

# technology integration

*There are hundreds of technology tools perfect for education available for free on the Internet. These tools do many things, but below I try to highlight the best of the best when it comes to three overarching goals: transforming your entire classroom, transforming students' presentations, and transforming cell phones.*

*Unless otherwise noted, all of the tools listed here are FREE and web-based. Web-based means you can access them from any computer with an Internet connection. For more detailed information on all these tools (and more), as well lesson ideas, check out my blog, Stretch Your Digital Dollar, at <http://digitaldollar.edublogs.org>.*

## BLOGGING



Classroom blogs are an excellent way to integrate technology into lessons every day. They give students a place to showcase their work, including videos, podcasts, and digital posters. They give students a voice to express their learning and ideas. Most importantly, they allow students to interact with their world. A student blog can be read by peers, family members, teachers, and strangers half a world away, all of whom can leave questions and comments for the blog's author.

Some websites that allow teachers to create and manage blogs for their students include:

- Classblogmeister at <http://classblogmeister.com>
- Kidblog at <http://kidblog.org>
- Edublogs at <http://edublogs.org>

## SOCIAL NETWORKING



**Edmodo** allows teachers to create closed social networking sites for their classes or schools. Teachers can post and collect assignments and even keep track of grades with this site. url: <http://www.edmodo.com>

## WIIMOTE WHITEBOARD

Most teachers with an interactive whiteboard can tell you how the tool transforms your classroom, your teaching, and student learning. But with a price tag of thousands of dollars, it can be extremely difficult to get one into many classrooms. Luckily, there is an alternative that costs around \$55. For the full directions and details, check out my blog. To create a Wiimote Whiteboard, you need a few things:



### Hardware

- Wiimote
- projector (if needed, you can build one for about \$30)
- computer with Bluetooth (if needed, you can buy a Bluetooth dongle for about \$10)
- infrared pen (you can build your own or buy one online for about \$8)

### Software

- Wiimote Whiteboard, downloadable at <http://www.uweschmidt.org/wiimote-whiteboard>
- ActivInspire, downloadable at <http://support.prometheanplanet.com> (apply for the teachers license to use the full version for free)

## WIKIS



When it comes to student collaboration, nothing beats a wiki. Much like Google docs, students can work together to edit a single document. But even better, with a wiki, students can make their work public so when they're finished, the world can access their ideas.

To start your own class wiki for free, check out:

- Wikispaces at <http://www.wikispaces.com>
- PBworks at <http://pbworks.com>

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## CARTOONS



**Blabberize** allows students to upload a picture of anything and make it talk. The user tells the program where the mouth is, and the program makes the mouth move. The user records the audio to be played as the photo "talks." For example, a student could upload a picture of a tuna and make it say, "I'm Terry the Tuna. I live in the Monterey Bay, and I'm a great athlete."

url: <http://blabberize.com>

**Go! Animate** is a click-and-drag program that allows users to create cartoons. Students can record their own voices or add talk bubbles.

url: <http://goanimate.com>

**Xtranormal** is a quicker, easier-to-use cartoon creation tool with the motto, "If you can type, you can make movies." Students can pick a setting, a couple of characters and then type a script for the characters to read, using computer-generated voices. The user can also choose from a list of actions for the character to perform. Students can type the script in several languages and can create cartoons with historical figures, like Albert Einstein.

One caveat: some of the characters and settings require a fee before users can publish their movie. You can also download a free version of xtranormal to use on your PC.

url: <http://www.xtranormal.com>

## COMICS



**Pixton** is a rich drag-and-drop comic book creation tool.

url: <http://pixton.com>

**Make Beliefs Comix**, also a drag-and-drop comic creation tool, offers a much simpler interface. It's perfect for young students or quick projects.

url: <http://www.makebeliefscomix.com>

## MULTI-MEDIA PRESENTATIONS

**Prezi** is a presentation tool, similar to PowerPoint. Unlike PowerPoint, however, Prezi allows you to create non-linear presentations with interesting visual effects.

url: <http://prezi.com>

**VuVox** is described as a multi-media collage, where users can add text, audio, images, and video.

url: <http://www.vuvox.com>

## PODCASTS

**Audacity** allows students to record and edit audio – perfect for creating a radio show.

url: <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>

**Voicethread** lets students upload an image, document, or video and then record their own narration. Other students can then record comments or questions to the original presentation.

url: <http://voicethread.com>

## DIGITAL STORYTELLING



For resources on digital storytelling, including tutorials, worksheets, lesson ideas, and examples, check out these resources:

- Center for Digital Storytelling: <http://www.storycenter.org>
- Science teacher Roger Pence's website <http://www.penceviews.com>
- PBS's place-based digital storytelling: <http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/for-educators/digital-storytelling/>
- Storymapping Stories: <http://www.storymapping.org/>

If you need video editing software for your classroom, here's a link to the top 5 FREE video editing tools: <http://www.desktop-video-guide.com/top-5-free-video-editing-software-review.html>

## DIGITAL POSTERS

With **Glogster**, students can create posters with embedded video, audio, animation, etc. Below is the link to the educational version.

url: <http://edu.glogster.com>

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## INSTANT FEEDBACK



**Wiffiti** lets you set up a “wall” with a background image. Then, users can post messages to the wall by navigating to a specific URL on their web browser or by texting a message to a specific number. The most recent messages appear on the wall in large font, and all the messages are saved in a Twitter-like timeline.  
url: <http://wiffiti.com>

**Poll Everywhere** basically allows you to ask students questions, which they then answer via text message or their phone’s web browser. The answers are available to you immediately – as a graph on a Web page or PowerPoint – so you can post the results in class for discussion.  
url: <http://www.polleverywhere.com>

**Twitter** has several applications in the classroom. For example, on a field trip, you could give students a series of questions about wherever it is you’re visiting. Then, as students discover the answers, instead of jotting them down on a paper, they can use cell phones to tweet their responses to a class Twitter account.  
url: <http://twitter.com>

## PROJECTS



**DailyBooth** is exactly like Twitter, except you can add photos. Teachers can create a class account and students can upload photos, with captions, by sending an e-mail from their cell phones. The class can then see all the photos and captions, in the order that they were sent, on the class’ DailyBooth page.  
url: <http://dailybooth.com>

**SCVNGR** allows users to complete or create SCVNGR hunts. The hints are delivered via the Internet or text message. As users find a clue, they text or submit their answer into the website. If they’re right, they get the next clue. The site offers pre-built scavenger hunts that users can complete for free, but it also allows you to build scavenger hunts. On the free account, only five people can complete the scavenger hunts you build. The best way to use SCVNGR in school is to have students build hunts for their classmates, because the hunt creators come away with a great deal of understanding. Then, other students can work in groups – using one phone – to complete the hunt (so you don’t reach that limit of 5).  
url: <http://www.scvngr.com>

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