

Get Connected With Today's (and Tomorrow's) Tools

Purpose: To engage participants in exploring ways to use digital tools and to increase their knowledge of free digital tools that can help improve their own professional learning.

Time: 45 to 60 minutes, depending on participants' previous knowledge and whether they will have computers available.

Preparation:

- For each small group (three to four participants), prepare a set of *What Do You Need?* cards by copying the chart and cutting apart the cards. Clip each set together.
- For each participant, prepare a copy of the *What Do You Need?* chart.
- Have available chart paper and a marker.
- If your school computer lab is available, consider having this meeting there so that teachers can begin investigating digital tools.

Steps

1. Facilitate a brainstorming session around what participants know and what they would like to know about ways technology can help in their daily work. Some opening questions to stimulate the group's thinking might be: *What are some of your own needs in managing information? What do you know about digital tools? How might digital tools help you in your work? What questions do you have about these tools? What terms do you want to understand? How can these tools be valuable for students? What would you like to learn about what's available digitally?* If the group is large, break into small groups and list responses on chart paper.
2. Give each group of participants a set of *What Do You Need?* cards. Ask groups to work together to match the Need cards with the Solution cards.
3. Invite groups to report out. As they do so, point out that a Solution card may match more than one Need card. For example, social bookmarking tools might be used both for organizing and for collaborating.
4. Distribute copies of the *What Do You Need?* chart to participants.
5. Lead participants to examine the Free Web Tools column. Explain that these are free digital tools that can be remarkably efficient in addressing some of the identified needs. Note that the tools and categories include overlap because many have multiple purposes. Also tell the group that these are just a few of the most common examples to begin — selected by the authors of this tool. Many more in each category are available.
6. Ask: "Who has already used one of these digital tools?" "What other needs has this tool met for you?" "What other digital tools have you used?"
7. List names of additional digital tools that faculty members suggest on the chart paper and suggest that participants add these to their charts.
8. Invite participants to go online and investigate at least three digital tools, keeping a list of each tool and their initial thoughts about how they might use it.
9. Suggest that teachers commit to learning to use at least one new digital tool and then meet to share their experiences.
10. Ask a staff member who is knowledgeable about digital tools to be a point of contact for teachers who have questions. Students are also valuable in this role. Many students use a variety of digital tools and would be enthusiastic coaches for teachers and staff.

Source for tools on pp. 4-6: Anne Jolly and Walter Olsen.

NEED	SOLUTION	FREE WEB TOOLS
<p>NEED: I need an efficient way to locate and organize web sites and information I find online. I might do this at home sometimes, so I want to be able to access this information from any computer.</p>	<p>SOLUTION: <i>Social bookmarking</i> is a way to collect and save bookmarks to a public web site and “tag” them (link them to key words).</p>	<p>SOCIAL BOOKMARKING TOOLS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Del.icio.us • Digg • Diigo
<p>NEED: I want to capture, locate, share, and use video to captivate and engage my students.</p>	<p>SOLUTION: <i>Digital video</i> tools allow you to view and download videos you see on the web.</p>	<p>WEB-BASED VIDEO TOOLS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy Web Video • Teachertube • Zamzar
<p>NEED: I'd like to connect and collaborate with other educators on common projects.</p>	<p>SOLUTION: <i>Online collaboration</i> tools provide online spaces to work together with others in real time or asynchronously.</p>	<p>WEB TOOLS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google Apps • Skype • Wikispaces
<p>NEED: I'd like to access photos, clip art, and other images to share with colleagues or use in my classes.</p>	<p>SOLUTION: <i>Photo sharing</i> sites provide millions of free images and allow you to upload, store, and share your own photos.</p>	<p>WEB TOOLS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flickr • Photobucket • Webshots
<p>NEED: I need to unite with colleagues to interact, learn, and build new understandings and friendships.</p>	<p>SOLUTION: <i>Virtual learning communities (VLCs)</i> allow you to interact regularly with colleagues and enjoy learning while building relationships.</p>	<p>WEB TOOLS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moodle • Ning • Tapped in
<p>NEED: I need to manage my time better. I don't want to spend a lot of time looking for information online.</p>	<p>SOLUTION: <i>Real Simple Syndication (RSS)</i> is a way to build and organize a database of easily accessible information.</p>	<p>WEB TOOLS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloglines • Google Reader • SharpReader
<p>NEED: I need to spend time reflecting. I want a different way to journal, and I'd like to get comments on my thoughts and opinions on various topics from others.</p>	<p>SOLUTION: A <i>blog</i> is a web site that allows you to keep an ongoing commentary or diary for reflection and feedback.</p>	<p>WEB TOOLS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blogger • Word Press • Windows Live Spaces
<p>NEED: I want to meet and interact with colleagues beyond those I see every day. I would like to access new sources of expertise.</p>	<p>SOLUTION: <i>Social networking sites</i> facilitate connections among people who share common interests or professional goals.</p>	<p>WEB TOOLS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook • LinkedIn • Twitter

FREE WEB TOOLS

http://delicious.com	Del.icio.us: a popular social bookmarking tool that allows you to store and share web bookmarks and to look at bookmarks on specific topics that others have shared.
www.blogger.com	Blogger: a free blogging tool for sharing your thoughts and ideas.
www.bloglines.com	Bloglines: a web-based news aggregator that brings together information that you want to read and delivers it to your computer.
www.deskshare.com	DeskShare: a web site that allows you to turn pictures and video footage from your camera into a video slideshow.
http://digg.com	Digg: a social news site where people share content by submitting links from anywhere on the web.
www.diigo.com	Diigo: a social bookmarking site that allows you to bookmark and share web sites, as well as highlight and/or attach sticky notes to parts of web pages.
www.facebook.com	Facebook: a social networking site organized by city, workplace, school, and region that you can join to connect and interact with other people.
www.flickr.com	Flickr: a site that allows you to post and share images and videos and also provides social networking.
www.google.com/apps/	Google Apps: a site that allows you share and work with others in real time on documents, spreadsheets, and other office suite applications.
www.google.com/reader/	Google Reader: a web-based aggregator that will bring your favorite feeds to you and allow you to share these items with others.
www.linkedin.com	LinkedIn: a social networking site used mostly for professional networking.
http://moodle.org/	Moodle: a virtual learning environment that specializes in online learning and online communities.
www.ning.com	Ning: a web site that allows you to create your own social networks around specific people or interests.
http://photobucket.com	Photobucket: a site that allows you to upload your photos and videos and share them with friends and family.
www.sharpreader.net	SharpReader: a feed reader that organizes news and blogs logically and lets you store them in virtual folders.
www.skype.com	Skype: a collaboration tool that allows you to both see and talk with another person over the Internet, and to share instant messages and files.
http://tappedin.org	Tapped In: an online community of educators who gather to learn, collaborate, share, and support one another.
www.teachertube.com	TeacherTube: an online community for sharing instructional videos.
www.twitter.com	Twitter: a social messaging tool for communicating and staying connected in real time.
www.webshots.com	Webshots: an online site for uploading and sharing videos and pictures and creating personal online photo albums.
www.wikispaces.com	Wikispaces: a site with simple web pages that you can quickly set up and collaboratively edit and update with others.
www.windowlive.com/Online/Spaces	Windows live spaces: a web site that functions as both a blogging and a social networking site.
http://wordpress.org/	WordPress: a web site that provides free blogging along with other services.
www.zamzar.com	Zamzar: a site that allows you to convert files and videos from one format to another without downloading any software to your computer.