gov/). Through this part of the FBI website teachers can sign-up their classes to go through “islands” that have been engineered to fit third-eighth grade students. On each of these islands the students are introduced to certain characters and events that help teach them the important of safe online surfing.

**Digital Footprints**

As the internet grew from a read-only resource to a read/write resource internet safety also grew from just finding appropriate content to creating and publishing appropriate, safe content as well. It is common to search social media sites or blogs that students produce and find them riddled with inappropriate content. Inappropriate content might be the inclusion of too much personal information such as first and last name or information such as their address or phone number, to images or text that are not viewed as age-appropriate.

Stranger danger is something that is typically covered by teachers and counselors at an early age in schools and while that was once viewed as not taking candy from a stranger, it has shifted to a focus on not engaging in conversations with strangers on the internet. Too often criminals use the internet to target young people by parading as someone younger and innocent who just wants to be their friend. The counselor at my school engaged my classes in a great activity by having them read through the transcripts of two people chatting on the internet. What seemed like a series of innocent conversations about mundane life as an adolescent turned out to be much more than that. After reading through the texts the students were asked to find instances where the young girl had given clues as to where she might live. By the end of the activity the students were able to piece together enough information to figure out exactly where the girl lived and how to find her. They then found out that the other person involved in the conversations was actually an undercover police officer working to teach the community about internet safety and predator danger. As homework, the students were asked to go home and look at their own social media accounts and see how many clues they could find that would lead a stranger to know where they live and how to find them in real life. The conversations in class the next day were alarming. Many of my students admitted that they had their address, phone number, and name all clearly labeled for anyone to see. Others felt like they gave away an abundance of personal information that was not needed. These kinds of lessons need to be happening in every classroom to make students aware.

Richardson (2010) urges teachers to ask their students to think about what they are posting and publishing online and how they will feel if someone comes across it in five to ten years. While many things seem harmless to students in seventh grade, they are unaware of the digital footprint that is being created that future employers and colleagues will be able to go back and find for years to come. Even though we hit the delete button on the computer or never sign back-in to an email account or social media account does not mean that it is not out there in cyberspace for people to find and explore.

**Parental Involvement**

Internet safety is not just something that educators need to be aware of and stressing to children; parents must also be involved with internet safety. Digital citizenship responsibilities extend beyond the school walls to anywhere the student has access to the internet. In a school situation like mine where my students also have an opportunity to rent the computers to take home, it is important not only to have parents sign-off for their children to access the internet, but also to teach the parents safety tips and how to monitor their child’s digital footprint.

In one situation I have dealt with this year, a family decided they wanted their child to be able to bring home a computer for educational purposes. This was the first at-home computer the child had been able to use because the family felt it had not been something they wanted to provide on their own even though they had the finances to do so. It was recently found that through the use of the computer at home the student had created social media accounts and was posting inappropriate pictures of gang signs and apparel as well as using foul language in their posts. The family was astonished at what they found when they finally realized their child had created a social media account. As highly-educated parents, they were terrified and immediately came to the school and requested that the child no longer be allowed to bring the computer home. They were so shocked that this had happened to them because they viewed their family as a wholesome family with high expectations and never thought their sweet child would do something like this.

To help parents like these, there are several sites that have been made available to educate parents of internet safety. [Kid’s Health](http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/family/net_safety.html) is one such site that gives a great list of tips that would have helped these parents such as asking for passwords and monitoring the child’s accounts on a daily basis. Another beneficial aspect of Kid’s Health is that they provide the same content in appropriate language for parents, kids, and teens.

Another online resource that parents and schools can utilize to increase internet safety is [Pure Sight](http://www.puresight.com/). Pure Sight offers not only wonderful [tips for any internet user](https://www.puresight.com/Useful-tools/tips-for-safe-internet-use.html) on their website, but also a program that can be downloaded on to any device connected to the internet that can serve as a filter or parental control. Many parents complain about how their child stays up too late at night surfing the internet or chatting with friends; this program allows parents to put a curfew on internet usage so that they no longer have to worry about how late they are searching the internet or chatting.

As educators who are putting devices in the hands of students to search the web and participate in contributing to the larger body of knowledge that is available on the internet we are responsible for making sure that all parties are aware of the risks and steer them in the correct way of finding what they need. To aide in this effort, my coworkers and I are already planning a parent night for our school to bring light to the issue of internet safety and provide them with tips and resources that will make them more educated in monitoring the digital footprint their child is creating.

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[**Global & Cultural Awareness in the Classroom**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/global-cultural-awareness-in-the-classroom)

3/29/2015

[0 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/global-cultural-awareness-in-the-classroom#comments)

As educators it is our job and responsibility to prepare our students for whatever may come next in their lives. While much of that learning revolves around content standards, there is a larger responsibility to help each student become culturally and globally aware of the world in which they live (Hilt, 2011). If you were to ask some of my students to list the places they have travelled during their lifetimes, many would have to say nowhere outside of the city we live in. For some, a twenty minute drive up the interstate to Chattanooga, Tennessee is a huge treat and they talk about it and write about it for months. Working in a school with a high poverty rate has created a population of students who have rarely if ever traveled outside of a small circle on the map. It is my duty as a teacher to provide as many learning experiences as possible. When budgets get cut, field trips is one of the first things my school district cuts back on so I must provide these activities through the use of the Internet.

Along with the location isolation, also comes cultural isolation. Thanks to the use of the Internet students from Dalton, Georgia can interact with students all over the world through the use of Web 2.0 tools such as [Skype](https://education.skype.com/), [KidBlog](http://kidblog.org/), [Wikispaces](https://www.wikispaces.com/), and many other interactive tools. Not only can I have my seventh grade students look up information about the different biomes of the world, but I can have them blog and Skype with students who live in each of the biomes and hear the information directly from someone who lives there. They can then create a blog devoted to reflecting upon and sharing the information they have gained. This adds an authenticity to the information and the students become more engaged in their learning. For students to understand and respect other cultures it is imperative to expose them to them any way possible and if you cannot do it in person, your best resource is the Internet that connects us to everyone.

When discussing diversity in the classroom it is important to realize we also must respect the diversity within our classroom in respect to learning needs not just cultural needs. Differentiation is a buzz word that has been thrown around in education for many years now. Smith and Throne (2009) suggest that differentiating the curriculum for students is critical to success in the middle school classroom because each child is developing at a varying pace. While we understand the theory behind tweaking the curriculum to best fit the needs of each individual as a learner that can be rather difficult to implement when you have a class of thirty students who all have different needs. To aide in this implementation our school district is encouraging teachers to utilize a learning management system (LMS), [Canvas](http://www.canvaslms.com/). Other such LMS’s, [Blackboard Collaborate](http://www.blackboard.com/Platforms/Collaborate/Overview.aspx), [Brightspace](http://www.brightspace.com/), and [Moodle](https://moodle.org/) to name a few, all allow teachers to assign and differentiate what learning path each student is taking. While all of the students in the classroom may be learning about ecosystems, the LMS allows the teacher to assign something to the entire class or certain individuals. This helps with remediation as well as extension activities, which can often be forgotten because teachers are working so hard to help the struggling students.

Richardson (2012) argues that each child needs a personalized education not just personal learning. Making the leap from personal to personalized learning can be difficult and time consuming for the teacher, but it is needed. If a student is allowed to learn all of their content based on what they enjoy, it takes on a whole new level of engagement and learning. In my middle school my team of teachers is currently developing and implementing [Passion Projects](http://www.rundesroom.com/2013/11/passion-projects-in-classroom.html#comment-form) (Genius Hour) with our students. Our goal in using Passion projects is to find what our students are really passionate about and then use that to steer their learning path in our content areas. For example, we currently have two young ladies who are passionate about creating a sensory room for some of our special needs students in the building. In order to make this happen, these girls have learned math skills with measurements and budgeting, writing skills as they have reached out to the public for donations, and many other skills that they would not have gotten as easily in the traditional classroom. While we have not perfected our implementation of having each student create their own learning path, we are at least trying and we are seeing positive results. We are hoping to expand this to other teams within our building next school year.

During the beginning phase of our passion projects as we had students explore what their passion might be, many were choosing topics that involved helping others around the world. With the help of the Internet, researching specific needs across the globe is relatively easy and has broadened the scope that our students are aware of globally. When I think about increasing students’ cultural and global awareness I am immediately taken to social media. Tools such as [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/), blogs, podcasts, and numerous others all grant access for someone anywhere in the world to be in constant communication with someone else in a different location. When a major event happens in one part of the world, social media is immediately filled with images, text, and videos about what is happening. In the classroom this can be utilized to support instruction and not just seen as something students look at when they leave your room.

As teachers work to educate students on just how public the Internet is, I am seeing more and more pictures on social media where teachers are trying to prove how many people can see an image or video posted in a “private” account. The same goal can be accomplished in the classroom by having students write blogs about a certain topic and tracking the location of users who view and comment on their blogs. It is amazing how quickly things spread around the world, not just down the street or into the community.

More teachers are turning towards the Internet to help them communicate and collaborate with parents and the community about events happening within the classroom and school. Teacher websites, blogs, and even text messages using services such as [Remind](https://www.remind.com/), are becoming available in every school nationwide. Sending home weekly or monthly newsletters is slowly going away and the electronic version is now available with the click of a button to retrieve from any computer or Internet equipped device. By setting up a class blog, a teacher can showcase student work, and communicate with students, parents, the community, and any other teacher or individual who may be interested in what is taking place.

The time is now for teachers to get on board with the idea of using the Internet in their classroom because it is certainly not going away. As Edyburn (2006) argues, so many of the tasks we are used to completing in our daily lives outside of school have evolved and adapted due to the overwhelming presence of the Internet in our world. It is time for education and educators to take hold and embrace the gift that has been given to us to not only educate the future generations, but also to make them more globally and culturally aware of the society in which we live.

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[**Equitable Access for All Students**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/equitable-access-for-all-students)

4/12/2015

[0 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/equitable-access-for-all-students#comments)

Equitable access of digital tools and resources is a concept that is misunderstood by many.  While many school districts such as my own strive to “equal the playing field” in terms of access to technology, the educational system alone cannot fill all gaps that are created by economical and family situations outside of school.  [Common Sense Media’s article Zero to Eight](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/zero-to-eight-childrens-media-use-in-america) argues that impoverished families with an income of $30,000 or less a year have a drastically lesser percentage of technology in the home including smartphones, tablets, and other devices that provide access to the Internet  (Rideout, 2011).

Although no one sets out to put his or her child at a disadvantage, Rideout concluded from her research that many gaps in access to digital tools and resources are created before a child reaches the age of two (2011).  Socioeconomic status and family background play a pivotal role in forming a child’s prior knowledge and experiences from the time they are born.  By the time a child enrolls in school for the first time, many differences can already be found in those who have been raised in an environment rich in experiences and those that have not (Barron et al., 2010).

To help create a fair starting point for all students, teachers strive to create shared learning experiences that all students can benefit from.  In many cases, it is up to the teacher and school to provide access to digital tools and other resources that will enhance the child’s learning and skills needed for success in the future.   Even though some students have technology at home, the family views on the purpose of the technology can differ.  Some families may only see it as a way of communication and entertainment while other families see that as a feature, but not the primary purpose.   Research has concluded that students from higher socioeconomic families are more likely to use home computers for educational purposes than those from lower socioeconomic homes (Barron et al., 2010).

Unfortunately, the funds needed to provide devices and digital tools is lacking in many districts across the country.  There are many grants available for school districts as well as individual classroom teachers, but the competition for the monies is fierce as all educators are hoping to increase or improve their current technologies available for student use.

In Georgia, the department of education and state legislators are working to provide districts with the funds needed in their budgets to increase technology in the schools as we push for more standardized testing on computers with the End of Grade Milestone Assessments.  The price of computers or digital tools is a hefty one, but in many cases not as hefty as the price tag associated with creating and maintaining an infrastructure and network that can support not just the teachers using the Internet, but also all students.  Newer school buildings tend to be more equipped with an infrastructure that can handle current and future needs, while many of the older school buildings would require major renovations to be able to handle what is being asked of schools.  This means that equitable access to digital tools and resources may rely heavily on the place in which a person lives and the schools they attend.  To ensure great equitable access for all there has to be a push from the top down to get the funding in the hands of those schools and districts that are stuck with older building and limited outside donors.

Equitable access to technology is also something that has to be addressed in terms of teachers.  It is common to walk around a school and find that some teachers seem to have every digital tool or resource imaginable to use for instruction while others depict more of a classroom from the past with very limited digital resources other than perhaps a teacher computer.  Products such as interactive white boards, clickers, iPads, and iPods can have a great impact on the level of engagement a teacher is able to create during a lesson.  Without equitable access to these devices or any other software that might be purchased for a classroom or school, teachers are put at a disadvantage when preparing their students for the next step or even just the future outside of education.

All schools need to set-up policies and procedures regarding the best practices relating to the usage and access to technology in the school.  Before a child is allowed to use technology in the school, it is imperative that the teacher or educator make contact with the parents and give a clear picture as to how technology will be used both inside and outside of school for educational purposes.  If a child is allowed to take technology home, written consent from the parents must be obtained first.  In the case that a parent does not wish to have their child bring home technology, it must be respected by the school and alternative resources should be made available to that child.  Many educators feel the need to help fill the gap for students who do not have technology in the home, but often times if there is not currently technology in the home there is a reason why the family has shied away from it.

For any technology to serve a positive educational purpose there must be a clear partnership between the family, school, and community.  Positive outcomes have been linked to not just involving the students in technology experiences and expectations, but also the families and community (Hohlfield, Ritzhaupt, & Barron, 2010).  This might include parent classes in the community on how to use certain programs on the computers, or even just providing a place where adults can come and use the technology with their child.

When technology does become available for students and teachers in a district or school there should be a plan in place for where that technology will be allocated and whether or not it will be assigned to a certain classroom, or if all people in the school will have the opportunity to check-out the resources and it be housed in a central location.

As a school district we have begun to supply devices that students can rent for the year and take home each day as needed.  While providing this opportunity has been extremely helpful for some of our lower income families, this alone has left many students still without equitable access to the needed resources outside of school.  In some cases the families are unable to pay the rental fee and although the students were told that no one would be denied a computer for financial reasons, many are still too embarrassed to express their financial need.  Other students found no need to rent a device because they did not have access to the Internet outside of school.  In my community, free access to the Internet can be located at the regional library, community center, and a variety of restaurants.  The only problem with this, the students, specifically younger students who cannot drive, are unable to get to these places.  Most of our lower income students live in an area that is not located near the part of town where most restaurants are located.

I support programs like the one [Mitchell County Schools](http://www.mitchell.k12.ga.us/) have started called the Magic School Bus to combat this issue.  Mitchell County took a retired school bus and renovated it to house laptops, Internet, projector, and an interactive white board.  This mobile computer lab goes from neighborhood to neighborhood to allow all students a chance to have equitable access to the technology outside of school.  Teachers wishing to help support the students in their educational endeavors outside of school staff the bus.  In areas like mine, this would be a great way to reach those neighborhoods with less access to technology.  Another idea to help fill the void my district has considered is to create areas such as pavilions outside of the elementary schools that would house wireless Internet access.  It would be imperative that strong Internet filters were in place to ensure that it was being used for educational purposes, but our elementary schools are located in the neighborhoods where most kids would be able to walk or ride their bike to gain access to the Internet.

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[**ITEC 7430 Lesson Plan Project**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7430-lesson-plan-project)

4/26/2015

[3 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7430-lesson-plan-project#comments)

﻿This is a lesson that I created to integrate specific Web 2.0 tools into my seventh grade life science classroom.  For this lesson I had the students build on their prior knowledge of the fish we have been collecting data on from our local creek.  We took that knowledge and created a digital presentation on the food web and ecosystem of our local Mill Creek.  Below you will find a screencast that walks you through the basic overview of the lesson plan and then the actual lesson plan with resources is attached at the bottom of the post.

[**ITEC 7430 Final Reflection**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7430-final-reflection)

4/28/2015

[0 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7430-final-reflection#comments)

Over the last semester I have had a real opportunity to explore many of the Web 2.0 tools that are available for use in the classroom. Although I have always felt like I was ahead of the game in terms of technology for my school, I found that there were so many more things I could be pulling in for either my own classes or for colleagues.

One of the main goals I have set for myself as a result of this particular course is to create a way to expose more of my fellow teachers to the different Web 2.0 tools that are out there. I was inspired by the class Padlet that was created for us to each list one Web 2.0 tool that we enjoy using. As teachers we all come to the table with something different and Padlet serves as a great tool to house this information that can be accessed at any time. Most teachers I know would be able to pick one tool that they use with their students and give a brief description of what it is and how it can be used. I find that as a teacher leader with technology that one of the things that teachers are most afraid of is change. They are reluctant to try something out because they don’t know what it is or what it could be used for. By providing just that simple information and asking teachers to just explore one tool every few weeks or once a month I think the confidence and curiosity would be boosted tremendously.

As a teacher in the classroom I am working to incorporate more technology that is learner-centered. Many of the tools I have used in the past have been teacher-centered or directed and I want to make a shift in the other direction. The usage of Web 2.0 tools such as Padlet and Wikispaces has opened my eyes to the possibilities of collaboration and communication that can take place and really bring the classroom walls down for all students. The more I have my students using these tools the more I am aware of the need for a strong foundation in digital citizenship. I am currently working with my teammates to create a digital citizenship unit that we will focus on at the beginning to the next school year. I am anxious to see how that upfront knowledge will alter the products that are turned in throughout the year.

[**ITEC 7410 Reflection**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7410-reflection)

7/16/2015

[0 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7410-reflection#comments)

As Creighton (2003) asserts, a strong technology leader for a school or district most first focus on the instructional strategies used within the classroom and then find ways to expand upon those strategies to integrate technology in a way that is most effective. Many people in the world of education feel as though introducing more technology in a school will serve as a magical tool that will automatically increase student achievement by merely having it present. Creighton (2003) argues that unless the technology is used to enhance higher-order thinking skills or problem solving, it will be less likely that the technology will help improve student achievement in the classroom. It is crucial that proper planning and training take place so that money is not wasted and all stakeholders benefit from the many positive aspects that technology can and does bring to education.

Instructional technology is a large field that has so many facets. In this course, I have enjoyed taking a deeper look at leadership and all of the behind the scenes work that goes into making a strong instructional technology department. I hav﻿﻿e not only been given a chance to look through and analyze the School Improvement Plan for my school and the district Technology Plan, but also the technology plans of other districts from around the state as well as the national technology goals as outlined by the Department of Education. Aside from just reading and analyzing the work of others, I was equipped with the opportunity to analyze data from a survey I created and create my own technology plan project for my school. In this I was able to create a shared vision to direct my work, analyze the current reality of the technology situation at my school through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats), and create an action plan to lead my school into a brighter future in terms of successful technology integration. Each of these pieces, coupled with the ability to find instructional technology grants, has led me to feel more confident in being a technology leader not only in classroom, but also in the school and district.

To increase my network and awareness to what is happening in the current educational technology world, I created and continued use with RSS feeds through Feedly. Using this Web 2.0 tool allowed me to quickly subscribe and follow many of the leading instructional technology companies and researchers in their blogs and articles posted on a daily basis. Each day I would log in and find multiple new posts or articles to read about what is happening across the country and globe in terms of instructional technology. I found this particularly helpful while the ISTE 2015 conference was taking place since I was unable to be there myself, but many users were constantly posting new information about the sessions they were hosting or attending. As an effective instructional technology leader it is crucial to stay on top of the current trends and read the research that is taking place on a regular basis. I look forward to continue reading my RSS feed and sharing new ideas with my colleagues.

Resources

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[**ITEC 7445 Video**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7445-video)

7/19/2015

[0 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7445-video#comments)

Below is a video I created for ITEC 7445 Multimedia & Web Design.  This is an introductory video for my seventh grade life science students before they complete a WebQuest where they are asked to create a Dichotomous Key to identify local fish. Enjoy!

[**ITEC 7445 Multimedia Web Design Course Reflection**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7445-multimedia-web-design-course-reflection)

7/28/2015

[0 Comments](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7445-multimedia-web-design-course-reflection#comments)

During this Multimedia Web Design course I have had the opportunity to develop my skills of using the design elements for structure as well as visual appeal when creating web pages and online or multimedia content for my students to use.  While I have always found myself designing online coursework to look a certain way, I now see how what I have been choosing to do fits within the five design principles of proximity, alignment, repetition, contrast, and consistency as outlined by Williams (2006).  I will certainly be more observant of these design elements from here on though, especially as I work to make pages and modules easy to navigate and follow for my students as well as fellow teachers.

One of my largest takeaways from this course was the knowledge gained of what makes a good WebQuest, and how to create one of my own.  While I was familiar with the idea of a WebQuest prior to this course, I had never completed or created a WebQuest in my teaching career.  Now I am walking away from this course with a working WebQuest that integrates my content standards with those of ISTE.  I worked hard to not overdo the project and create something that was realistic for my students to complete during a typical unit.  Too often I feel like I create elaborate projects that then must be cut down in order to have my students complete them within a realistic time frame.  As a technology leader for my school, creating the WebQuest reminded me to be cognizant of what I am expecting of those I am working with, whether it be a student or teacher.  While I would have thought that everybody had worked with WebQuests before, I had not, and it took me longer to complete the project to the level that I felt comfortable with.  Students and teachers should have expectations placed upon them that are realistic and yet still push them out of their comfort zone little by little.

Moving forward from this class I am left wondering more about assistive technology and how it is being used in my school.  Due to this course taking place in the summer I had to work with a high school student using AT instead of someone at my own school.  I am very excited to get back to school this fall and continue conversations with the special education staff regarding what resources they have available, and how comfortable they feel using technologies with their students.  I have begun some of these conversations already and am excited to offer my services and knowledge to these teachers!

Williams, R. & Tollett, J. (2006). *The non-designer's Web book: an easy guide to creating, designing, and posting your own Web site*. Berkeley, Calif: Peachpit Press.

[**EDRS 8900 - Post Reflection**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/edrs-8900-post-reflection)

12/6/2015

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Even though we had completed a research course prior to this, as well as one in my master’s program, this is the first time that I feel I truly understand what it means to analyze a research study as well as plan one for myself.  I look back at my assignments from before and now I see why I did certain things.  I feel as though before I was just checking off boxes on a rubric, and now I can apply this knowledge in my everyday professional life.

I am blessed to work in a school that allows us the freedom as teachers to do what we feel is best for our students instructionally.  The only thing that administration asks is that we can explain and use research to back-up or justify why we are using the instructional strategies we choose for our classroom.  Before this applied field research course I used to rely on finding research in journals or on the Internet that I felt matched what my students needed.  This course opened my eyes to see the importance, and relative ease, of completing my own research to truly find what my exact students need or want, instead of just finding research to match what I thought.  While I have always worked to learn who my students are as learners, the ability to conduct my own research will help push me to learn even more.

In conjunction with my research from this semester, I see myself really focusing on the blended learning environment I am providing in my classroom.  The students were able to give me some great feedback after just a quarter so I want to continue to seek their feedback and adjust what I am doing with them after midterms and then again at the end of the year.  I feel this group of students can really help guide me as I tweak my offerings for life science.

[**ITEC 7460 - Post Reflection**](http://samonett.weebly.com/blog/itec-7460-post-reflection)

12/7/2015

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This course has pushed me to think about coaching beyond what I have been asked to do in the past.  During this semester I was able to not only read some great resources about what coaching should look like, but also work with my peers to implement some of these strategies in my current work place.  The two most useful assignments I completed in this course were the peer coaching journal and the creation and implementation of a one-hour technology workshop.  For the peer coaching I was able to take a colleague that I already had a good working relationship with and use assessment techniques to determine where she stood in terms of technology usage in her classroom and more importantly how comfortable she was with change.  Using the Adopter Survey created by my PLC group allowed me to think in terms of not only where teachers are in their use of technology, but also how willing and open they were to change and further implementation.  Some teachers come across as though they are on the cutting edge, when in fact they have just found a tool they enjoy and are not interested in continuing the growth cycle of learning and implementing innovative ideas.  Others are extremely open to being innovative, but lack the resources to show it.

The creation and implementation of the technology workshop was eye-opening because it took something I have been doing on my own as a teacher leader in my school to a new level.  Instead of just sharing what I had learned about something with those I work closest with, I really had to consider my audience and the needs of those around me.  In creating an agenda and Weebly that the teachers could go back and access at any point on their own, I pushed myself to be more organized and intentional in what I presented and how.  The idea of using a Weebly that teachers can go back and access at any point is one that I want to use in the future as a technology coach.  I feel as though if teachers know there is a one-stop shop that will give those answers and resources for technology integration in the classroom, they will be more likely to use the resource and therefore also ask clarifying questions if needed.  If nothing else, it provides a great landing page to document all of the training being offered so that you can see how things have grown and all judge if the needs of the people are being met with what is offered.