

Nings, blogs and prezis – how is your Web 2.0 lingo?

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Nings, blogs, prezis, mashups, pods, wikis – how are you keeping up with the language of Web 2.0? These online applications are rapidly becoming tools of choice for an increasing number of teachers who are discovering that they provide compelling teaching and learning opportunities.

What is Web 2.0? Wikipedia offers this explanation: “Web 2.0 is commonly associated with web development and web design that facilitates interactive information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design and collaboration on the World Wide Web. A Web 2.0 site allows its users to interact with other users or to change website content, in contrast to non-interactive websites where users are limited to the passive viewing of information that is provided to them.”

The last sentence of this definition describes what Web 1.0 is (or was). The Information Age

and Web 1.0 has so far been about making more information available to more people - passively. We search, we look, take what we need and then move on.

Web 2.0 is the next phase of the great information explosion in which users not only are consumers of information they actually become content producers. By participating in online discussions or forums, providing comments on blogs or sharing your digital photos online you are contributing to the universally available body of knowledge and producing content for the consumption of others.

The social networking programs like MySpace or Facebook are really just frameworks filled with user-created content. The owner of a Facebook site produces content which is consumed and added to by friends.

Digital photos are shared on Flickr and friends post comments offering opinions, shared experiences and feedback which provides even

more content for others to consume.

Web 2.0 tools in education focus on collaboration and participation by students with their peers – either their immediate classmates or a remote group of students anywhere in the world – involving them in an interactive and proactive learning environment.

There is a plethora of Web 2.0 technologies although not all provide high levels of user contribution, collaboration and interaction. In future issues of *Education Today* we will introduce you to some of the more useful tools (see side bar on Prezi). In this issue, however, we will take a look at an initiative designed to involve principals in the use of Web 2.0 with the intention of helping them see the value of these technologies for themselves and so determine how they might promote Web 2.0 technologies in their own schools.

The Principals' Help Desk

The NSW Primary Principals Association has embarked upon a Web 2.0 project for its 1800 principal members by providing a

Prezi – a new Web 2.0 tool



If you are a fan of mindmapping then you will love the brand new Web 2.0.0 application Prezi. Prezi is a presentation tool without slides. Instead it lets you put all of your thoughts onto one canvas and then move from part to part, zooming in on the detail, in any sequence you determine.

Great for planning and developing ideas with a group and usable on- or offline, Prezi can be downloaded and used for free from <http://prezi.com>. There are online tutorials that will get you up and running in a very short time.

The NSW Primary Principals Association's Web 2.0 project the Principals' Help Desk

dedicated website called the Principals' Help Desk (PHD). Initially, the PHD is comprised of three online technologies to not only help principals find information they need quickly, they can also contribute information to help each other.

Web Directory

Have you ever wasted valuable time trying to find information you need on the world wide web? The Web Directory is an alphabetised list of links to hard to find information on education department websites or any other website. You can search by keyword and find all matching links. All links are contributed by principals so when someone finds a website or particular part of a website they believe will be of use to their colleagues the link and a short description can be added to the Web Directory thus contributing to the value of the Directory.

SHAREiT

SHAREiT is an online document sharing repository where principals can find useful and timesaving resources and contribute resources for the benefit of other principals.

SHAREiT is self-managing and any document contributed can also be removed by the contributor. Contributed resources are categorised so finding and downloading what you need is a quick and painless process. Documents available online include school policies on a wide range of topics, school management plans, surveys, speeches and presentations.

Principals' Exchange

The Principals' Exchange is an online forum where principals can engage in conversations on a wide range of topics. Questions and answers, requests for assistance, and an exchange of opinions on educational subjects help

individuals to participate in and contribute to the principal community as a whole.

Future expansion of the Principals' Help Desk will be determined by the demands of its users. However, some possible scenarios may see the use of Wikis for collaborative planning by small groups of users, or blogs and podcasts from educational experts to disseminate and discuss issues.



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Web 2.0 online community software system

Educational departments can cheaply and effectively improve communication between administrative staff, teaching staff, parents and students using new online community software.

Cognitive Development's Rapport platform is on-line community software that makes it easy to harness familiar social networking tools and allow staff to better manage their time, share their expertise, keep up to date on best practices and effectively manage the collective knowledge of a school, college or department.

Unlike managing internal communication through email or an intranet, a social network gives users greater freedom to access information, allowing them to find out about issues of relevance and items relating to their current workload while preventing access to information they are not authorised to view. The ability to tag and categorise content, an integrated search facility and a personalised news feed allow users to provide relevant, timely input to projects.

Features

- ◆ Fully adaptable to allow the system administrator to approve user accounts on creation and a registration process to insure valid emails

- ◆ Allows authorised users to upload articles, photo albums, audio and video (including HD video) files.
- ◆ Provides simple and advanced search options; content can be both tagged and assigned to one or more categories
- ◆ Easily configurable so community can be open (anyone can create a user account), approval required (user accounts must be approved before being made active) or closed (user accounts are assigned and unauthorised access is prohibited)
- ◆ Ownership of all user information and the ability to set T&Cs
- ◆ Assign users into Groups for ease of management, and/or allow users to create their own groups
- ◆ Integrated 'self management' of content
- ◆ Event management module allows for the promotion of events being held. These events can be visible to all, visible to specific groups or 'invite only' meetings
- ◆ Users can send personal messages to each other and manage their own Colleagues/Friends lists.

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