OTAN Online Connection

Spring 2008

Social Networking

Discover Education Streaming

OTAN has completed our contract with Discovery Education to provide online education videos and other media to adult schools subscribing through our program. Passcodes are now being distributed and face-to-face or online training is available for staff of participating schools. To schedule training, contact Penny Pearson at ppearson@otan.us or 916-228-2580 to find out which option will work for you.

John Fleischman Promoted

In recognition of his excellent work at the local, state and national level, not only with adult education, but with technology in education at all levels, John Fleischman, has been promoted to Assistant Superintendent at the Sacramento County Office of Education. He will continue his involvement as Executive Director of OTAN as well as his responsibilities for technology services at SCOE.

Branka Marceta's New Daughter

Branka Marceta, Coordinator of Technology Projects for OTAN and leader of the Technology Integration Mentor Academy, has a new daughter. Born January 23, Adela Marceta Jazvo is healthy, happy and doing well. She attended her first technology conference, CUE in Palm Springs, and of course she has her own blog at babyadela.blogspot.com.

Apply for TIMAC by May 16, 2008
By Branka Marceta

The online application for the Technology Integration Mentor Academy (TIMAC) is now open through May 16, 2008. For the past four years, TIMAC has been a two-year commitment with 30 teachers from throughout the state participating in the Academy. Due to budget cuts, as of 2008-09, participation in TIMAC will be for one school year. For 2008-09, ten new participants will be selected, and up to five more may be added if the participating agency covers travel and tuition costs.

Suzanne Ludlum uses a MacBook for notetaking

The philosophy of TIMAC is that positive changes in teacher behavior are most likely to happen if the teacher is given ongoing support by a mentor who is a peer. During the five days of training, new TIMAC participants will be offered the tools not only to upgrade their technology skills but also to be a successful mentor and effectively set goals. The new TIMAC participant will become a mentor at her/his agency to one or more fellow teachers and help them formulate, realize, and evaluate their technology integration goals. In turn, each TIMAC participant is assigned a support mentor – one out of the growing number of enthusiastic, technology-savvy adult educators with experience in both professional development and technology integration.

Some examples of projects undertaken by TIMAC members so far include:

- Upgrading hardware
- Selecting and implementing educational software
- Establishing computer labs from the ground up
- Promoting better use of existing technology, such as LCD projectors
- Using emerging technologies such as interactive whiteboards, student response systems, document cameras/digital presenters, PC tablets

Castro Valley learners use wireless tablet PCs

- Establishing an online presence by creating Web sites or using Internet-based course management systems as well as Web 2.0 tools such as blogs & wikis
- Training on software to create worksheets, flyers, slide show presentations, and videos

All of these exciting projects have a long term goal – to improve the learning skills, and technology literacy of the adult learners we serve in California.

For further information, contact Branka Marceta at 916-228-2580 or bmarceta@otan.us. The application is available at http://www.otan.us/timac/applyonline.

Inside this Issue

Moodle Instructor Derek Parker

By Penny Pearson

Derek Parker co-teaches two courses for Old Marshall Adult School: An EMT-Basic program and an EMT-Paramedic course. Moodle is a major component of his courses, not only to supplement student instruction using quizzes, supplemental course resources and an online wiki, but also for management of the other instructors, scheduling, labs and grades.

Parker's experience with online course management systems previously was limited to his experience as a student. Developing his EMT courses using Moodle "… is the first time that I have had this experience. To be really honest with you, I love it."

The EMT classes are structured with both face-to-face instructor time in class and the use of supplemental materials such as Web-based resources and online quizzes. Students also have access to the lectures in the form of PowerPoint® presentations, so they have time to review the information and form questions. "I didn't think that many, if any, students would do that, but when I lecture, I see the students flip through the presentations that they printed off!" stated Parker.

Developing his EMT courses using Moodle "… is the first time that I have had this experience. To be really honest with you, I love it."

Often the question of testing fidelity arises when teaching online courses. Did the student actually take the test? Parker avoids this issue by requiring that all students take their online quizzes in class after the lecture. The quizzes are graded automatically, allowing Parker and the other instructors to perform item analysis. "When teaching a vocational course it is easy to skim over something that we (as instructors) do on a daily basis. The item analysis feature on Moodle helps us focus our teaching." Students who finish the course take a certifying exam produced by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians. The test is administered entirely online. Parker helps his students prepare for this exam by structuring all of his exams to follow the same format: "The first group of students that took the exam was admittedly intimidated by the computer. We are allowing the testing to become second nature now. Our students are NOT tech savvy, let me tell you! But by the end of the course, they understand how to navigate the site and be very productive on it. Moodle is very user friendly…" said Parker.

Parker offers this advice for teachers considering Moodle: "If you are looking at using Moodle, don't be intimidated by the fact that it is a computer program. It is user friendly and becomes fun to use. The benefits of the site are small for educators, but are huge for the student. For me, that is the most important part. I believe that if we can find one little thing to facilitate learning a bit better, then that is a good thing."

For information on getting your own Moodle course site, contact Penny Pearson at ppearson@otan.us or call 800-894-3113.

Online Training On Demand

By Penny Pearson

Are you a bit nervous about this "online training" that you hear so much about? OTAN offers online classes in a variety of great titles and in a short period of time (just an hour or two) so you do not have to make a big time commitment to get in a little learning. The process for taking a class is simple and convenient.

OTAN online workshops use collaboration software called Adobe Connect ® that allows many users to log in to one Web page where a presenter can share documents, show presentations and photos, play audio, and guide you to specific Web pages. They are offered to individuals at scheduled times but if your school is interested in one of our online workshops, and it is not offered at a time convenient for your staff, a school administrator can request a special "in-service" session. Schools would provide a computer lab with a fast Internet connection, an overhead projector, speakers and an instructor workstation. A teacher would facilitate the online session by communicating with the online instructor, and helping in the computer lab as necessary. The online sessions are one hour long, but we recommend that teachers spend an additional hour in the lab practicing their new skills.

For an individual session, all you need is a computer with a fast Internet connection, speakers or headphones to hear the presenter, be an OTAN member with a valid email account to register, and basic computer skills.

To expand professional development, school sites may host a three-hour face-to-face workshop and then follow-up with an online training session. Research has indicated that often when technology training is offered, the lack of follow-up diminishes learner retention . An online follow-up training session will allow teachers to review materials taught and ask any questions they might have.

So register for an OTAN online workshop for yourself or your staff, and learn something new! Contact Penny Pearson for more information at ppearson@otan.us or call 800-894-3113.

Online Workshops for April and May:
April 4: Using Discovery Education Streaming's Assignment Builder
April 5: Using Web Sites to Teach Math
April 8: Using Moodle to Create a Course Web Site (2 hours)
April 17: OTAN for Teachers
April 18: Creating Web Pages with Google Page Creator
April 18: Google Goodies
April 19: Using Discovery Education Streaming Quiz Builders
April 25: OTAN's Online Lesson Plan Builder

May 2: Audio Editing with Audacity
May 6: Creating Moodle Assignments
May 14: OTAN Services for Administrators
May 16: Google It!
May 16: Using Excel to Create Student Study Activities
May 16: Create Your Own Podcast
May 17: Picture Dictionaries in the ESL Classroom
May 30: Wikis in the Classroom
May 31: Using Excel to Create Links and Hyperlinks

Social Networking and Education
By Marian Thacher

http://www.classroom20.com
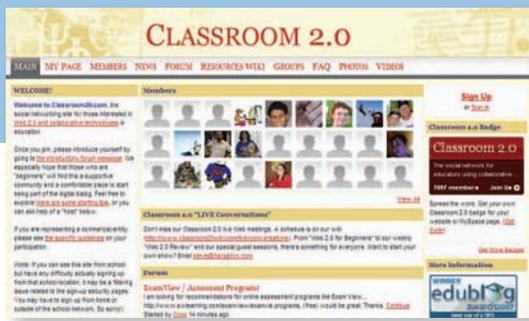
What is all this talk about social networking? There has been some fear generated around social networking, and many schools block anything that even looks like networking, chatting, or discussion boards. However, it may be that we are missing some wonderful learning opportunities for both our adult students and our teachers and staff.

A social networking site can be created for any kind of community – a study group on persistence, a collaboration between classrooms in several different cities, all ESL programs in California, or all education technology enthusiasts in the world. Social networking Web sites provide a variety of features such as: news and announcements; threaded discussions; posting of documents, photos and videos; links; surveys; and member profiles.

How to Get Started

It's easy to create a community site using a service such as Ning (www.ning.com). The first step is to think carefully about your goals, and your target audience. Do you want a site for the teachers in your program? Martha Rankin's blog for Newport Mesa Adult School is an example, http://adultedmatters.word-press.com (see page 4). She has created an online community with the goal of building a professional learning community at her school.

Do you want a site for anyone interested in a particular topic? Classroom 2.0 (http://www.classroom20.com) is an example of a social network for teachers who are using new technologies in their classrooms, and it has now grown to over 6,000 members, worldwide. These communities and others thrive because the members get something they want – needed information, sharing, support for learning, and a connection with likeminded others.

Once your goals are clear, to get started simply go to a site such as Ning.com or Nexo.com and sign up. You will make choices about what features will be included, what will show up on your home page, and how your site will be organized.

Some Examples

Classroom 2.0 is an example of a very successful social network for educational technology. It is not limited by geography, so people from all over the world are members and discussions are quite active. I use this site when preparing a presentation or thinking about a new technology topic. While preparing a workshop for ACSA on Technology for Administrators, I posted a question on Classroom 2.0 about what should be included. I got several good suggestions and ended up having an online conversation with a middle school principal in Saskatchewan about some new online tools. This virtual community helped me do my job better and expanded my learning. Since it met my goal, I continued to return and to participate.

Many social networks are for teachers, but a community-based organization in New York, *Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow,* decided to create a MySpace page for their young adult job seekers. Since most of their clients already had MySpace pages, teachers used the opportunity to help them create a more professional online presence, and to teach about where online information can go, such as to potential employers. Their MySpace page is at http://www.myspace.com/obtjobs.

To see other examples, see a list of social networks used in educational environments at http://socialnetworksined.wikispaces.com. You will find many online communities, but almost nothing related to adult education. It's up to us to build this presence if we find this is a tool that will benefit us.

Baldwin Park Director's Blog
by Marian Thacher

John Kerr, Senior Director of Baldwin Park Adult and Community Education, uses a blog to communicate with his staff, http://www.bpace.k12.ca.us/users/johnkerr. He shares attendance data, news about the program, celebrations and challenges.

OTAN: John, what made you decide to start a blog?

John: I found it to be an easy way to communicate with my staff. Our teachers are very focused on earning ADA. I was asked the same questions every week about hitting our cap. Now I just post our ADA, by program, on the blog. It's also a good way to communicate "what's new." We have a kiosk in our lobby with information about new classes, upcoming events, student leadership info, etc. It's very conspicuous, but teachers walked by it every day without noticing until I posted a picture of it on our blog.

OTAN: How did you get your staff to start reading the blog?

John: I had to be consistent about posting information there rather than sending an email or a memo. Once people knew that new information would be there, they started looking at it. If I do have something I want them to print, I post it on the blog and everyone can get it from there.

OTAN: I see that you're also using your blog as preparation for your WASC visit. How does that work?

John: This year we're using a wiki to write the chapters for our WASC accreditation. (A wiki is a Web page that anyone can edit.) This has been great! Team members can go online and write their sections, and we have the documents in one place. I link to it from the blog so that everyone can easily find it. We also link to WASC surveys. Right now, we have two surveys up for the "Organization for Student Learning Focus Group."

OTAN: Any advice for other administrators who want to do something like this?

John: Do it! It's made my job easier, and it doesn't take that much time. Setting it up took a while, because we wanted specific features and security options. There are lots of options out there for creating a blog. Look at a few examples, and then just try it.

The most difficult part for me is getting into the habit of posting at least once a week. The staff will look if they know new content is coming. If it's not updated, they stop checking.

Adult Education Matters: Interview with Martha Rankin
by Marian Thacher

Martha Rankin

Martha Rankin has worked in adult education for 10 years, and is currently in her third year as Assistant Principal for Newport Mesa Adult School. In October, Martha attended a district conference on building professional learning communities. She came back excited and ready to put her new ideas into practice. She knew she wanted to create a blog as part of the community that she and her staff would build, but she had no idea how to begin. She had never even commented on a blog before. Through a Google search, she found a 40-minute video tutorial by Christopher Abraham on how to set up a blog using WordPress. (http://tinyurl.com/2e5c57) After watching this tutorial, she felt ready to get started.

OTAN: Your blog is very clean looking and easy to navigate. Do you recommend using Wordpress?

Martha Rankin: I used Wordpress because of the tutorial I found online, and I've been very happy with it. They have a lot of widgets you can use, but over time I have simplified the blog in order to make it easier for teachers to use. I took down the map that shows where your visitors are coming from. I took down my long list of links and put them elsewhere. I got rid of the cloud view and went back to lists because the cloud was confusing to teachers. I want the home page to be really accessible to people who aren't used to blogs. I use the categories widget to organize all my posts so that a teacher looking for information on persistence, for example, can easily find it.

OTAN: What does the concept of building a professional learning community mean to you?

Martha: Simply put, it means collaboration, working together on a shared vision for improving student learning. On the leadership level, it means creating and sharing that vision with teachers, and then building the conditions, the structure, and the culture to promote that sharing.

OTAN: What are your goals for using the blog, and how does it fit into your overall professional development plan?

Martha: We are in the middle of our WASC accreditation process, and this is like our electronic portfolio for WASC. I have a whole category called WASC on the blog that the accreditation team can click on to see how we developed our Expected Student Learning Outcomes together, and how we are revising our professional development plan in the middle of the year as we get more feedback from students and staff.

I also use the blog to post all the documents we are working on, meeting announcements, and needs assessments. I post a draft of the agendas for our professional development meetings so that we can develop the agenda together and everyone can see it and have input.

http://adultedmatters.wordpress.com/
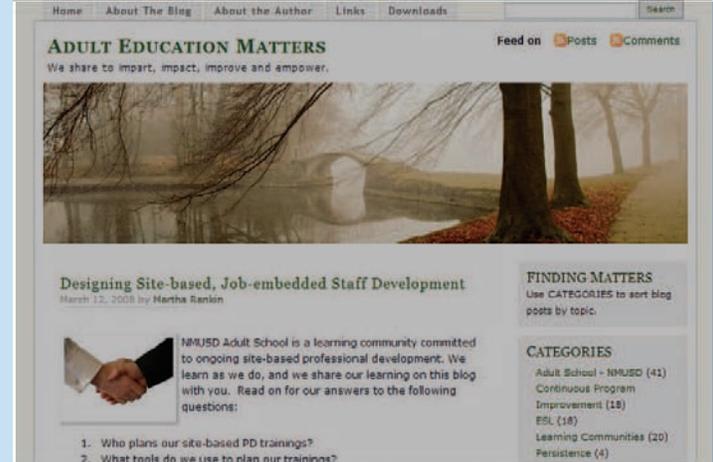
OTAN: How did you get your staff started using the blog?

Martha: One thing that really helped was that we had just opened a new facility with a computer and Smart Board in every classroom. Teachers had been going without for a long time, and once they finally had access to the technology they were anxious to start using it.

Our principal, Becky Bishai, really supports the concept of shared leadership, and that has helped too. Some teachers were nervous about the computers, but we did our best to create a supportive environment, do trainings, and listen to the feedback. That was very important. When I heard grumbling about something like having a hard time finding things on the blog, I listened and I tried to do something about it.

OTAN: What steps did you take to get teachers on board?

Martha: Well, we have Tech Tips for 20 minutes once a month. These are done during the first 20 minutes of class while students get started with independent work. The teachers get together and one of their peers demonstrates a teaching strategy that uses technology. The handouts and instructions are on the blog. Peer mentors get paid for their prep time.

OTAN: So how much time do you spend on the blog?

Martha: I do work on it during my work day, maybe an hour to an hour and a half a day, because it's part of our professional development plan. Because it's a passion of mine, I'm often searching around on the weekends and finding good information to post.

OTAN: Any advice for other administrators who are thinking about starting a blog or some other kind of online community-building site?

Martha: I would say look at some blogs out there and then identify your goals. Get a finger on the pulse of your staff's ability to access it, and then meet them where they are. It only works if the staff uses it.

OTAN Power User: Glen Sparks

Glen Sparks is the Principal of Amador Valley Adult and Community Education in the East Bay, which is part of the Pleasanton Unified School District. Amador Valley has 60 instructors teaching basic skills as well as an array of enrichment classes including Italian, Mandarin, Astronomy and Bookkeeping. Glen also teaches part-time as an Associate Professor of Continuing Education for California State University, East Bay.

Glen Sparks

Glen proudly touts OTAN as the main adult education online resource for both his adult education staff and for teaching candidates at California State University, East Bay. At Amador Valley, he recently invited OTAN trainers to speak to his certificated and classified staff, reviewing the many areas of the OTAN Web site, and giving them an overview on the variety of options for incorporating technology into their teaching. Teachers expressed interest in the Lesson Plan Builder, and in the Students Succeed program site which recognizes former adult education students who have met some of their life goals.

He has also frequently invited OTAN to make a presentation to his college students getting their adult education credential. The students have the opportunity to become acquainted with the OTAN Web site and some of the other services and programs offered to teachers by OTAN. They also get to try out and discuss technology for the classroom such as portable keyboards and blogs.

Says Glen, "There are many valuable Web sites and information sources available for teachers of adults online, but for my money, OTAN is the most valuable site for educators. The lesson plans available, the association with the California Department of Education, the up-to-date information, and the many links to relevant resources, make this site a daily hit for me. I have been happy to recommend this site to both my Cal State and Pleasanton Unified School District teachers. OTAN simply helps us be better prepared and more knowledgeable for our students, and that really is what it's all about."

Classroom Activities Using Web Sites

Did you know that OTAN posts a new Web-based classroom activity every month? Find them on the OTAN site by looking for Web-based Class Activities under Teaching Tools. These are currently being written by Kristi Reyes of MiraCosta College Adult Education. Kristi has a wide range of technology skills and does many technology-based projects with her ESL students at MiraCosta. You can see some of Kristi's projects and resources at http://kreyes.mcc.googlepages.com/eslbuffet.

Kristi's newest lesson suggestion is based on the National Public Radio series *This I Believe.* These are short five-minute essays written by a variety of people, some famous like Wired magazine founder, Kevin Kelly or cellist, Yo-Yo Ma, and some by ordinary people. They are inspiring and thought-provoking, a great starting point for class discussions, analysis, critical thinking and writing assignments. Kristi links to the audio files, as well as to adaptable hand-outs created by Beth Bogage from the San Diego Community College District.

Also, all previous lessons are archived, so you can find suggestions for many activities like using online photos for literacy projects (http://tinyurl.com/285bvm), sites for improving writing (http://tinyurl.com/2hk60a), and many more.

Look for OTAN at these upcoming conferences:

CATESOL State, Sacramento, April 10-13
Topics: Blogging, OTAN Web site, Discovery Education Streaming

COABE, St. Louis, April 28 – May 1
Topics: OTAN Web site, Discovery Education Streaming, Moodle, Technology Resources for Educators

CCAE State, San Diego, May 1-3
Topics: Blogging, OTAN Web site, Discovery Education Streaming, Moodle, Taking Online Workshops, Technology Integration Panel: Using Interactive Whiteboards, Internet Resources for Adult Education Teachers

CASAS, San Diego, June 17-19
Topics: Technology in the Adult Education Classroom, Online Resources for Distance Teaching, and more!

New Materials in the VESL/Workplace Clearinghouse!

Two new modules for the Automotive Technology Program at Palomar Community College are now available. Module 1, Careers in Auto & Diesel Technology and Module 2, Automotive Systems Part 1 prepare students for the current technology, skills and work environment.

Module 1 #611
Module 1 Instructor's Manual #612
Module 2 #613
Module 2 Instructor's Manual #614
CD-ROM of Module 1 #618
CD-ROM of Module 2 #619

For prices and ordering information, contact the VESL Workplace Clearinghouse
Educational Cultural Center, SDCCD
4343 Ocean View Blvd. Bldg. F
San Diego, CA 92113
(619) 388-4941, Fax (619) 388-4989
veslwkpl@otan.us

Also now available are updated exercise supplements (#621) to accompany Food Service Express software and new answer sheets (#609) that correspond to VESL Certified Nurse Assistant/Home Health Aide textbook: Nursing Assistant, A Nursing Process Approach.

Executive Director's Message

A Google search of the term Web 2.0 returns an astounding 71,600,000 "hits." A few short years ago that search term would not have shown any results.

Although there are numerous definitions for Web 2.0, I like to think of it in terms of the Web made interactive, where information becomes a two-way exchange. Web 2.0 sites allow users to interact, share information, and exchange thoughts and ideas. A term some educators use to describe Web 2.0 is the Read/Write Web.

Numerous applications and Web sites offer Web 2.0 characteristics. Wikis, blogs, social networking, social book-marking, and other interactive sites all offer a degree of interactivity with the users. In K-12, educators are struggling with how to use these tools in a way that doesn't threaten the established order. In adult education, we are beginning to see some interesting uses for both instruction and school administration. On page 3 of this newsletter, Marian Thacher offers some great examples and resources for learning more about the evolving and increasingly interactive World Wide Web.

For a number of years, all of the California Adult Education Leadership Projects (CASAS, CALPRO and OTAN) have been moving in the direction of online professional development. The number and quality of offerings has improved significantly. Some courses are offered in an asynchronous mode (not real-time) and others are offered in a synchronous mode (real-time). If you haven't tried online training workshops, perhaps now is the time to give it a try!

John Fleischman
Executive Director

OTAN

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