



OTAN Online Connection

A publication for members of the
Outreach and Technical Assistance Network
www.otan.us

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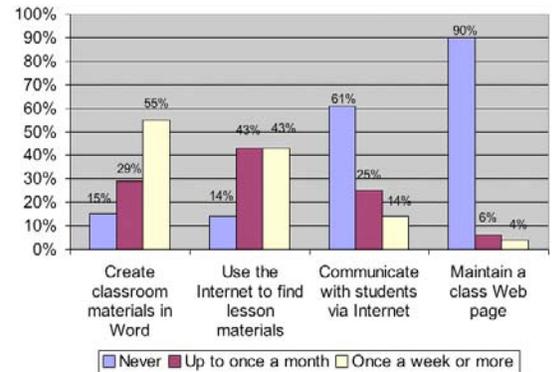
Technology Planning Bears Fruit

Yes, this newsletter looks different! OTAN has completely redesigned our Web site with new navigation, logo, and graphical look. All our print materials, including the newsletter, were redesigned to match the updated Web site look. Please visit www.otan.us to see what's new. You will find the site easy to navigate, with all your favorites still there. More information on the site will be coming in the next newsletter.

Since the EL Civics technology plans are due at the end of January, this is a good time to report on some of the findings from the technology plans submitted by approximately 180 agencies every year for the last five years.

Teachers and staff at local agencies have been filling out a computer skills self-assessment for five years now, so we can view the average for the more than 3,000 individuals who completed the survey statewide. The results show that teacher technology skills have improved or maintained every year in every area. That outcome most likely reflects teacher motivation and good professional development opportunities, as well as staff turnover where newer teachers are coming into our workforce with more technology skills already at their fingertips.

In 2004-05, we started collecting information from teachers on the technology skills they used in their teaching, and the technology-based tasks they were having their students do. Last year, 3,040 teachers answered these questions. Eighty-four percent of teachers are creating some classroom materials using a word processor, and 86 percent are using the Internet to find lesson materials at least once in a while. On the other hand, only 4 percent maintain a class Web page. We can expect to see this increase over time, as the Web becomes a more common medium for communication, and computers, Internet connections and data projectors become more common in classrooms. We may also find that maintaining a class Web page is a way to stay in contact with learners who need to "stop out" for a period of time.



**How teachers are using computers
2005-06**

2006 was the sesquicentennial year for adult education in California, and OTAN's goal was to have 150 former adult education students represented on the California Adult Education Students Succeed Web site by the end of the year. Thanks to you, we made it! The stories of 150 successful individuals are available on the site, with photos and eleven streaming videos. Thank you to all programs that nominated former students! Please direct your boards, community members and legislators to the site at www.AdultEdLearners.org



The project will continue with two nomination deadlines in 2007, March 23 and September 28. Nominations may be submitted online.

We also asked about what activities students are doing in the classroom, and it's interesting that approximately 20 percent of teachers are having their students use computers for writing tasks, use the Internet for research and other learning activities, and are communicating with their students by email or other electronic means once a week or more. There are still many teachers, 40 to 50 percent or more, who have no access to computers and the Internet for their students, or have access but are not using it.

One new feature of the technology plan this year is the addition of an optional student computer and Internet access survey. As of early December, nine programs had already entered student survey results. With over 1,400 student surveys submitted, 41 percent of students reported that they have a computer at home, although only 34 percent say they use the computer. Thirty-four percent reported that they have and use Internet access, although only 6 percent exchange email with their teacher.

Programs that opt to conduct the student survey will be able to view aggregated results, and break down the results by program area and level. This data will prove useful in creating technology-based assignments and homework, communication, or planning the implementation of online instruction.

In this Issue

Online Workshops Are a Breeze

OTAN has begun offering more workshops online, making training available to those who haven't been able to participate in scheduled face-to-face workshops because of work schedules, travel constraints, or other barriers. The technology plan training has been delivered online for several years, and participants have been enthusiastic about the convenience and ease of participating. As long as you have a phone line and an Internet connection, you can hear the presenter and participate in the discussion by calling the toll-free conference number, and by logging in to the online Breeze meeting site. All participants can see what the presenter shares from her desktop.

This fall, Scott Dowell offered Basic Computer Maintenance and Troubleshooting as an online workshop via the Breeze system. The workshop immediately filled up and the waiting list held enough people for three more sessions. Scott has continued to offer this workshop online in a variety of time slots.

"This is a valuable service. Making the PowerPoint available is a nice touch. I plan on sharing this info with my staff... Thanks!"

"My co-worker was listening in on the speaker phone. She and I agreed that this was a very informative and useful presentation."

Branka Marceta has also offered Technology Planning for Administrators workshops through Breeze. Administrators were especially appreciative of the convenience, and the ability to share ideas and experiences with fellow administrators without having to leave their sites.



Screen capture of a Breeze workshop

Watch for announcements of further offerings on the OTAN Web site and via email.

EFA Video Podcasts Coming Soon

English for All is a free online course for intermediate and above, English learners. The lessons are available at www.myefa.org, and a robust management system is also available for free. Now, through a new project of the Woodland Community College, the English for All videos will be available for download to anyone with a video iPod or other compatible personal media player. Watch for an announcement on the OTAN Web site and the EFA site when download instructions for these videos become available.



Ask the OTAN Techies

Q. What is Spyware and how do I get rid of it?

- C. Watson, Lompoc, CA

A. Spyware, or adware, is any software that covertly gathers user information through the user's Internet connection without his or her knowledge, usually for advertising purposes. Spyware applications are typically bundled as a hidden component of downloaded freeware or shareware programs. Once installed, the spyware monitors user activity on the Internet and transmits that information in the background to someone else.



Spyware can also gather information about e-mail addresses and even passwords and credit card numbers. Some malicious spyware programs will also try to take over your computer by installing additional spyware programs, changing your browser home page, and even redirecting your Internet searches.

Removing Spyware is much like removing a computer virus – it is best to use a program to remove them. The two most common free Spyware removal programs are: Spybot Search and Destroy and Lavasoft's Ad-Aware SE Personal.

Our recommendation is to download and install both programs. You will find that you are better protected running both applications. If one program fails to identify the spyware, the other program will usually pick it up.

Once you have installed both programs, you should find and use the "Check for Updates" option – just like your anti-virus programs. This will download and install the most current listing of known spyware programs. After updating both programs, you will need to run each program separately allowing them to remove any spyware programs found. Once both programs have completed their scans and removals, you should reboot and rescan your computer with both programs again until you no longer detect any spyware programs.

After all of the spyware has been removed from your computer, update and scan your computer every 2-4 weeks. This will help keep the spyware programs off your computer.

To avoid future spyware invasions, you - and others who use your computer – should not download any software or install any additional browser plug-ins without first determining if the application is safe to install. By keeping your spyware program current and controlling what is loaded on your computer, you should be able to keep those annoying spyware programs away from your computer.

Thanks,

The OTAN Techies

If you have a question for the OTAN Techies, please send an email to support@otan.us.

Spyware detection programs

SpyBot's Search and Destroy
www.spybot.info

Lavasoft's Ad-Aware SE Personal
www.lavasoft.com

Free Moodle Course Accounts Offered by OTAN

During the Technology Integration Mentor Academy (TIMAC) training in October 2006, the one technology integration goal shared by the largest number of participants was to learn how to create their own Web sites. There are examples throughout California of adult education teachers who have already established an online presence for their class. Some teachers create Web sites by using free hosting services and simple interfaces offered by Yahoo Geocities, Nicenet, Google Blogger and many more. A few intrepid teachers use Web development software to create and maintain Web sites on their personal servers.



The biggest challenge in creating and maintaining a class Web page is the actual time a teacher needs for creation and maintenance of these pages. New formats have emerged in the last few years with teachers in mind. Course management systems can be described as platforms for delivering courses and lessons online. Blackboard is one course management system and another is Moodle. OTAN has been offering Blackboard accounts to adult education teachers for the last year. We have now added Moodle as a course management system. Moodle is a popular open-source system that is gaining popularity among educators internationally. We will continue to host Blackboard for at least another year while we evaluate both systems and make a decision about which one to continue.

Both systems provide a shell for posting course outlines, assignments, handouts, and a list of links. Both have discussion boards, chat rooms, and the capacity for teachers to create quizzes. Both track student participation and quiz scores.

OTAN will be offering free Moodle accounts and training to adult educators in California who are interested in this new teaching and learning format. For more information contact Branka Marceta at bmarceta@otan.us or (916) 228-2587.

Some reasons for having a class Web site:

- Extend learning and communication beyond classroom
- Offer more in-depth reference, information and practice
- Orient learners and create a sense of community amongst them
- Equip adults with basic technological skills

OTAN Library Resources on Encouraging Learners to Read

In NCSALL's Focus on Basics (FOB) article *Influences on the Reading Practices of Adults in ABE*, Alisa Belzer reports on what adult literacy learners do outside of class to improve their reading and writing. Belzer includes a number of ideas for encouraging students to read, such as "making an explicit connection between reading practice and reading improvement, creating a classroom library, and helping students come up with techniques for reading independently."

Additionally, FOB (Vol. 8, Issue B) includes *Learners on Learning to Read* in which Belzer relates her findings on how to teach reading to adult developing readers as shared by the adult learners themselves.

PATH: | www.otan.us | *Teaching Tools & Resources* | *By Program Type* | *ABE/ASE/GED* | *Reference/Articles on Classroom Instruction* |

There are many other resources on reading to be found in the OTAN Library Collections at www.otan.us.

In the Reference Library

House of Miracles: A Portrait of Literacy (Loughrey) - a series of short stories of adult learners from interviews, research, and observation.

PATH: | [Home](#) | [Research & Reference](#) | [Library Collections](#) | [Adult Ed. Reference Library](#) | [Adult Literacy](#) |

Revisit, Reflect, Retell: Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension (Hoyt) - a valuable resource for creating meaningful and authentic learning experiences.

PATH: | [Home](#) | [Research & Reference](#) | [Library Collections](#) | [Adult Ed. Reference Library](#) | [Reading](#) |

Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning (Buehl)- literacy development strategies that emphasize effective learning in content contexts.

PATH: | [Home](#) | [Research & Reference](#) | [Library Collections](#) | [Adult Ed. Reference Library](#) | [Reading](#) |

In Ask the Experts

Ask the Experts contains a collection of research and resources on teaching reading to adults, including sections on research summaries, assessment, teaching techniques, instructional materials and professional development.

PATH: | [OTAN Home](#) | [Ask the Experts](#) | [Research-based Reading Instruction for Adults](#) |

In the Document Library

Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers (McShane) - builds adult literacy instructors' knowledge of scientifically-based reading research and provides basic guidance on how to use it in the classroom.

PATH: | [Home](#) | [Research & Reference](#) | [Library Collections](#) | [Online Documents](#) | [Adult Literacy](#) |

The items listed above are just a few of the many resources available in the OTAN Document and Reference Libraries, offering adult educators access to a wealth of information about adult education practice and research. Many materials that are not online may be borrowed from the OTAN Library. When you've found the item(s) you want to check out in the OTAN Resources section of the web site www.otan.us, follow the instructions provided.

Executive Director's Message

When the OTAN Project first established online access to information the World Wide Web didn't exist. Back in those early days we made information available via a mainframe computer, and individuals connected to OTAN Online via a statewide network of dial-up modems. Connections were slow (1200 baud) and information was available in small text files (12K) only.

As the Internet evolved, so did the ability of OTAN to provide information. Around 1993, OTAN converted to a system known as Gopher, a protocol for making information available via the Internet using a file-like hierarchical metaphor. But Gopher was short-lived and by 1995 OTAN staff began using hypertext markup language (HTML) to post and make information available via the Web.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges faced by OTAN staff has been organizing online information so that end-users can access it in an intuitive and simple manner. Over the last 5 years that has become a challenge due to the legacy of various file formats, delivery systems and technologies, and the sheer number of OTAN files (more than 24,000).

Realizing that easy access to information is absolutely essential for OTAN Online users, about 6 months ago we set out to redesign and restructure the OTAN Web site. We took this opportunity to give the site a whole new look, new user-friendly menus, a more effective search engine, and a merging of OTAN Online and AdultEdTeachers.org. We hope you like the new OTAN Online and we welcome your thoughts and comments.

Best wishes for a healthy and happy 2007.

John Fleischman
Executive Director



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