

## You Want Me to Go High Tech?

*“Children are native to cyberspace and we, as adults, are immigrants.”*  
—Douglas Rushkoff

I know that if I were reading this document instead of writing it, the writer would have lost me with the words *high tech*. Adding lessons for helping students learn critical text-related reading, writing and vocabulary skills is something I understand. But high tech doesn't sound like something I ever thought I would be doing in my English classes.

Fortunately, our students, and many of our colleagues, have already figured out ways to make learning and technology work together to increase student engagement and understanding of the resources at their disposal. Learning how to capitalize on what our students already know and enjoy is a major learning curve for many of us. I asked Lee Ann Spillane, one of the writers for *Plugged-in to Reading* and *Plugged-in to Nonfiction*, to take us through her high-tech journey as a high school English teacher and help us understand some ways we can utilize this incredible resource. The section that follows is Lee Ann's conversation with us about language, resources and instruction when using technology as a tool for learning and communication.



### Are you a high tech teacher?

Marc Prensky estimates that by age 21, today's learners will have sent more than 200,000 e-mails and will have spent

- Less than 5,000 hours reading
- 10,000 hours playing video games
- 10,000 hours on the cell phone
- 20,000 hours watching TV

Incredible, isn't it? What does this mean for the learners sitting in your classroom right now? I believe it means that our students learn differently than they did a generation ago. It means that many of our students, while not native in the sense that they know how to use all digital tools, *are* native to digital environments. They multi-task—cognitively, they do and process many things at once: watching television while texting a friend while listening to an iPod or music player. Students are immersed in media-rich content that they access, shape, and carry with them. Does your curriculum use the richness possible with this technology?

# Program Implementation Guide

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We know the value of reaching students where they live and, therefore, we knew our design for *Plugged-in to Nonfiction* needed to support teachers and students in using 21st-century tools in their classrooms. Included with every text are high-tech options you can do with your students. From Web quests to Google Earth, students are given guided opportunities to explore many of the Web-based applications that are forming today's Internet. The following guide is provided to familiarize you with current Web 2.0 tools and to help you establish a common language with your students.

## What is Web 2.0?

Simply put, Web 2.0 has come to mean the read/write Web. In other words, this is a Web where consumers don't merely read information, but they also organize and create it online as well. When educators or educational technology specialists talk about Web 2.0 tools, they usually mean Web-based applications that can be used to store data, create information, share files, network and more. Web 2.0 is interactive, whereas Web 1.0 or former applications of the Internet were more static.

## How can you use Web 2.0 tools in your classroom?

Will Richardson says first you should think about what you love to teach. Perhaps you love to teach students to respond to literature. Or you enjoy running literature circles or reading groups in your classroom. Then think about which Web 2.0 tools might enhance or extend that experience for your students. Two tools come to mind for me: blogging and videoconferencing. A blog—shortened from weblog (a literal log of Web sites visited)—is a place online where writers post short entries and their readers post comments back to them. Bloggers post ideas and interact with their readers via such comments. In a classroom, you can set up a blog so each student can contribute to it. Students would first post their responses to the book they are reading and then be able to comment on each other's blog postings. You could even, as Richardson did, invite authors to lurk (read without contributing) or comment on your students' blog postings.



Videoconferencing can be accomplished by inviting authors or other experts to participate in book discussions via Skype. Skype is a free application that allows you to make computer-to-computer voice and video calls. You can have a conference call using Skype or just call one-on-one. Students don't need to make these calls on their own; you can set up Skype sessions for a whole class with one computer and an LCD projector. Imagine Skyping a class across the country, or in another country, in order to discuss a book you've all read. Skype makes this kind of collaboration possible.

Sara Kajder says we should start with a task or an authentic classroom need. The tool should follow naturally. Do your students write collaboratively? If so, perhaps storing documents on a wiki is a tool that would enable them to write together more effectively. For example, an English teacher at my school does a yearly group project that involves students working collaboratively to research and write about a time period in British literature. Students in the "Romanticism group" are asked to write a research paper that details the arts, politics, fashions, religious beliefs and other aspects of the time period. Each member of the group takes one of the time period's topics. Once the research and writing are finished, students put their papers together. Sometimes, we find that the

# Program Implementation Guide

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writing is not as smoothly put together as it could be because each student is actually writing a separate piece of the research. A wiki could help students see drafts as they progress because wikis notify group members when new files or new editions of a page are posted. Students could then fit their pieces together over time without having to meet in real time right before the paper is due. A wiki is a readable/writable Web page. A teacher can set up a free wiki (see the glossary for sites) and invite students to participate in it. Students log in to the wiki and begin posting information to it for all group members to use. Students can post links, whole pages devoted to their topics, and even the written files on which they're working.

## What about podcasting?

Podcasting, reminiscent of the ubiquitous iPod and the idea of broadcasting, is a term that describes amateur Internet radio. A podcast is an audio file broadcast to an audience via the Internet. Podcasts remind me of radio shows, though they are more varied than any radio program to which I've listened. Anyone can create a podcast using free software downloadable from the Internet. Audacity is one such program that allows users to record their voices and mix in music or sound effects to create an MP3 file that can then be uploaded to the Internet or to iTunes. There are thousands of free podcasts available in iTunes and thousands more hosting on the Internet at sites like iPodder or The Education Podcast Network (<http://epnweb.org>), a directory of education-related podcast programs created by David Warlick.

If your students enjoy talking about the books they read or discussing issues in class, then perhaps podcasting would help them hone their abilities to read, write and speak fluently. Podcasting builds fluency. At my school, I often work with reading teachers who have their students record and create book review podcasts. First, students write out scripts for their reviews. Then, they record their scripts, edit the audio, and add music and other effects. Students often record their scripts multiple times in order to get their voices just the way they want them to sound. Because students know that their creations will be broadcast to students on the teachers' classroom blog or website, they are careful, and often more meticulous, as they create them. In fact, revising two or three times is not uncommon. Talk about crafting a voice! Students are engaged by this technology more than any other I've used in the classroom.

## Where do I begin?

Do we assign or do we teach? One trap into which I've fallen many times is the assignment trap where I **tell** students to do something rather than **show** them how to do something. It is important not to assign a blog to your students or tell them to go and post to a blog. Instead, lead them to it. Hook them on the idea, teach them about blogging, and then let them create it with you.

There are many lessons embedded in the idea of having a classroom blog or in the use of any of these digital tools. There are lessons you should consider teaching *before* your students begin to use the tools and lessons you can teach *during* and *after* the creation of these projects that will extend instruction. Several lessons for blogs, wikis and podcasts are listed for you in the chart on the following page.



# Program Implementation Guide

## DIGITAL TOOLS LESSONS

	<b>BEFORE</b> Teach students how to ...	<b>DURING</b> Teach students how to ...	<b>AFTER</b> Teach students how to ...
<b>Blogs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read a blog</li> <li>• use text supports of a blog (blog archive, links, profile, etc.)</li> <li>• define a blog</li> <li>• identify parts of a blog</li> <li>• sign in to use a blog</li> <li>• judge effective vs. ineffective blog posts</li> <li>• set up a blog site and register online for a free blog</li> <li>• understand the purpose of tags</li> <li>• acquire blogging vocabulary: post, comment, blog, archive, publish, RSS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• write and publish a blog posting</li> <li>• respond to a blog posting they read</li> <li>• add pictures to a blog post</li> <li>• add links to a blog post</li> <li>• add/embed a video clip into a blog post</li> <li>• add a comment to someone else's blog post</li> <li>• edit a post that has already been published</li> <li>• delete a blog post</li> <li>• have a digital discussion using blog posts and comments</li> <li>• effectively tag and organize blog posts</li> <li>• search using tags</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify and solve problems when posting to the blog</li> <li>• use the Control (CTRL) F keys on the keyboard and the Find window to search blog postings for key words or author's names</li> <li>• reflect on discussion (or lack of discussion) generated by a blog posting</li> </ul>
<b>Wikis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read a wiki</li> <li>• use text supports on a wiki (Home, Edit, Save buttons as well as other organizational tabs, links, etc.)</li> <li>• sign in to a wiki site</li> <li>• define a wiki</li> <li>• edit and save a wiki page created by someone else</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitor who is using a wiki</li> <li>• add a page to a wiki</li> <li>• upload a file to a wiki</li> <li>• add links, video, or images to a wiki page</li> <li>• use the history feature of a wiki to resurrect lost pages or earlier versions of a page</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compare one version of a wiki page to another to track revisions</li> <li>• save documents from the wiki to a computer</li> <li>• print documents from a wiki</li> </ul>
<b>Podcasting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify the parts of a podcast</li> <li>• listen to a podcast</li> <li>• play a podcast on the computer</li> <li>• download a podcast to a digital music device (iPod or MP3 player)</li> <li>• use controls/buttons to navigate a podcast</li> <li>• use recording software to record their voice</li> <li>• acquire podcasting vocabulary: encoding, uploading, broadcasting, RSS, hosting, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• add tracks to a voice recording using digital recording software (Audacity, Garage Band, etc.)</li> <li>• add effects to their voice (speed, tempo, pitch)</li> <li>• add effects to music or other tracks</li> <li>• save their file as a project for further editing</li> <li>• save their file as an MP3 or WAV file to post to the Internet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluate and respond to peers' podcasts</li> <li>• reflect on the process of creating a podcast</li> <li>• problem solve when saving files</li> <li>• save MP3 podcast file to a flash drive</li> <li>• upload podcast to a hosting site</li> <li>• download podcasts from a hosting site</li> </ul>

# Program Implementation Guide

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## Concerns?

There are always concerns when using technology in the classroom. The most important, or most discussed, is student privacy and Internet safety. If you have students writing online, I would encourage you to review your school or district's Internet policy with your students. Have students use first names only or pseudonyms when posting and consider writing a letter to parents about any technology projects you do with students. Will Richardson includes a sample letter to parents in his book *Blogs, Podcasts, Wikis and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms*. You might even hold a technology workshop for parents and students one evening before the start of any project. Teaching parents about the tools you will use with students can add support for students and build relationships between schools and families.

From an instructional standpoint, another concern is fair use. You'll want to teach your students what is legal and what is not in terms of copyrighted material. Using a popular song as background music to a podcast that will be posted online for a public audience is not legal. Students need to know what their limits are. I've found that a mini-lesson on copyright featuring the Web-based video spoof "A Fair(ly) Use Tale" to be an effective lesson with students on such issues. I also teach my students to cite the material they use. Citations on blogs should be in a format appropriate for your classroom (MLA, APA or another accepted citation style).

You might also consider the question of computer access. Do all your students have access to a computer at home or at school? Will you use these tools primarily at school or will you expect students to use them at home? As with anything you try in the classroom, planning is the key. Spending time planning how, why and to what end you will use digital tools to enhance instruction is vital.

Blogs, Skype, wikis and podcasts are just a few of the Web 2.0 tools you might find useful in your classroom. For more suggestions or ideas check out the Glossary of Web 2.0 Tools in the Additional Resources section of this Teacher Guide.



## So where do you go from here?

Technology can be intimidating, but it can also be exciting. Decide to make it exciting for you and your students by learning one new aspect at a time. Venture out to the read/write Web and you will be amazed at what's out there. Do you read blogs? Start by reading a few education blogs like those listed in the appendix. Try and keep up with two or three of them. After reading (or lurking) for a while, start participating in the conversations by posting a comment. Blogs will likely lead you to podcasts or video streams (live or taped presentations available online).

Start listening to podcasts. There are many educational podcasts hosted by the Educational Podcast Network and in iTunes. Join a network. There are several such places for teachers. You don't have to join MySpace; consider networks such as Classroom 2.0 on Ning, to which I belong. You might also consider plugging-in to a Twitter network. So get out there and get connected, so you can connect to the students sitting in your classroom.

