

Assistive Technology Works!



FCTD

*Family Center on
Technology and Disability*



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Social Media Tools



July 20-31, 2009

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Social Media Tools

Introduction

They're growing like topsy - Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and thousands of blogs, wikis, and related social media tools. When well used, they connect, inform, entertain, and educate. Whether you love them, hate them, or just can't be bothered, social media tools have changed the way Americans meet, communicate and collaborate. Educators and disability professionals have joined the fray, creating forums specific to their interests, including assistive and instructional technologies. If you're an experienced user of social media, we invite you to share your insights and resources. If you're quietly guarding the secret that you really have no idea what a wiki is, and Twittering..well, really; then this is the place to learn, in educator/parent/disability professional friendly language.

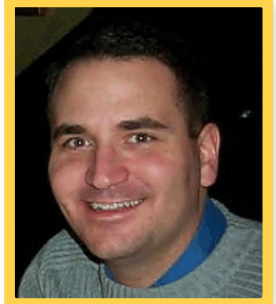


Learning Objectives

1. Identify the purpose of social media tools
2. Understand how to effectively and efficiently use social media tools for professional development and collaboration
3. Understand how to use social media tools in the classroom
4. Understand how to use social media tools to strengthen the connection between families

Expert Bios

Christopher R. Bugaj, MA CCC-SLP earned his Bachelor of Science in Education at the State University of New York at Fredonia and earned his Masters of Arts in Speech Pathology at Kent State University. Chris is the host of the A.T.TIPScast, an award-winning podcast on the implementation of assistive technology in public schools. Chris is also the co-producer and co-author of the popular Night Light Stories podcast that features original stories for children of all ages. The International Society for Technology in Education will be publishing a book co-authored by Chris on the topic of building an assistive technology team in public schools which will be available in January of 2010. Chris has presented at a variety of local, state, and national conferences. Chris is an active member of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. He currently works as an assistive technology trainer for Loudoun County Public Schools in Northern Virginia as well as an adjunct professor for George Mason University.



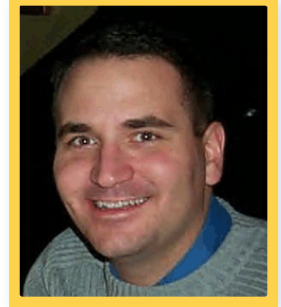
Alice Wershing is the Educational Technology Coordinator for the East Tennessee Technology Access Center in Knoxville, Tennessee. She is a credentialed teacher in Special Education and Elementary Education, as well as an Assistive Technology Practitioner, licensed by the Rehabilitation Engineering Society of North America. Ms. Wershing has 31 years of experience, including 21 years in the field of Assistive Technology. She has lectured and presented nationally, and is currently an adjunct professor at the University of Tennessee- Knoxville. She has also published on the use of assistive technology for developing literacy and play skills. She is conservator for an adult with multiple disabilities and the sibling of an adult with Pervasive Developmental Delay.



Expert Perspectives

Christopher R. Bugaj, MA CCC-SLP

There is a scene in the movie *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* where a pyre atop a large tower is set aflame to signal a call for aid. Miles away a sentry atop a similar pyre witnesses the flames blazing from the first tower and lights his own fire signaling a third tower which, in turn, signals a fourth. In this way, one by one, a message is sent over a wide expanse of rugged terrain binding the people of these distant lands together. In present day, if a hideous horde of drooling creatures were attacking your fortress you'd just pick up your cell phone to call for help and then, maybe even using that same phone, do a quick Internet Search for "How do I hold off a horde of monsters who are attacking my castle?" You wouldn't wait for days hoping against all hope that your signal got through and that help was coming. You'd know instantly if your allies would be hopping on their noble steeds and riding to your aid. You'd know instantly how to defend the walls of the stronghold until help could arrive. The power of the Internet and social media lies within the increased rate at which one can connect with others to share information.



The ability to communicate has been around since the dawn of man. With each generation new and better tools have emerged to help humans share information faster. At first there was yelling out your window which gave way to two cups tied to a string which gave way to the telegraph which gave way to the telephone which still exists but is expanded upon by text messaging and video conferencing. The need and desire by humanity to connect has always existed and with each successive generation we've gotten better at it.

Integrating social media into your life and investigating its uses for educational purposes spawns an array of questions. Is this a good tool? Should I invest time into learning this tool and, if so, how much time? Is it safe for my students and if it's not safe, can I still use it for professional development purposes? With so much "out there" how do I even begin deciding what's right for me? Will this tool add enjoyment to my life or will it suck even more of "My Preciousssss" minutes away from me? How will I find time to do all the other stuff I need to do if I start using another tool? I know so little about these tools that I don't even know where to begin or what questions to ask, so should I even use these tools? And the list goes on.

Social media and all that it encompasses is a tool, like any other tool. It can be intimidating at first. It takes some time to explore a tool and learn to use it efficiently and effectively. The first time you picked up a hammer you may have hit your thumb a few times. Every once and awhile you might

cut yourself with the kitchen knife. But those setbacks didn't stop you from hanging the picture on the wall or enjoying that tomato on your sandwich. In time you learned. The use of social media tools, both personally and professionally, will come along the same way if you let it providing you with new and exciting ways to educate students.

Alice Wershing

The field of assistive technology has grown exponentially since I first began as a staff member at the Disabled Children's Computer Group in Berkeley, CA, now known as the Center for Accessible Technology. As the Alliance for Technology Access (ATA) began with this center and 10 others in the late 1980's (wasn't that just yesterday?), it was clear that we all were venturing into new territory. The need to communicate about the daily challenges that fledgling centers faced in meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities in their local communities brought about a new sense of being together for a common purpose. We all fielded requests for assistance, challenges to take the technology of the day and make it accessible in ways it had never been before.



Before the World Wide Web, we were limited to talking to each other about what new solutions we'd found through Apple Talk and the early days of what we now know as email. We got together regularly at conferences and the networking continued face to face. The dialogues began early in the morning and ran late into the night. It was an exciting and daunting time, in that the options we had then pale in comparison and number to those of today, and those that are being developed as I write this piece.

The buzz that went across the wires in those early days of the ATA continues today in the form of new social networks, blogs, listservs and the endless possibilities of Google and other search engines. Answers can be gotten in minutes as opposed to those early days of letter writing to companies in order to find new solutions for individuals who came through our doors. Instead of waiting to see new products at the next conference exhibit hall, one can now use the Internet to see first hand how a device works through video, online chatting or by attending online webinars, where the actual software can appear on your desktop, for either observing or actual hands-on experience. I am not suggesting that this replace attending conferences or trainings in person, but it is not always possible. Social networking tools can offer similar content and dialogue, inspiring new ideas and the use of new tools.

Twenty some years later, as the field continues to explode and new technology abounds, the excitement I felt in those early days is still present. There are so many new developments around us, both in our field and in the world of technology in general. Every day is a new learning experience, finding more and more new resources as I search for solutions or ways to create access.

So how is it possible to keep up and find the new solutions that can assist those in our communities? Social networking enhances our access to new information and to be able to share with others how technology can improve the lives of those we work with, and even ourselves. It also challenges us to learn new ways to manage our time, to keep our privacy when needed, and to not add to that ever-increasing feeling of information overload. What do we do with what we learn, how do we file it for future use? Is anyone else getting weary?

We also must look at some critical issues related to this fast growing phenomenon to insure that by depending on these very networks that we are not excluding others who may not have access for multiple reasons. Especially in this global economy, are we creating an elite group of those who can have access to technology, engage in learning and move forward versus those who continue to struggle with basic needs? The literacy level required to participate in social networking can be high, having a computer or other device that opens this door can be costly. Are those who do not have access or know how to use these tools missing out? And if so, how do we create an inclusive network, so that all can be excited, motivated, and life-long learners? It remains to be seen where this new set of tools will lead us. Just like in those early days, someday we'll be looking back and remembering when social networking was just beginning. So bring along your thoughts, your experiences, and let's journey on.

Recommended Resources

Accessible Twitter

Accessible Twitter is an alternative to the Twitter.com web site. It is designed to be easier to use and is optimized for users with disabilities. Although it is still in the Alpha Stage, people are able to access most of the functions offered by the original Twitter site.

<http://accessibletwitter.com/>

Beginners Guide to Social Media

This introduction to the Web 2.0 world lists most of the popular social networking sites. The resources are grouped into categories and offer an explanation of what each site is used for.

<http://www.sitemost.com.au/blog/2007/07/30/beginners-guide-to-social-media/>

Common Craft

Common Craft is a small online community consulting company owned by Lee and Sachi LeFever in Seattle, Washington, USA. They started making short videos in 2007 and use paper cutouts and simple white backgrounds to explain things without technical jargon. Examples related to social media include: Twitter in Plain English, Wikis in Plain English, Social Media in Plain English and more.

<http://www.commoncraft.com>

Emerging Technologies: Social Media and People with Disabilities

This website discusses the increasing impact of social media tools in the lives of people with disabilities. It provides a brief overview of websites like Facebook and Twitter and offers some helpful tips for newcomers to social media.

http://www.tvo.org/cfmx/tvoorg/tvoparents/index.cfm?page_id=145&action=article&article_title_url=EmergingTechnologiesSocialMediaandPeoplewithDisabilities&article_id=5299

Everything You Need to Know About Web 2.0

This brief resource will help you familiarize yourself with the general concept of Web 2.0 and the many technologies that fall into this category.

<http://www.techsoup.org/toolkits/web2/>

Getting Started with Social Media - A Guide and Resource List

This guide is intended for users who are new to social media. The guide offers a strategic way to approach social media in order to get the full benefit of the available technology.

<http://www.technotheory.com/how-to-use-social-media-guide/>

Mashable: The Social Media Guide

This Website is a social media news blog covering cool new websites and social networks such as Facebook, Google, Twitter, MySpace and YouTube. It ranks as one of the largest blogs on the Internet.

<http://mashable.com>

Social Media for Non-Profits: 26 Great Slideshare Presentations You Can Use

This blog post offers links to presentations and articles focusing on using social media for non-profits.

<http://www.wildapricot.com/blogs/newsblog/archive/2009/05/12/social-media-for-non-profits-26-great-slideshare-presentations-you-can-use.aspx>

Teaching Degree.org Blog

A blog post titled 100 Tips, Tools, and Resources for Teaching Students About Social Media. The blog contains information about the basics of social media and ways to share that information with students. It also provides tools and articles as a resource guide for educators.

<http://www.teachingdegree.org/2009/06/22/100-tips-tools-and-resources-for-teaching-students-about-social-media/>

The Social Divide

This article focuses on specific problems people with disabilities may face with the new wave of social media tools and offers ways to overcome these barriers.

<http://universallydesigned.net/general/the-social-divide/>

Social Media - Links and Resources

The following list of links was compiled from the discussion throughout the Institute.

Accessibility Features for Mac and Windows posted by awershing@aol.com on Jul 21, 2009

Both operating systems have “ease of use” or “accessibility options”. For Mac, go under the Apple to your system preferences, and then select Universal Access. You have different options- screen reader, text enlarging, flashing cursors for sounds, etc. Sticky keys can assist accessing keystrokes with one hand. Mouse keys can use the numeric keypad instead of a mouse. There is a separate onscreen keyboard outside of the system preferences.

<http://theappleblog.com/2008/09/24/mac-101-get-an-onscreen-keyboard-in-osx/>

In Windows XP and I think VISTA, go to Start, All Programs, Accessories, then Accessibility. There is a wizard that can walk you through what you might want to use, or you can go directly into any of the options. Also, don't forget that you can use your Control panel on either platform to change things like mouse speed, size of icons, key repeats from the keyboard. These are all features that may assist access in general as well as access to social networking.

Accessible Twitter is an alternate version of Twitter designed for people with disabilities.

<http://www.accessibletwitter.com>

Activeworlds is a virtual worlds website. <http://www.activeworlds.com>

The **Alliance for Technology Access** provides information about where people with disabilities can acquire assistive technology. <http://www.ataccess.org>

Alternative Financing Technical Assistance Programs - A list of state offices that provide financial assistance to acquire assistive technology.

<http://www.resnaprojects.org/AFTAP/state/RESNA.html>

Bebo is a free social networking site. <http://www.bebo.com>

Patrick Black has a list of blogs on special education. <http://bit.ly/favatblog>

Blogger allows people to publish blogs for free. <http://www.blogger.com>

Classroom 2.0 is a Ning in which users discuss assistive technology.

<http://www.classroom20.com>

Common Craft provides videos explaining how social networking sites work.

<http://www.commoncraft.com>

Delicious allows users to bookmark sites and share their bookmarks with friends.

<http://www.delicious.com>

Diigo is an educational bookmarking website. <http://www.diigo.com>

Discovery Education focuses on visual learning. <http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com>

DropBox is a social bookmarking site similar to Delicious. <http://www.getdropbox.com/>

Edmodo is similar to Twitter, but participation is limited to people invited by the user.

<http://www.edmodo.com>

Elgg is a site that allows users to blog, network, and share information through news feeds and file sharing. Registration is not required. <http://elgg.org>

Eventful allows users to search for events. It also lets users request an event. The user requesting the event can then ask other people to join in his/her demand. <http://www.eventful.com>

Evernote allows users to make to-do lists. <http://www.evernote.com>

Facebook is a free social networking site. It allows users to choose “friends” who are able to view their accounts. A friend request must be reciprocated. Users may make their accounts public if they wish, but generally accounts can only be viewed by a users “friends”.

<http://www.facebook.com>

FriendFeed like NutshellMail, combines posts from social networking and email accounts. It also allows users to share this information and comments with friends. <http://www.friendfeed.com>

The **Georgia Project for Assistive Technology (GPAT)** helps provide assistive technology to people with disabilities. <http://www.gpat.org/resources.aspx?>

Hi5 is a social networking site similar to Bebo, Orkut, and Facebook. <http://www.Hi5.com>

Jott converts voice files to text. <http://jott.com>

LinkedIn users maintain a list of contacts. This includes direct contacts, but also gives users information about their direct contacts' contacts, etc. It is generally used to find jobs, and employers can use it to search for potential employees. It also features a question-answer service called LinkedIn Answers. <http://www.linkedin.com>

LiveJournal allows users to create an account that can function as a blog, journal, or diary. Like Facebook, it has a "friend" system, where account holders pick "friends" who can see their posts and make comments. Unlike Facebook, however, friending does not need to be reciprocated. LiveJournal posts and webpages can also be viewed by non-users. <http://www.livejournal.com>

The **Maryland Assistive Technology Network (MATN)** is a wiki that provides information on Assistive Technology resources. <http://matnonline.pbworks.com/>

Meetup.com allows users to search for events and find other people who share their interest in those events. The website then facilitates offline meetings and event attendance.
<http://www.meetup.com>

MySpace is a social networking site similar to Bebo and Facebook. <http://www.myspace.com>

National Assistive Technology Act Programs - This site provides a list of states' assistive technology resource centers. <http://www.resnaprojects.org/nattap/at/statecontacts.html>

Netlingo provides a complete list of internet shorthand.
<http://www.netlingo.com/acronyms.php>

Ning is a site that allows users to create their own social networks based on their personal interests. <http://www.ning.com>

NutshellMail allows users to keep track of posts from all their social networking and email accounts. <http://www.nutshellmail.com>

Odiogo converts text to audio. <http://www.odiogo.com>

Open Diary - users create their own online diaries, which can be either public or private.
<http://www.opendiary.com>

Orkut is another social networking site. Profiles on Orkut, unlike Facebook, are open to any visitors

to the site. <http://www.orkut.com>

Plurk is a micro-blogging site similar to Twitter. <http://www.plurk.com>

QIAT provides users with the latest information on Assistive Technology (AT). <http://www.qiat.org>

Remember the Milk allows users to make to-do lists. <http://www.rememberthemilk.com>

SafariMontage is a site that focuses on visual and distance learning.
<http://www.safarimontage.com>

SchoolTube is an educational video site. <http://www.schooltube.com>

Second Life is a virtual world website. <http://www.secondlife.com>

Skype allows users to chat (for free) over the internet, via voice and/or video.
<http://www.skype.com>

Skyrock is a social networking site with a focus on blog creation. <http://www.skyrock.com>

Stagecoach Island is a virtual online community. <http://blog.wellsfargo.com/StagecoachIsland>

Tadalist allows users to make to-do lists. <http://www.tadalist.com>

TeacherTube is an educational video site. <http://www.teachertube.com>

Teen Second Life is a version of Second Life designed for teens. _
<http://www.teensecondlife.com>

Toolbelt Theory is a blog by Ira Socol that discusses the skill sets people need to function after high school. It also provides links to various resources that teachers and parents can use to assist disabled students.

<http://speedchange.blogspot.com/2008/05/toolbelt-theory-for-everyone.html>

Twitter is a free social networking/micro-blogging site that keeps users updated on what their friends are doing at any time. <http://twitter.com>

TypePad is a paid blogging site. The service starts at \$4.95/month. <http://www.typepad.com>

Upcoming displays events, and allows users to share RSVPs with other users. Users can also estab-

lish “friend” relationships and make event plans together. <http://upcoming.yahoo.com>

Voicethread allows users to comment on various forms of media using text or audio commentary. <http://www.voicethread.com>

Vox is a blogging website with an emphasis on social networking. <http://www.vox.com>

Webspiration is a graphic organizing site that allows multiple students to contribute to an online graphic organizer. <http://www.mywebspiration.com>

Wiziq is an educational site that allows teachers to teach virtual classes, create online tests, and more. <http://www.wiziq.com>

WordPress is a free blogging site that allows users to organize posts and articles into categories. <http://www.wordpress.org>

Zamzar is a site that allows users to convert YouTube videos into other formats. <http://www.zamzar.com>

Transcript - Summer Institute 2009 : Social Media Tools

- **Welcome!** posted by **Awershing@aol.com** on Jul 19, 2009
I am looking forward to the comments and dialogue with all of you in this course. I've looked at the list of resources, and some are familiar to me, while others are not. I'm looking forward to discussing how this new technology is emerging and growing, and also to learning about how others are using these tools.
Alice Wershing
 - **Re: Welcome!** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 19, 2009
Alice,
I couldn't have said it better myself. I'm looking forward to reading everyone's opinions, thoughts, and experiences with regard to this relatively new aspect of our culture. I think, in a way, forums like these are one of the first forms of social networking via the Internet. They set the ground work from which other sites like <http://www.twitter.com> were built. What do you think?
 - **Re: Welcome!** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 19, 2009
Oh, by the way, attipscast is me, Chris Bugaj. I signed in with my "professional handle" that I use on most social networking sites.
Chris :)
 - **Re: Welcome!** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 20, 2009
Yes, the early forums on this site and sites like Closing the Gap paved the way, for sure! It is interesting to watch the progression of social networks from then to now. In every instance, it provides a way to share information and learn from each other.
 - **Re: Welcome!** posted by **Kirsten Kotraba, M.S., OTR/L** on Jul 20, 2009
I Absolutely agree! What a fast paced environment, social networking has become. Once one form of networking is used (such as Friendster.com or Myspace.com) for a short period of time, a new "hot site" is introduced (Twitter.com, Facebook.com). I think it is important to embrace this form of technology, and find ways it may be utilized more frequently in an education setting.
 - **Re: Welcome!** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
What you reference here is exactly something that had me worried when I first started exploring these sites. Are they a flash-in-the-pan or are they something with some substance that will stand the test of time? I'm finding that Twitter and Facebook seem to be the longest lasting so far. I'm thinking these two are becoming two of the most entrenched.
chris
 - **Re: Welcome!** posted by **VernaAnn Kotansky** on Jul 20, 2009
I too am very interested in how social networking can influence the lives of the students I work with. I personally have found Facebook to be an incredible networking tool (not to mention the 'catching up' with old friends factor). I look forward to exploring these tools.
 - **Re: Welcome!** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
I use Facebook too and, like you, I have found it extremely useful. My wife, kids, and I live far away from the majority of the rest of the family. Facebook allows us to keep in contact with everyone all at once, share pictures and videos, and share the funny moments that would otherwise just pass the rest of the family by.
Chris

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
In our school district many, many, many social media tools are blocked as well. When a student (or teacher) does try to visit a site they get an error message that reads that the content is blocked due to "Online Communication". The irony is that every website is online communication. In fact, dare I say that is the point of the Internet- communicating.
In discussions with other educators around the country I think there might be three main points of view/strategies/philosophies at work.

1. SCHOOL GOALIE- The school system has taken responsibility for keeping everything inappropriate out. Like a goalie in a soccer match, the job is to keep everything out. Every once and awhile a ball sneaks through and the rival team scores, but then the goalie learns to adapt to prevent them from scoring again. This philosophy takes A LOT of work by instructional technology departments and can limit the availability of some very useful tools to teachers. However, students stand very little chance of being exposed to something inappropriate.

2. INAPPROPRIATE EQUALS OPPORTUNITY - The school system has kept content filters at a minimum. Students have access to some (most?) social media tools. Students may stumble across something inappropriate but teachers take that opportunity as a moment to teach why that content is inappropriate. This philosophy frees up instructional technology from spending time and resources on blocking everything that might be considered inappropriate and maximizes the responsibility of teachers to manage their students' behavior. Students are much more likely to accidentally see something inappropriate but they are also much more likely to learn from that moment.

3. TEACHER OVERRIDE- The school system takes a mixed-match approach combining both 1 and 2 above. The school district blocks sites for student logins but allows teachers relatively free reign over the Internet. In this way, when a teacher finds a tool or resource they really want to use they can login to use it. Which philosophy does your school system subscribe to?

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **saraharpe** on Jul 20, 2009
I too have experienced this frustration both with social media and also YouTube. In one school district I spoke directly with the Technology Dept and gave them a list of specific sites I needed for one computer. They complied with this request and although the student was somewhat limited in access they were able to accomplish some goals.

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
Yes! Congratulations! Now that is showing some initiative! Good for you and good for your students. Let me ask, was it as simple as it sounds, with you just calling up the Tech Department and them unblocking the content or was there some hoop jumping first where they asked you to fill out paperwork, justify your reasoning, promise to give over your first born if anything went wrong? Also, did they comply indefinitely or were you given a time range: "We'll unblock for one month, but then the filters go back in place."?

I'm guessing here but I imagine most places have some sort of protocol in place for teachers to request content lifting. If they don't, it is probably on their list of things to do.

Chris

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **saraharpe** on Jul 21, 2009
Because the Technology Dept knew me (I talked with them often when they installed software, etc.), they seemed to

acknowledge and trust that these were legitimate student needs. The biggest frustration was at the beginning of the next school year when I had to go make the arrangements in a different class.

I recommend getting on a first name basis with your technology people. Bake them brownies.

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 21, 2009
Pizza parties, ice cream socials, and the like go a long way.
I think the word is "schmooze" :)
Chris

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **rcc** on Jul 21, 2009
Guess I need to start baking. I have been trying to simply have an email account approved for specific students with autism so that they can communicate their daily activities with their families. They are much more interested in this than writing in a journal and they can send the messages to family members that are out of the area. The fact that they get a reasonably quick, personal reply has been much more engaging for them and they are more willing participants in this communication activity. I have been letting the students use my account but really feel they should have their own accounts (with restrictions would be ok) in order to be more independent. I can't imagine asking for facebook or youtube access at this time.

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **Bridget** on Jul 22, 2009
Several years ago we started an email literacy program for our students. The students started by composing their messages and I would transcribe and send via my email account. We made a case (a strong case) for the educational value of using email (we actually had to keep fighting that the value was in the emailing itself) and a year later got district approval for the kids to have their own email address. Earlier someone posted about building relationships. It takes time but is very worth it. I learned more about why the controls are so tight and they listened about why I so passionately felt my students needed access to these mainstream opportunities. Reading, writing and communicating all improved and

my evidence was in the body of the email communications sent. Next we started blogging. Barb Wollak in St. Paul Minnesota incorporates many mainstream technologies in her teaching. Check out their blog at <http://www.hpjh.blogspot.com/> After our email and our blog we started talking about the benefits of more real time communication like instant message and texting. Kids nowadays are texting and instant messaging as a form of communication much more than email. Some of the benefit of our students engaging in these activities is that their peers are doing it. It doesn't make them feel or look different to be doing it and they love it. anyways the point to my long winded answer is build relationships, don't give up (because it is valuable), and keep dreaming about the possibilities that keep coming our way.

- o **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **Jennifer Bull** on Jul 22, 2009
Thank you for the email link and the idea to keep pursuing these opportunities on behalf of student achievement.
- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **Dixie Trevarthen** on Jul 20, 2009
At this point many of the schools I work with are the "Goalie"--everything is off limits. That seemed to be in stark contrast to what was being presented at our state's education tech associations conference which had sessions on many of these social tools. So it is very confusing for me on how to present accurate information to the teachers I work with.
- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
I've had that same experience. Here's a specific story. I saw someone who works in a private school do a presentation and they mentioned a Web 2.0 application called <http://www.glogster.com>. It seemed like a very cool way to make creative posters. I went to the site while back at work and, sure enough, it was blocked. I had to wait to explore it at home. So, here was one school using a tool and getting kids engaged by using it yet my school district had it blocked.
I think one step is to continue to share the resource with teachers, even if they can't use it at school. If enough see the potential use/benefits they can make their voices heard about wanting it unblocked.
Chris

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 20, 2009
I agree with Chris. It may take time, and it may be frustrating to have to wait, but I think the more we can point to best practices elsewhere and give examples of good uses of the tools, the more options may become available. We all may have to work collectively to come up with ideas on how to proceed with these tools and to provide access in the classroom.
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **aledew** on Jul 20, 2009
I think that it may be like other technologies, in that the solutions always follow the problems. Perhaps the concerns that are raised by social networking sites, like privacy, especially in the case of children in school, are just waiting for a "fix" just as a computer virus has to arise before we find a way to combat it.
Another issue I thought might be of interest is the "Twitter Effect". I have heard reporters mentioning how instantaneous information about how a movie was to the first viewers is now affecting later sales on the same day! How will this immediacy affect the definition of what is "current" in terms of curricula? Schools may be forced to access data primarily online, since there is no way to provide current data in printed textbooks, if this is the new definition of current.
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **mbaumunk** on Jul 21, 2009
I believe, too, that one of the concerns noted in a district in which I worked was that if these social networking sites were available, they would become distractions and the students would be "off task".
I think that our tech dept. has installed in a couple of classrooms (in which there are no filters to block unacceptable websites) a kind of spy program that allows the teacher to access (without alerting the student) the student computers and determine if they are on an appropriate website. If not, the teacher can force the kid out of that website. Pretty sneaky!
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 21, 2009
I've heard of this type of software but the name escapes me right now. I've seen it installed in computer labs especially where one computer has the ability to see and control other computers at anytime. The teacher actually wouldn't even need to ever do that, just informing that students that this is possible might be enough

incentive.

Once upon a time, in summer camp, the camp counselors told the kids that if they went to the bathroom in the pool it would interact with a chemical in the pool making the water turn pink around them so that everyone in the pool would know who went in the pool. I doubt any kid ever tested the theory. I know I didn't :)

Chris

- o **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **saraharpe** on Jul 21, 2009
Funny analogy!

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **mbaumunk** on Jul 22, 2009
I appreciate the humor! Yeah- the teachers don't have to kick kids off that often, generally just give the class a gentle reminder to be working on their assignment, and the kids usually straighten up. Love the pool analogy, though! Made me giggle! I, too, was told that in the pool and now am guilty of passing it on to the next generation. I have told my son the same thing... Hopefully he giggles about it later in life, too!

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **Jennifer Bull** on Jul 22, 2009
I know. I was recently at a Conference and the presenter basically posed this question about any type of technology (cell phones, YouTube, etc): "Is it inherently bad?" If not, then it comes down to a supervision issue in school. He was advocating for no blocking of Internet sites...again, supervision issue if students access unacceptable sites.
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 22, 2009
I was recently at NECC 09 (National Educational Computer Conference) in DC and heard a similar comment. I forget

who said it (it was during one of the main presentations) but he said something like (I'll use quotes but I'm paraphrasing) "We need to stop treating students and teachers like thugs and criminals for wanting to use technology that is available to them." I'm sure that wasn't the exact quote but the meaning is the same. The AT Coordinator for our school district was at a different presentation at a different conference and heard the head of an IT (Instructional Technology) department basically come right out and say (again, paraphrasing), "Policing students is NOT my job. I'm here to provide the tools that teachers tell me they need." Like you're stating here, supervision doesn't necessarily need to fall within the job responsibilities of IT. In fact, wouldn't it make an IT professionals job a whole lot easier if they didn't have to police the system?

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **Sylvia Tripp** on Jul 20, 2009
Attipscast,
Your comments are interesting. My school district used very tight controls over the internet for the past five years such as the school goalie you described. This was instituted because of previous abuse. Only recently these tight filters were removed. Teachers documented problems caused by the filtering for our IT department . Because of the teacher feedback, the decision was made to relax controls. Teachers are happier with this system. Not all filters are removed, but now using the internet for simple informational research is much more productive.
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
Excellent! The school district changed its philosophy based on teacher feedback. I wonder if that steers us towards a potential strategy; get enough teachers vocalizing their needs and results may come.
You mentioned the abuse of the Internet. Our school districts (like most, I think) have an Acceptable Use Policy that teachers (and I believe students) sign at the beginning of the school year. To me, this is the administrator's answer to abuse. If a student or teacher is caught abusing the privilege the administrator has the signed Acceptable Use Policy as a piece of "you can't say you didn't know" evidence.
Chris
- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **KDrum** on Jul 20, 2009
I would say our school system uses the School Goalie method for internet use. This is a very useful tool, but sometimes can get in the way as well. I have many websites that could be very beneficial to my students, but the system will not allow access. While it is frustrating, I understand their point of view. We wouldn't want our children to gain access to bad websites.
- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **ned campbell** on Jul 31, 2009
It is NERTS to have an IT guy that is not educational process driven locking down a school network out of, basically, fear. I consult with school districts all over the state on behalf of students and also the counselors that work with them. As it relates to the school's networks being locked down (goalie) the IT geeks should be working intelligently to tweek the system on behalf of the educational objectives. In an era where social media is exploding and offering students with disabilities ways to connect with their friends and communities in so many instructive and educational ways is it

absolutely insane for school IT nerds and school administrators that are so afraid of these technologies to have control. Teachers need to learn how to meet the kids WHERE THEY ARE to engage them and teach them how to engage each other in appropriate ways. How are we to do that in the face of a IT security guy that wants to be a goalie? Teachers that want to be on FaceBook UNITE!!!!

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **silvanagraf** on Jul 20, 2009
I am a parent of a 12 yr old Asperger child. I would like him to socialize through Facebook or Twitter, but I too fear the exposure he might get...He might be an easy target for cyber-bullying or naive enough to give too much information. What kinds of protective tools can we apply, and what is the right age to let them participate?
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **Jackie Hess** on Jul 20, 2009
Have you looked at some of the websites/chat rooms/webboards that are specifically for young people with Asperger's? Your child may be too young for politically active sites such as "Aspies for Freedom" but I know I've seen other "safe" sites. I'll see if I can find the links and post them.
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **silvanagraf** on Jul 22, 2009
We visited that site about a year ago, but maybe we should revisit it. He might be ready now... Thanks for reminding me of it!
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
Knowing the right time to start is a personal choice dependent on the abilities and personalities of each family and family member, but I believe the place to start is with the family. That is to say, maybe a household rule is that he is only allowed to be "friends" with people who are in his family as a start in order to practice and learn. Also, the rule could be that passwords need to be shared with Mom or Dad so that things can be "spot" monitored. In this way, parents can make sure that their child is using the tool appropriately.
I wonder what other practical safeguards other parents participating on this forum have implemented?
Chris
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **aledew** on Jul 21, 2009
With my older typical kids, I have found that often even they do not understand the public nature of these forums. I had to talk to them about:
 - (1)not saying anything on the board that you would not say to your grandmother
 - (2) realizing that controversial topics and opinions can offend others, and not assuming that everyone agrees with them or will engage in a lighthearted debate,
 - (3)never posting or transmitting personal information (this seems to have gone by the wayside with Facebook, for good or ill)
 - (4)saving face, or protecting the reputation of your family, since what they say online can easily come back to haunt us
 - (5) keeping in mind the permanent nature of posts: would you want your job interviewer to see this?
 - (6) the many way that the written word can be interpreted, and how you can easily offend without meaning to
 - (7)stranger danger
 - (8)sexting and why it is wrong, immoral AND illegalso, I can just imagine what kind of conversations I will have with my

oh so atypical son!

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 21, 2009
This is an awesome list. It's like a checklist of things to think about. I can picture a little cheat sheet put up right next to the computer with a visual representing each point.
- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **Marie** on Jul 27, 2009
What a great list. Talking about these aspects to your children can enlighten them and make them aware of possibilities they may not otherwise think about. So often, teenagers think what they do online will always have positive outcomes when that's not always the case. Socializing online is sometimes like sending someone into a room full of strangers from all sorts of backgrounds and thinking every stranger is nice, polite, and wants to do no harm. The majority probably is...however, no one wants their son/daughter to meet or be exposed to a predator. It's always best to be cautious. Great advice.
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 27, 2009
Yeah, I sort of think of it as swimming in the ocean. There is a chance that you'll be stung by a jellyfish or bitten by a shark when you swim in the ocean. Some, to avoid the possibility of a jellyfish attack, will never swim in the ocean. That definitely works to avoid those dangers but it also means you won't ever get to have that sensation of a leaping over a huge wave as it comes crashing into shore or scuba diving around a sunken ship. The trick is practicing safety- in the ocean and the Internet- to keep yourself safe. Part of our responsibility as educators and parents is to teach the younglings how swim safely in the ocean.
Chris
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **Sonya Skramstad-Breymeier** on Jul 27, 2009
I just had a conversation with my niece on this. She is 16 and just posted a bunch of pool party photos where she and several girls are in bikinis. It wasn't until I said that when you are 50 would you want your kids and grandkids to look at these photos. I reminded her that they are forever and at this time she paused and said she never thought about it that way.
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **Marie** on Jul 28, 2009
That's just how teenagers think. Here and now. However, when we look back at photos of ourselves as teenagers, they can depict so much

about the culture and the way things are at the time. From the hairstyles to the clothing fabrics. Like a time capsule.

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 21, 2009
You can set Facebook so that you only share with certain people. You don't have to accept every friend offer.

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
LuAnn,
I think we've already uncovered a few potential solutions.
 1. Start small- For this one lesson, for this one website, I am requesting that the students have access. During that lesson gather as much feedback as possible from students to make the case for permanent unblocking.
 2. Mobilize others- Get other teachers to be involved and vocal about wanting a change in philosophy.
 3. Provide examples- There are other school districts with varying philosophies. Find one to use as an example and show the benefits. I've heard an educator named Kathy Schrock (Nauset School District, I believe) talk about this. She might be a good place to start: <http://kathyschrock.net/>Chris

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 20, 2009
You may be able to unblock some sites for a specific period of time. One of my students in another course I teach has done this in his school system. You may have to approach your administrators with a strategic plan as to how you are going to use these tools. You might suggest first using them to pave the way as an "early adopter" in connecting to resources on technology for your students, as a professional resource. Once other colleagues see what you are doing, they may want to join in. Or find others who are already using these tools for professional development and networking. That may open the door to student use as well.
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **sandra Callahan** on Jul 21, 2009
We tried to get the I.T. department to unlock the access to Facebook for an 18 year old brain trauma student. He had so many friends who posted on his page and he was very interested in reading the posts and seeing the pictures. I.T. gave me a big, flat NO...I can't get the student to get interested in any other "literacy" type activity. This year I am going to approach it from a curricular stand point.
 - **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 21, 2009
It sounds like he has access to the page in other environments, that's a good thing. Here is something to note, when someone comments on your Facebook status or when someone sends you an e-mail in Facebook it also goes to your e-mail account as an e-mail. So, even though I can't check Facebook at school, I can still read some of the posts/replies/correspondence via my g-mail account. In this way, the student could read the e-mails from school and draft replies that he copy/pastes in Facebook later.
Chris

- **Re: Defining social media tools** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
To me, Wikipedia does a pretty good job of defining how I think of social media. Here is that link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media It also lists examples of common social media tools. The following list is a truncated/adapted version of the list provided by the Wikipedia entry:
"Examples of social media software applications include:
Communication

- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **Anne Rosenberg** on Jul 30, 2009
I think if facebook, myspace, etc are allowed in schools, the students need to be monitored when using them.
- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **ned campbell** on Jul 31, 2009
It is sad to me that so many school districts have IT departments and administrations that are so afraid of these technologies that they are blocking them. Since when does a geek get to trump educational process? And how are faculty able to learn how to help students with disabilities, in this case deaf and hard of hearing students, if the school is blocking the tools. At the very time these tools can open up so many vistas for blind and deaf students to connect to their communities we slam the door. Or it's like walking up a beautifully engineered ramp just to get to the top and being locked out of the building. We need some work with the IT staff that have taken a blunt force attitude toward protection of network resources. Doing this in name of security. I content the networks are there to enhance and advance the learning process. Not bring it to a halt! I am saying this as a IT user liaison for staff and educators and I am constantly hitting my head against the wall with the IT security types.
- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **LindaJ** on Jul 20, 2009
I'm interested in hearing more about how an agency or organization can use Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc to communicate. I know that when I need info about disabilities, education, technology, etc., those are not the places I go to find it. I have accounts on all the "hot" social media but I don't use them very often. Mostly, I opened the accounts to see what's new and explore how it can be useful to me, my clients, my non-profit agency, etc., and I'm still looking. They are fun for posting photos for the whole family around the country to see, but again, that was always available through the photo hosting sites.

I was quite happy when this topic for Institute came up because I am struggling to see how this can benefit our agency. The agency now has MySpace and Facebook accounts. I asked what they will do for us and those who put them up said that it will bring in donations (NONE so far) and also new people will learn about us. No new names (and very few people who already know about us) have shown up in our "friends." So.. How is communicating with members on facebook better than email or on our own website? There is so much junk on the internet, how do we limit that or prevent accidentally finding it in searches on the social networking sites? Some of the sites are fun... and there's nothing wrong with fun but I just don't have time to "follow" a bazillion folks on Twitter and keep up with the other work I have to do. I'm open to suggestions so maybe someone can help answer some questions. I want to use these tools if they can provide benefit but I'm still searching for that benefit! I'll be reading the discussion closely! Thanks for any suggestions! Linda

- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
Linda,
All great questions. I'll provide my own experience here and maybe you'll be able to relate. I do this podcast called the A.T.TIPSCAST (<http://www.tinyurl.com/attipscast>). You can listen via iTunes or directly from the web. When I started I just assumed people interested in assistive technology would find the podcast and start listening. Sure enough a very small handful of people did just that but in order to get a larger audience I needed to do some additional advertising. Of course, I had no money for advertising so I looked to social media as a potential tool for spreading the word. Facebook came first, then Twitter. What I found was that the number of new people I got to listen to the podcast related directly to how actively I used the tool. With Facebook, it started out with old friends who I hadn't seen since high school who are now adults who a) are educators themselves or b) have students with disabilities. These people gave it a listen and then told their friends and family and so on.

That was one way the word spread.

Also Facebook has fan pages and groups. I chose to start an A.T.TIPPERS group on Facebook where fans of the show could "get together". New announcements about the show are posted there and members can interact if they so choose. It has a forum, similar to this one, where people can post questions, answers, and opinions. I post in different Facebook group forums about similar topics as another way to advertise the podcast.

Secondly, I started using Twitter and following people who had similar interests. The protocol is to typically follow someone back if they follow you. In that way, just following people with similar interests and them following me back build the audience. People share resources and experiences like crazy on Twitter. I can't follow it all and I don't think that is the expectation. I share my resources when I can and others share their resources when they can. With Twitter, when someone likes a resource you've shared they might "Retweet" that resource, crediting you with the post. In this way, your name gets shared with everyone following that person. In this way, my followers grew which has led to more listeners.

One strategy I might suggest is to watch what a similar non-profit is doing and try to learn from/replicate what methods they are using.

I will add that I think you'll find two sets of people who participate in social media. One set is the active participant who reads and posts content frequently. The second set are the lurkers. I am willing to bet we have lurkers reading this right now. A lurker is someone who is a passive participant only. The lurker experiences the content (listening to podcasts, reading forums, follows on Twitter) but does not interact with anyone else. I'm just guessing here but I believe there are way more lurkers out there than active participants. There's nothing wrong with that at all in my mind, but the person responsible for the content should be aware that it is very difficult to get people to become active participants (and posting your opinions/thoughts/facts is free. I can't imagine trying to get donations!)

My final thought here is that, like most things in life, you get what you put into it. Creating a Facebook account or Twitter account is not enough to grow the non-profit. Providing resources using these tools over time will result in gradual recognition. Providing opportunities for clients to participate in activities using these tools will result in additional benefits. Try just one "tweet" a day to start if it is hard to integrate it into your routine. Try organizing an event in a Facebook group for your organization where every client can discuss a topic of interest. Does that help?

- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **Jonathan Cruce** on Jul 21, 2009

Something that hit me the other day about the 'social' networking is how it might evolve over time. What is being created with, for example, Twitter networks, are large and small groups of people who all share information about a particular topic. Of course there's overlap between topics and users, but in general I see the emergence of large collective intelligences that will essentially have the market for a particular type of information. 'Have a question about Astronomy? I know this guy who follows a guy who is an astronomer, and of course that guy has an entire group of friends who are astronomers.' Question about A.T.? Some guy I know Twittered about some 'A.T. Tipscast' thing just a few minutes ago. Let me see if he has any more information about that...

This 'collective intelligence' will make a big difference in how problems are solved in the future. It will also come with its own caveats and pitfalls, as collective mythologies and misconceptions are magnified. A random group of people, for example, will tell you that you are more likely to

catch a cold if you get wet in Winter. A slightly more scientifically focused group will tell you that studies have shown that to be untrue. A group focused exactly on causes of the common cold will be able to tell you that previous studies showed it to be a myth, but that more current and controlled studies have shown some grain of truth that is yet to be teased out.

That means that in the near future you can connect with the A.T. community with a quick Twitter or email and have access to an entire collective intelligence about what has worked and has not worked in the past for similar situations to yours.

Just my \$0.02...

- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 21, 2009
I think you're exactly right and, in some ways, we're seeing that now. I think your common cold example is exactly right. When a person has a question that needs answering they can put it out to a community that is interested in that subject. People who respond will have varying levels of knowledge and experience. Part of the responsibility of educators might be to teach students (adults or young people) 1. to verify the information and 2. how to verify the information. Simply asking people to state their evidence may be a place to start. A responder who says, "It has been my experience..." provides one form of information where a responder who says, "Here is a research article on..." provides another form of information. Maybe our job as educators is to help teach that there is a difference.
Chris
- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **aledew** on Jul 21, 2009
Very good point. There is such a vast array of information out there, and it is all presented in a format that looks reliable. There is no facial expression to judge, no personal reputation to consult, no way to tell the true claim from the flim flam. It is not like consulting the dictionary, or the encyclopedia, and being pretty sure that every fact was researched and verified.
A whole new world.
- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **roellgen** on Jul 27, 2009
We all need to become critical thinkers.
- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **M. Cook** on Jul 21, 2009
The issue I see with the fast-paced design of all the social media is the impulsivity factor. People tend to put an answer out there and it is not always researched and accurate. Using the internet for my students has been a wonderful tool, IF they are able discern what is factual from what is opinion. The question I raise is this, how do we try to teach our students to look for this information and use their minds to question the validity of what they read? It used to be that .org, .gov, .edu were reputable websites to look for information. With the advent of twitter, forums, blogs and all the other media avenues for information this becomes problematic.

- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **KeithBurt** on Jul 21, 2009

This is interesting. As a marketing professional, I am continually interested in market segmentation. Generally, the more segmented your target the more specific benefit oriented message can be sent to the group.

Our agency makes extensive use of YouTube to augment the content of our website. It has become evident that when people can see the rehab center and hear from actual clients about their experiences, it helps with the enrollment decision. However, we have embarked into the world of facebook and twitter with less success. Our goal for our social networking presence is to facilitate peer-to-peer communication. We believe that the typical young person relies more heavily on what their friends say about something than they do on organizational communication. The key issue to this market phenomenon is interpretation of "agenda." The generally held belief seems to be that the more vested someone is in the organization, the less credibility they are perceived to have. The reverse is also the case and coupled with the former clients voiced experience; these individuals seem to have significant persuasive power amongst their peers.

Now, this creates amazing marketing opportunities. If we can objectively identify clients with successful experiences with our agency, we can, through social networking, create a "testimonial group." This group will then readily endorse getting services at our agency because the success they personally have experienced is integral to their own life and life choices. In short, they become "trend setters/early adopters" in the product life cycle.

In my opinion, this is the promise of participating in social networking from an organizational standpoint.

- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **Jonathan Cruce** on Jul 21, 2009

It seems, though, that what you were weighing about agenda would mean that, if the "testimonial group" was officially tied together as a group, that is if there was a link from your website to a YouTube playlist of testimonials, they would lose some of their credibility... I'd guess that the ideal 'long tail' for you would be if a YouTube search for your organization's name resulted in a list of all of your testimonials, posted by the respective user rather than a single individual, with few or no negative testimonials... I can see an application that filters Twitter feeds - if I've Tweeted about XYZ Assistive Technology in the past, and someone I'm following tweets something like, "Anyone heard of XYZ AT?" then that particular tweet stays on my screen longer, or stands out in some way because it's obviously something I've been interested in the past. That would be useful for consumer concerns, and it would be useful to organizations that specialize, such as AT centers.

- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **KeithBurt** on Jul 21, 2009

I believe we would want this group of folks to be loosely tied, if tied at all, together as a group. more like a web forum.

The issue of negative testimonials is scary to the leadership but there really should be a forum to air

negative experiences. I applaud those web retailers that don't screen customer's product ratings. Negative feedback is often more important than positive for a number of reasons. I hope to read more posts regarding the use of social media by organizations.

- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 21, 2009
We are just beginning with Facebook at our center www.discoveret.org/ettac
We've used it to send out information on events mostly. I have a training listserv that I use to send out emails about trainings. I'm not sure if it will migrate over to Facebook or not. We are also looking at Ning.
- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **LindaJ** on Jul 21, 2009
Yes, that helps! I'd also like to suggest to others who are looking for ways their organizations can use social networking to look through the resources for this topic. Click on the resources link and you'll find a lot of info. I'm in the middle of reading through the "Social Media for Non-Profits: 26 Great Slideshare Presentations You Can Use" section and finding some interesting ideas!
 - **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **KeithBurt** on Jul 22, 2009
Linda,
Please post a link to this resource. I have looked at the resource link at the left and don't see it listed and it doesn't pull up on a keyword search.
Thanks very much
 - **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **Pat Linkhorn** on Jul 22, 2009
It's the Resources tab at the top of the page.
 - **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **LindaJ** on Jul 22, 2009
Sorry I wasn't clear! Click on the "Back to Thread List" link and then you'll see Resources at the top part of the page under the tabs.
Linda
- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **Ned Campbell** on Jul 30, 2009
Social networking technologies all have their own unique focus "drivers." Facebook is driven by connecting people and allowing them to connect their daily life activities. Think of six degrees of separation. A great way to keep up with interests and an extremely good way to find people you know in common. Well adapted for sharing your life. For an individual with disabilities a fantastic way to overcome isolation and join with community. Ning is similar but driven by topic or agenda interests. For professional and business connections Linked In may be the network of choice. Each are different ways to expand your connections. To build and expand your networks your "spheres of connection." Using these technologies for education means first learning what each does best and then leveraging those capabilities. For instance, our younger clients getting prepared for transition are on Facebook. We can keep up with what they are interested in and suggest resources that can help them. And get them to share these

with each other. We can certainly use email for that, but they tell us Facebook is a lot more fun!!

- **Re: Social Media for Organizations** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 31, 2009
Just today I was listening to an interview with C.C. Chapman who does a podcast called "Managing the Gray" <http://www.managingthegray.com>. In the interview he and author J.C. Hutchins (<http://jchutchins.net/>) talk about social media and how social media can work as a marketing tool for businesses. I had heard of C.C. Chapman before, but in name only and wasn't sure what he was all about. After listening to the interview it made me want to learn more and so I checked out his website (<http://www.cc-chapman.com>) where I saw his podcast Managing the Gray. Just reading over the posts associated with the latest couple of episodes (show notes as I've heard them be called before) it looks like this podcast might be useful to organizations trying to decide if, when, and how to use social media to help them grow, expand, and/or meet their goals. Typically I wouldn't suggest something without having listened to it for myself but seeing as this is the last day of the Institute, I'm out of time. I won't get a chance to listen before the end of the day so, now that you have your grain of salt, I hope it helps you in your endeavors.
Chris

- **experience** posted by **Sylvia Tripp** on Jul 20, 2009
I have no experience with social media at all. I am hoping that what I learn in this course will help me to steer the children away from Fun Brain and other such sites.
 - **Re: experience** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
Sylvia,
Is there a particular tool, website or other resource that you've heard about that you're interested in learning more about?
chris
 - **Re: experience** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 20, 2009
What I have seen with some of my clients is growth in their thinking as they try to experiment with the tools. I have one client who is working on literacy skills, has been since the age of 19. Now at 33, he has a way to design a page that can link him to friends and new people. He lives in a very rural area, he uses a single switch to access the computer, and has the Internet read to him. It is prompting him to work on his sentence writing skills, to be able to talk about his life, and to create web pages in a meaningful way for his personal use. What we have to think of is how to provide access to these tools.
 - **Re: experience** posted by **Pat Linkhorn** on Jul 20, 2009
I believe we are opening up new worlds for people with disabilities through these social networking tools. My VI daughter is using them quite a bit now with her Netbook with System Access. There is an opportunity there to also teach our children "Netiquette" skills so they have good experiences. Perhaps Social Stories need to be written for these skills? I can see how social networking could be used to increase communication skills, writing skills and a host of other skills they will need in the future!
 - **Re: experience** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
Absolutely! Those "netiquette" skills are becoming essential to successful communication. Whether commercially available social stories or those generated for specific individuals for specific skills, additional resources for teaching these skills are necessary. I couldn't agree more that communicating via social networking could be used to increase all sorts of skills. Just think of the amount of writing that needs to occur to be an active participant on Twitter or Facebook. Not to mention that these sorts of writing activities are authentic in that students are actually writing for a real audience, not just writing for the teacher's eyes only.

- **Re: experience** posted by **Pat Linkhorn** on Jul 20, 2009
 Authenticate is the key word here. Students see a reason for it that makes sense to them and they are motivated to do it. I see my daughter begging to go online and I see her typing skills becoming better because she needs to answer in a timely manner. Typing Tutor was never so motivational!
 The problem I see with her is again, "netiquette" because she tends to ask inappropriate questions at times. There is a whole different way the typed text is interpreted. All caps = angry or shouting, for example. Plus, body language and tone of voice aren't there and questions or discussions need to be worded in the right way. It's a social learning/teaching opportunity. Just think, ASD kids would get a chance to edit their choice of words before hitting "send" and what a learning/teaching experience that could be!

- **Re: experience** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
 RIGHT ON!
 A common recommendation I make to parents of students who are learning to type is to instant message a trusted friend or family member. IMing Grandma or Cousin Eddie is a great way to practice typing, typing for meaning without fear of misspelling things or getting the grammar be wrong.
 And, like you say, it provides an even greater learning opportunity. It does making teaching and learning those skills of editing that much more imperative.
 Another common recommendation is to "Listen to your text" as part of your editing checklist. Again, when there is something authentic on the line (What you wrote might be misinterpreted by a real person) students are much more apt to listen to text during the editing phase of writing.
 Chris

- **Re: experience** posted by **RebeccaC** on Jul 20, 2009
 Is anyone having luck getting the local school systems to allow these social networking sites as part of a classroom routine?

- **Re: experience** posted by **pumpkinbaby2** on Jul 20, 2009
 No, the network is so controlled and locked down that the students have a difficult time surfing the net for research...let alone social network sites.

- **Re: experience** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 21, 2009
 pumpkind2baby,
 Are there particular sites you'd like to use that students are locked out of? Also, as an alternative, does your school district subscribe to any online databases (like NetTrekker for instance)?
 Chris

- **Re: experience** posted by **Ned Campbell** on Jul 30, 2009
 I am so loving this thread. Yes, yes, in the face of all of the barriers that kids and adults with disabilities face each day, social network tools are becoming a very important way to engage others in ways they would never be able to otherwise. What we have to begin to learn as parents and teachers and professionals that

work with individuals with disabilities is to allow our children to show us the way. They are already there, we just need to be open to learning from them. Our natural inclination may be averse to technology, but in the case of social networking tools, appropriate use and monitoring is not only safe but can be extraordinarily "connecting" in so many ways. Need to make sure that all of these tools maintain development that meets accessibility standards so that individuals with blindness and vision impairments, hearing impairments and print challenges are not excluded at the very time when these technologies could be opening new doors for them. It is indeed a watershed era as these technologies become ubiquitous and accepted.

- **Re: experience** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 20, 2009
Sylvia, you may want to look at the resources listed in the Wikipedia list that was posted. Also look at the resources posted for the course. Pick one to start with and then see how it fits for you. If it doesn't, then keep going on the list and see what you find. We'll keep talking over the next weeks.
- **Technology for High School students** posted by **nelidas** on Jul 20, 2009
I would like as much information I can get about where to apply for getting technological tools like "computers" for my classroom? There are so much information my students will benefit from is we only have access to computers, internet, etc, etc.
I am looking forward to learning from the workshop and from each participant.
 - **Re: Technology for High School students** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
Before going into a longer response about how to acquire technology I wanted to be sure that I'm reading your post correctly. Are you saying that you don't have any computers in your school?
Chris
 - **Re: Technology for High School students** posted by **unserk** on Jul 21, 2009
I too would like this type of information. Teaching in a smaller school district with limited resources is always a challenge. I need some help in being creative with the tools we do have access to. There are a lot of resources that students don't have access to because of our 'filter' and the control of what they can get into. How can we convince the higher powers that the students NEED access to the restricted resources?
 - **Re: Technology for High School students** posted by **saraharpe** on Jul 21, 2009
I always dealt with specifics. A specific website, how the student will use it and how the student's use will be monitored. I tended to have greater success working with my Special ED Director (who was very computer savvy) and the technology department within the Central Office. The technology personnel at the individual school level did not have as much authority to approve these unusual requests.
 - **Re: Technology for High School students** posted by **unserk** on Jul 22, 2009
The problem we run into, is not being able to access things that we may need (students AND teachers). The filter is district wide - without any hope of lifting the control of the system. It is frustrating to not be able to access a science demonstration on U Tube or other resources because it is blocked.
 - **Re: Technology for High School students** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 22, 2009
I wonder if it is addressed as an AT consideration during the IEP, as a curricular modification, if there could be something worked out. Since I'm not in a school, there may be others who can address this. If you're also taking the other online course on Accessible Materials, I think Joy Zabala could weigh in on this I'll try to post it as a question there.

- **Re: Technology for High School students** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 22, 2009

I started to write a response about the IEP team trumping the IT department yesterday when I was reading this thread, but I decided against it. That is, I started to think that maybe an IEP team could write in an accommodation to use some tool that would otherwise be blocked, but I ultimately decided that this might have some unwanted repercussions.

Specifically, I think it is best not to write in specific tools- So, the accommodation/AT might be "Access to multimedia content to include videos" rather than "Access to YouTube." The first way of writing it gives options where the second is more restrictive. Secondly, I think IEP teams should know where they are getting the accommodations from/how to accomplish an accommodation before writing them in. Don't get me wrong, if a student needs something for a free and appropriate public education then it should be written in, but teachers/admin should know how they will accomplish what is being written in.

Finally, to address YouTube specifically, there are ways to pull YouTube videos off YouTube and save it in other formats. I actually haven't done this, but have heard of it being done.

<http://www.zamzar.com> is an example of such a site. If a YouTube video would be perfect to make a point or represent information in another way for a student then the teacher could get it. It is too bad that teachers need to jump through hoops to get those materials though.

Finally, two other educational video sites in case you weren't aware:

<http://www.teachertube.com>

<http://www.schooltube.com/>

Chris

- **Re: Technology for High School students** posted by **Jennifer Bull** on Jul 22, 2009

Chris-

As a CSE Chairperson I thank you for this comment. IEP teams should definitely know how program modifications will be accomplished before writing them on the IEP. And thank you for providing alternative ideas on how to accomplish program modifications without putting the school and IEP team at odds.

- **Re: Technology for High School students** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 22, 2009

You're very welcome and I'll take it one step further. I think one way the AT professionals (any educator really) can help with these sorts of issues is to make sure that first interventions tried are the least restrictive interventions which are typically interventions that are already available in the classroom. That is, when brainstorming tools to help achieve goals (or to come up with lesson plans) educators should attempt to exhaust what IS already available to them. Many schools have provided alternatives (and pay bucks to provide

alternatives) that teachers might not be aware of. Demonstrating to Instructional Technology that everything has been tried with what is currently available has gone a long way in helping fuse that relationship in our school district. That is, because IT knows that we (AT and other educators) are always looking for solutions that are already available first when we DO come to them to ask for some software to be tested/installed or some website to be unblocked they know it is because we've tried everything else.

The "alternatives" that come to mind that I reference above are in relation to YouTube.com and two examples might be Safari Montage (<http://www.safarimontage.com/>) and Discovery Streaming (<http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com/>).
Chris

- **practical ideas** posted by **BethS** on Jul 20, 2009

I am re-entering the AT world after a 6year absence. The emergence of social networking sites seems to me to be one of the biggest changes I have encountered as I am getting my feet wet again. I am hoping to get some insight into practical application and implementation of these tools for the individuals I will be working with. I use Facebook personally, but it is stretching me to see how I could use it in a constructive way within the AT world and with the individuals that I will be seeing. I would love some examples of useful and practical implementation of Facebook, Twitter, etc. that others may have had with students.

- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 20, 2009

Open Source software of all kinds abounds for many different needs, which is another huge change in the past several years. I can't speak for Twitter because I'm not using it, but there are AT communities on Facebook and on Ning, another tool that hasn't been mentioned yet. You can sign up for it online and there are is an AT Ning. www.ning.com
I use these communities as well as several listservs to keep up on new trends and products. If you are not signed up on the QIAT list, you may also want to join that in order to keep up with current AT news. www.qiat.org

I do think that social networking opens up opportunities for teaching writing and communication skills. Within each tool we will have to look at what assistive technology tools we can use in order to scaffold the process for our students. I can envision a scanning overlay or an Intellikeys keyboard overlay that gives students a framework for writing. I can envision a word wall or a social story script to assist students in spelling and writing etiquette. Any other thoughts?

- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **Mark Dyar** on Jul 20, 2009

I am interested in examples of social stories scripts that would help students with writing and communication through online learning platforms like Blackboard and Elluminate as well as Twitter and Facebook.

The use of texting within virtual media may create more concern and debate over the use of standard English vs. visual symbols, abbreviations, and other shorter and faster ways of communicating. Is writing etiquette defined by the receiver, the sender, the media, or educational traditions?

- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **Pat Linkhorn** on Jul 20, 2009

I think the issue about standard English vs. the other shorter ways of communicating will be an issue for educators, but students will need to know it and understand it because they will receive it. i.e., "r u there?" I truly believe it will evolve into its own English/language. What will they call it? Possibly Text English? It

will go against the grain educationally, but there is a time and place for it, so that's something to think about.

- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
I think you hit the magic word here- Evolve. Language evolves, changes, shifts all the time and over time. Methinks we don't speak or write the same way people did back in Colonial America or in the past. This is just one of the ways that language is shifting.
<http://www.talklikeshakespeare.org/>
Chris
- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **Pat Linkhorn** on Jul 20, 2009
You're absolutely right about that. It just seems to be changing more quickly now. I can't even imagine where this will all be in even 2 years. The Text English will, in many ways, be so much easier for students with special needs, and also can help to take away the stigma of good spellers vs. bad spellers and level the playing field in social media situations. Oh, so many things to think about!
- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
IMHO (In my humble opinion) you're spot on. I believe there will be a need for more code switching skills and delineating when to use which language set. This already exists and is part of the hidden curriculum of school in face-to-face situations. Many students understand to use one set of language rules in one situation and then to use another set of language rules in a different situation. Goodness knows that I spoke differently around my friends than I did around my grandmother or while at work. Text English (such a good term for it) is just an extension of this skill.
Chris

- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
Mark,
To me, what defines writing etiquette is "success". That is, was the message attempting to be conveyed received by the receiver? If so, then success! I might be alone on this one, but I think the most successful/powerful/useful social stories are the personalized ones targeting a specific behavior. So, if a student is demonstrating a particular behavior via Blackboard, a social story could be developed to target that specific behavior.
Some general "How-to" use of Blackboard or Elluminate that students can watch (pre-use of the tool or post-use to curb behavior) can be found on Youtube or TeacherTube. Like this one <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJjLRShTpz0>

What do you think?
Chris

- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **Pat Linkhorn** on Jul 20, 2009
I think this is a great tool for teaching students who lack social skills. It's not "out of the mouth" before it's too late to take it back.
- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
Welcome back to AT! It is true that I'm not sure that I would use Facebook with my students, but, as Alice suggests there are similar social networking alternatives to try. She mentioned setting up a closed Ning. This is like Facebook where each student could have an account and be discussing curricular content in a closed setting. Another place to start might be with <http://www.voicethread.com>. In Voicethread a user loads a picture and other users go in and make text-based or audio comments about the picture. A teacher could load a picture of a

historical figure and every student could provide one fact about that figure. In this way students are learning from each other in a fun, engaging, multi-modal way.

An alternative to Twitter for students is <http://www.edmodo.com>. This is similar to Twitter but in a closed format where only those invited could participate.

Anyone use either of these tools and/or have other practical examples of using Facebook/Twitter with students?

Chris

- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 21, 2009
You might also start with discussion boards if you have access to software that includes them. Blackboard has them built in and you can set up a topic. You can allow or not allow posts to be edited and you can also set up lists of who can post.
- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **Ned Campbell** on Jul 30, 2009
I love Voicethread thank you for suggesting it. For a deaf or hearing impaired student does it have a way to close caption? Also, for a blind or vision impaired student would it work with a screen reader?
 - **Re: practical ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 30, 2009
Ned, I don't think it does have a closed captioning option but I'm not 100% sure. According to this shared presentation (<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/1951506/How-to-Reach-the-21st-Century-Mind---Using-Multimedia-in-the->)there is a way to do it and Matt Monjan (who put the presentation together) even gives some reasons why you would want to CC the voice-thread video.
I'm not sure about how it would work with a typical screen reader either. I'm fairly confident that it would work with a screenshot reader, like the one in Read & Write Gold by TextHelp but I haven't actually tried it.
Chris
- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **Ned Campbell** on Jul 30, 2009
Oh, cool. Voicethread has some excellent posts sharing assistive technology. Go to VT and search for "assistive technology." This could be an excellent resource for AT professionals to show new technologies and demonstrate existing ones. Thanks for letting me know about this. I'm going to share it with other professionals at my agency and also with our transition coordinators. Very exciting.
- **Re: practical ideas** posted by **msebu** on Jul 25, 2009
Welcome back-The pace of development of social networking has been amazing. I, too, have students who use the sites-but I am not sure how to make it be useful to their learning. So far, it seems so many places have a connection to facebook so that offers possibilities. I use it in that way myself. Twitter could be a way to get students in community sites to let us know what they are doing-I am pondering...
 - **Re: practical ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 25, 2009
What would you say to asking the students? I wonder if inviting the students to come up with ideas, especially community related ones, might further increase buy-in and enthusiasm?
Chris
 - **Re: practical ideas** posted by **Jennifer Bull** on Jul 26, 2009
Yes, I agree that having the students come up with the ideas is the best way to get students to get and stay involved. I know that working in a public school system, if we do decide (which is unlikely in my opinion) to use any social networking, we have to remember that the school needs to provide the tools needed for access. Therefore, funding is the major issue in public schools.

- **Re: Access to social media sites** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 20, 2009
When I think of Universal Design, I think of it as a continuum rather than black or white. That is to say that a tool itself is not either universally designed or not universally designed but it is universally designed to some degree. Take the classic example of Universal Design, curb cuts. Curb cuts are a good example of something that is MORE universally designed, but consider the person who is blind and in a wheelchair. Without something else or prior experience with that curb that person would not know where on the curb the curb cut was located.

What am I saying here? Basically, I'm saying that it might help to consider whatever the resource/tool as being somewhere on a continuum and that some sort of assistive technology helps users of that tool with access. So, in the case of social media tools, I wouldn't say something is "universally designed", per se, but I might say, "This tool is MORE universally designed". In that way, every resource on the web becomes a possibility for everyone, it is just a question of what kind of assistive technology is needed to make it accessible to each specific user.
Chris

- **Re: Access to social media sites** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 21, 2009
Is everyone aware of the accessibility options built in to Windows and Macs?
 - **Re: Access to social media sites** posted by **aledew** on Jul 21, 2009
It would be great if you could give us an overview!
 - **Re: Access to social media sites** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 23, 2009
There are accessibility options built in to both Windows and Mac. The screen reader works better on the Mac and reads all of the screen, while the Windows version reads only certain text. Both have screen enlargement, the Windows version splits the screen while the Mac enlarges all of the screen. Both have keystroke options for single finger typing and for using the mouse through the numeric keypad. The Mac options are under the Apple and then under System preferences. The Windows options are located in the start menu and then accessories.
 - **Re: Access to social media sites** posted by **bwojci** on Jul 23, 2009
Microsoft has some great online tutorials and demonstrations of the accessibility features of Windows. They can be found at <http://www.microsoft.com/enable/>. Apple has similar resources for their operating systems which can be found at <http://www.apple.com/accessibility/macosx/vision.html>.
- **Re: Access to social media sites** posted by **Sonya Skramstad-Breymeier** on Jul 23, 2009
I just had a consumer undergo and AT evaluation and so far the "Reach" system is the easiest for her to use. She is non verbal, has limited use of her hands due to a crippling disorder and is a wheelchair user. She could use a pair of glasses to activate the computer and thus speak, type, email, facebook, and also operate environmental controls. The system can also be used as a full fledged computer so she can use it at a job in the future.
 - **Re: Access to social media sites** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 23, 2009
Is this the Reach system? <http://www.ahf-net.com/> That is a new product to me but it sounds like she's found a way to use the social networking sites, well, the entire Internet

for that matter. Awesome!
Chris

- **brain cramp!** posted by **efrerichs** on Jul 21, 2009
Hello all, I just spent a lovely evening watching the Red Sox lose, and chatting on FB (Facebook) with people all over Massachusetts, Colorado, Texas, Vermont, Washington DC and even sent a couple messages to New Zealand (I won't be up when she responds around 5 am hopefully) I talked to people from grade school, high school, college, grad school, work, and some people I didn't even know. Everyone got a chance to talk, express their opinion, tell a joke, or direct someone to something they felt strongly about. I am a big fan of the Sound of Music in Central Station Antwerp.
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EYAUzLI9k>) Yesterday someone forwarded me a link about a petition to keep autism coverage in the health insurance bill being considered by congress. I was #2000 something. As of right now there are nearly 10,000. Earlier tonight I wrote a poem in response to a blog that I read that posts writing prompts, and I write a blog. Why am I writing this? Because for me the advantages of social media are many and I strongly feel that many of these tools can and should be shared our students and they should be taught to use them in ethical responsible and appropriate ways. One of the schools I work in used web cams and the internet to talk to their sister school in Haiti this year, but they got to see in living moving color the children they had been WRITING to all year. I probably compose more paragraphs, think more globally, and am more motivated to create a quality product if I know that I have a chance to share it with a wider audience. I think our students might appreciate that too. And you know what else is cool... I didn't have to sit here with my hand up forever waiting to get called on. I got to use my spell check, and I googled a couple things while I was writing this. I should probably try to make it a bit more organized, but Craig Ferguson just came on which means it is past my bed time!
Sorry for rambling, didn't use a GO (graphic organizer), or MM (mind map). My own abbreviations. ;-)
- **Re: brain cramp!** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 21, 2009
I love the idea of calling a graphic organizer a "GO" with students. "Okay students, let's draw a 'go' for this word/paragraph/story."
I think one of the themes coming across here is, again, that authenticity for production. It means way more to a student when producing for an actual audience and, therefore, the results will be better. Penpals, podcasts, videoconferences, blogs, etc. It seems that students crave the connection and, maybe, are starting to come to expect it. Which is a pretty exciting change.
Chris
- **Re: brain cramp!** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 21, 2009
It is exciting and daunting. It does bring back the point in one of the other posts, that we now have a meaningful context for writing and communicating. When we are teaching writing to any student, it now can become more "real". I also love the idea of using a graphic organizer to work on a draft of what would be sent on a social network. Then after tweaking the draft, students can send it and get feedback. What a great thing- think about setting up your own area on any of the tools just for a writing class. Students get immediate feedback and practice about writing and what to say before they get on to the web. An awesome opportunity for teachers and students.
- **Re: brain cramp!** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 21, 2009
Another idea might be to use a collaborative online graphic organizer, such as Webspiration (<http://www.mywebspiration.com/>). Webspiration is the free, online version of Inspiration (a popular and commonly used graphic organizing program). Using this tool, more than one student can access a graphic organizer and contribute. In this way, we open another door for students; the door of collaboration. Then, once they've created their "GO" collaboratively they can share it authentically.
Chris
- **Re: brain cramp!** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 21, 2009
I'll have to check this one out. I wonder if screen readers can read the text.

How do you know which form works best for a student? Do you present a variety of options to the students and let them try which of those options feels best to them or do you start out instructing students to actually try each one, provide feedback and then, for future assignments, let them choose the style that works best for them?

Or, do you do some sort of structured needs assessment at the beginning of the school year to determining learning styles?
Chris

- **Re: brain cramp!** posted by **Patricia McDonald** on Jul 25, 2009

Thanks for all the responses. I had a dear teacher friend in the '70s and each child in her first grade classroom "journalled" (obviously, pencil and paper). The "wheels" of education are often seemingly reinvented, albeit in other formats. Many teachers in the '90s presented journaling as some new creation in the educational world. I guess it is similar to whether Dick and Jane really could teach reading... My friend's classroom also did not have desks but instead had tables for the students to work cooperatively. She was selected as one of the top 100 graduates of the College of Education at the University of Minnesota. My friend definitely felt that she knew what worked with all levels of her students. I don't know if any of you remember when you could go grocery shopping and not have a complete aisle for cereal, a complete aisle for crackers, etc. What happens now in families that can make choices for their children and there are literally hundreds of choices they could make. Does this make things more difficult? Unless a parent takes a class like this or the school district their child is in gives all the options possible (or mandates what the child will receive), how would they possibly know all the wonderful items available for their child?

- **Re: brain cramp!** posted by **efrerichs** on Jul 25, 2009
I had written a longer post in response to your writing question that went on and on and on and on and after looking at it it basically comes down to what I believe are 2 separate skills. The physical act of handwriting and the cognitive act of composition. Both are important, but there are many tools and supports to help with the act of composition, and composition is the skill that is needed to to take a student into their future.

Handwriting is a useful tool that students should develop a certain proficiency in and I do believe has an impact on memory and learning, but can also be detrimental to learning if it is such a challenge that content is lost.

You bring up another excellent point with this post and that is how are parents to know what is available for their children? This I think underlines the mistrust of education professionals and professionals in general these days. How many of us

attempt to diagnose ourselves before going to the doctor? I thought it was shocking in one post I read that the AT specialist had no recommendations. This does not help our cause. Even if I am only pointing out and supporting the positive work that is already being done for a student, I try to expand upon it, give examples, web resources, and quick low to mid tech ideas to incorporate into a students "tool belt" (Ira Socol) I may not be recommending a laptop, high tech communication device, or I may think that the classroom is doing well, but pointing out the good things they are doing and maybe pointing the team towards a resource or two that they may not know about is my job, and usually makes a parent feel better knowing that the child's team is made up of intelligent professionals who do research, and are up on current technologies and tools. Yet I don't think many parents view educators, related service providers, and specialists within the public setting this way. Often because we do not portray ourselves this way. So what am I trying to say...parents shouldn't have to know everything, parents should be able to trust in the professionals working with their child in the same way that they should be able to trust in their pediatrician. We are professionals. Where did things go so wrong?

- **Re: brain cramp!** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 25, 2009
Really,
I couldn't agree more with everything written in this last post.

1. AT personnel NEED to provide at least one recommendation per time asked to help. As stated, this does not mean the recommendation needs to be for something that costs money and it does not mean that the recommendation needs to be something complicated or profound.

2. No matter what the situation, the current team working with the student is doing something positive. AT personnel should find out what that is and highlight it, even in the worst situation. Rays of sunshine are easier to see on cloudy days.

3. When I was in my first year out of college I worked as the SLP (speech-language pathologist) at an Elementary School with a very dynamic and personable principal. He was always very willing to share his opinions about the state of education in the country at staff meetings. He told a story during one staff meeting in mid-February that I'd like to share now.

The principal was in line at the grocery store around 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon on a snowday. He was standing behind two women. The first in line, currently checking out, was juggling two kids - who were fighting over nothing, teasing each other, asking for candy, calling "Mama, Mama, Mama" over and over again. The woman looked haggard and tired - worn out. The second woman in line was smiling, bright and vibrant as ever. The check-out person, making small talk, said to the first woman, "Hey there, snowed pretty badly earlier huh? Who knew it would clear up like this?"

"No kidding," replied the first woman scrambling through her purse for her credit card. "I had to take off work today because school was cancelled. My boss was so angry and plus, I had nothing planned for the kids- no food or anything. I just wasn't prepared for this. Ugh, I'm beat."

"Not me!" piped up the second woman in line, chipper as ever, "I'm a teacher!" The principal just shook his head. The principal's point was clear (a moral to our story): When teacher's say stuff like that it makes the public, in general, not like you.

I'll end with one last thought. I joke that I have my "Junior Camper Occupational Therapy Badge" because I've been around OTs, watching what they do and working with them, for 10+ years. I feel like I've learned from my experiences with working with them. However, in no way do I think I am qualified to do Occupational Therapy. Almost every person spends a minimum of 8 school years with a teacher. Many people spend much more time (16+ years) with teachers. Lots of memories are made in that time. It is easy to think (flawed as that thinking may be) that because you've been around a profession for a long time that you could do it too. Very few spend that much time with other professionals (like pediatricians).

Chris

- **Re: brain cramp!** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 25, 2009
I just re-read the moral to my story and realized I butchered the grammar. Let's try that again, grammatically correct, for the archives:
The principal's point was clear (a

moral to our story): When teachers say stuff like that it makes the public, in general, not like them. There, phew! Now I can sleep tonight.
Chris

- **Where to start?** posted by **Marion Dell** on Jul 21, 2009

Whew! Just read through these postings and realized there is another whole world out there....along with all the documents that I used to lose in cyber space. I must admit I did not realize the value of social media till reading some of these posts. It's time to get out of the "this old dog doesn't want to learn new tricks" slump and access this media. Won't reveal my age, but when I think about my learning style in school/college it was very different than what is used today!

In the discussion on how to introduce and teach this the suggestion was to begin with one site. So where do I begin? I am using my school computer as I wanted to see if the sites were blocked. (I know that our district differentiates between teacher computers and student computers in regards to some of the things you can access on the network. That is not to say we are not also blocked on a considerable number of other sites.) I was able to get to the home page of both Twitter and Facebook (those seem to be the two most mentioned). I wasn't happy that Facebook wanted my sex and dob before it would let me in. I suppose I could do an alias. I did note on the first page that there were some names of people I knew in the community who wanted to know if I wanted to be their friends...or something to that effect. I assume if I say yes that would get me in to their pages?

OK, I just realized that I was being hesitant knowing that the district can see where I've gone and what I've done, but....my rationale is that I am taking this course so YOU ALL will be my witnesses :). I guess I will go in and just see what I find by filling in all the blanks. Suggestions on what, where, how to start? It will be my afternoon project.

Marion

- o **Re: Where to start?** posted by **Jonathan Cruce** on Jul 21, 2009

I would suggest, in Facebook (FB), that you fill in what you want others to know, not necessarily every item. That is, do you really want everyone who contacts you through Facebook to have your phone number? Then, look around for the Privacy Settings and check them out. They're pretty self explanatory. After that, you can begin to add your friends by searching or taking the application's suggestions, and developing your personal network.

One thing to note about these types of networks - although they do have some individualized etiquettes about contacting and following and such, you're really only required to do what you're able to do. I know one woman who was so overwhelmed by not being able to follow everyone's status updates on Facebook that she gave up and closed the account. That's not necessary (and doubly so for Twitter). Do what you can do and what interests you, and there's no need to feel guilty about what you can't or don't want to make time to do.

- **Re: Where to start?** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 21, 2009

I just wanted to second what Jonathan is mentioning here. When I first started on Facebook (which, by the way, is where I would recommend someone start) I too felt an obligation to read every status update and it started to feel overwhelming. But then I missed a day and nothing bad happened which is when it dawned on me that if I miss something like a status update from some high school friend who I haven't seen in years that it wasn't a big deal at all.

Also, I'd like to second the notion that Facebook users have incredible control over the privacy settings. The settings can be changed at anytime and, I agree, they are pretty intuitive.

Chris

- **Re: Where to start?** posted by **Katy** on Jul 24, 2009

Thank you Jonathon for helping me with "where to begin". My head is smoking. Although I am not totally inexperienced with the internet, I am behind the eight ball on the social

tools. Even my grown kids and some of my peers have said get a Facebook. So today I will. Where to next? Help

- **Re: Where to start?** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 24, 2009
Katy,
Once you play on Facebook for a day or two, let us know how it goes. Are you enjoying it? Anything striking you as interesting? After you find some friends try looking for some groups that interest you to see what the discussion boards are all about. I'm curious to hear your feedback.
Chris
- **Re: Where to start?** posted by **M. Cook** on Jul 21, 2009
I agree, Marion, that the fact that Facebook wants personal information is daunting. I have gotten a social networking page recently due to my own children wanting them. Bluntly, I want to see what they are doing on their pages. I was careful to set the controls as privately as possible but the issue I see with this is that once the information is on the web, it is there. If a picture is posted, it can be copied and sent over and over again. Part of our responsibility as parents and perhaps educators is to teach the management of appropriate posts, pictures and access. The base idea of everything you post should be....do I want this out there for everyone to see? Our school system has its own Moodle system which has Blogs for teacher/student conversation and websites for teachers to post everything from websites to quizzes to homework/course information. This helps keep things more in check.
- **Re: Where to start?** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 21, 2009
I've had the same concern over posting pictures of my daughter on Facebook. While it's a great way to share with others, it does open things up. I also use Apple's Mobile Me system to send photos out. It issues a password that has to be used in to my site and I have control over who I send to.
- **Re: Where to start?** posted by **Patricia McDonald** on Jul 21, 2009
I have realized from this course that I have in fact participated in a form of Social Media. My daughter-in-law has my 1-1/2 year old granddaughter on Tot-Spot. My son and his family live in a different state and it has been marvelous for all of us!
- **Re: Where to start?** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 21, 2009
This is one I haven't heard of before. I can't wait to check it out as I have a 20 month old myself.
- **Re: Where to start?** posted by **KDrum** on Jul 21, 2009
I too decided to tackle FB so I would be familiar with it when my kids wanted to start using it. I have decided that it is really a lot of fun and keeps me up to date with old friends!
- **Re: Where to start?** posted by **Jeanne Romell** on Jul 21, 2009
I can tell you that I have only been on Facebook for a few weeks. I started very timidly. I really just wanted to see new pictures of my 1 year-old great nephews but now that I have gotten reconnected with friends I have heard from in years, I am having great fun (still with a very brief profile). I can see many ways that my students can benefit from such social networks. So far it looks like each individual can go at their own pace - start as a lurker and then dive in when ready. Getting a county system to relax their guard may be daunting task but I am glad to have this institute to learn from.
- **Re: Where to start?** posted by **debbied** on Jul 22, 2009
I just want to throw a cautionary tale out there, having to do with HS students and FB. They forget, that whatever is posted on FB stays there- it really is permanent out there in cyberspace. So, I know a young lady who is unsure of her sexual orientation, and has, on FB, publicly had boyfriends and girlfriends. Now, she wants to join the military- guess

what? She is desperately trying to erase all info on her relations, and she cannot. Bottom line- if using FB with high schoolers, keep reminding them whatever is posted is more or less permanent, especially if you have over 100 "friends"....

- o **Re: Where to start?** posted by **kathleenn** on Jul 23, 2009
For understanding social media and it's value, these CommonCraft videos do a great job of explaining....it's a good place to start.
 1. <http://www.commoncraft.com/social-media-pack>
 2. Take a look at this wiki...<http://web2tutorial.wikispaces.com/RSS>
RSS(Google Reader) + Blogs you like + Social bookmarking (Diggo or Delcious) is a great place to begin (but you will need more than an afternoon...LOL

- **Accessibility Features in OS for Mac and Windows** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 21, 2009
Both operating systems have "ease of use" or "accessibility options". For Mac, go under the Apple to your system preferences, and then select Universal Access. You have different options- screen reader, text enlarging, flashing cursors for sounds, etc. Sticky keys can assist accessing keystrokes with one hand. Mouse keys can use the numeric keypad instead of a mouse. There is a separate onscreen keyboard outside of the system preferences. <http://theappleblog.com/2008/09/24/mac-101-get-an-onscreen-keyboard-in-osx/>
In Windows XP and I think VISTA (I'm not as fluent there), go to Start, All Programs, Accessories, then Accessibility. There is a wizard that can walk you through what you might want to use, or you can go directly into any of the options.
Also, don't forget that you can use your Control panel on either platform to change things like mouse speed, size of icons, key repeats from the keyboard. These are all features that may assist access in general as well as access to social networking.
 - o **Re: Accessibility Features in OS for Mac and Windows** posted by **aledew** on Jul 21, 2009
You should post this on the other conference as well. Thanks! I know my son has already discovered the screen reader on the Macbook! Now if he could just discover the volume control.

- **Wikis?** posted by **aledew** on Jul 21, 2009
Call me old school, but I'm not at all familiar with this application. How can this be used with students with disabilities?
 - o **Re: Wikis?** posted by **KDrum** on Jul 21, 2009
I'm new to this too! HELP!

 - o **Re: Wikis?** posted by **Jonathan Cruce** on Jul 21, 2009
From Wikipedia: "A wiki is a website that uses wiki software, allowing the easy creation and editing of any number of interlinked Web pages, using a simplified markup language or a WYSIWYG text editor, within the browser. Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites, to power community websites, and for note taking. The collaborative encyclopedia Wikipedia is one of the best-known wikis. Wikis are used in business to provide intranet and knowledge management systems. Ward Cunningham, the developer of the first wiki software, WikiWikiWeb, originally described it as 'the simplest online database that could possibly work.'"
I've seen these used in a number of ways. The most well known, of course, is Wikipedia. Information on specific topics is stored in a database, and can be edited by users. That way, if someone comes along who knows more about a particular aspect of the topic than the original author, he can edit the entry to reflect more accurate info. All edits are logged so that inaccurate or biased information can be moderated at a later date.
I'll let the experts and others with more experience with students speak to how it can be used with students...
 - **Re: Wikis?** posted by **tirvine** on Jul 21, 2009
CommonCraft has created a wonderful explanation of Wikis. Here is direct link to the video.
www.commoncraft.com/video-wikis-plain-english

- **Re: Wikis?** posted by **Jean S** on Jul 21, 2009
Thank you for the video link to explain how to use Wikis. This is new to me and I am taking this course to find ways to help myself and my children.
So far I have read through the discussion transcript.
Are there technology tools that would help a student with their organizational skills? For most of us we used the old calendar or assignment notebook.
Sometimes the social skills are not given a chance because of poor time management.

- **Re: Wikis?** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 21, 2009
Well, this is one aspect I haven't had any luck embracing for myself. For me, I still use a paper calendar. There are tools like Google Desktop and Google Calendar that people swear by but, for me, I still need to write it down and see it in a monthly paper-based calendar. The paper-based calendar is small enough for me to carry around into schools and it takes no time at all to flip to the correct page. It also is very cheap with no recharging necessary. I've tried to switch to a palm pilot and I've been thinking about the iPhone but it's just not in the budget right now.

Having said that, I know other people who haven't embraced social networking who's lives depend upon their blackberries- not just one person either- at least two of my personal friends will not even look at Facebook but they'll tell me that they won't look at it via an e-mail "sent via blackberry".

Cellphone usage and other portable devices are beginning to be used more and more widely in schools because more and more students are using them as tools to live with. PDA= Personal Desktop Assistant and, for many students, it is like having an administrative assistant with them at all times.

To answer the question more directly. When looking at students with organization difficulties I typically just try to make one adjustment to their system at a time rather than try to impose a brand new approach but, of course, this depends on the student. I might make one suggestion like- "Hey, have you heard of this site called <http://www.tadalist.com>? You can make checklists on this website. You know, since you're having trouble reading your own writing in your assignment notebook you could go to the computer, log on, and enter the assignments here."

There are some other cool sites to check out too-

<http://www.rememberthemilk.com>

<http://www.evernote.com>

I've heard from other educators that they've used these in the past.

Chris

- **Re: Wikis?** posted by **Jeanne Romell** on Jul 22, 2009
I too haven't had much success with calendar programs or PDAs with my students - my OT experience leads me to believe that the proprioceptive input provided by manually writing items helps students with processing issues but I like the websites you offered for creating checklists. I will definitely check them out. Thank you!
- **Re: Wikis?** posted by **unserk** on Jul 22, 2009
AWESOME!! Thanks for the good suggestions!
- **Re: Wikis?** posted by **Bridget** on Jul 22, 2009
Thanks for the great NEW to me resources!! One of the things I love

about these discussion.. stimulating conversation challenging me how I think about education AND great new and old resources!!

- **Re: Wikis?** posted by **Jennifer Bull** on Jul 22, 2009
Wow, these are great resources! I have a student in a Life Skills class who can write, but won't and I was having the AT person come in at the beginning of the year to set up something on the computer with drop down boxes, but I am going to look at tadalist! Thanks!
- **Re: Wikis?** posted by **KDrum** on Jul 23, 2009
I'm with you on the paper calendar. I need to have the whole month in front of me at a glance. I don't turn on my computer all the time, so an online calendar would not be useful for me.
 - **Re: Wikis?** posted by **faithp** on Jul 26, 2009
I found an online family calendar at cozi.com this week that has a great feature on it of being able to text and e-mail appointments. We have set this up as tasks with a time on them instead of appointments that get texted to my kids' phone's. So far (only 1 week into it) it seems to be a good reminder to them of chores, medication schedules and things they need to do.
 - **Re: Wikis?** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 26, 2009
That's awesome! Please give us an update at the end of the week with your kids feedback too. I'd love to hear how it went and what they thought of it.
chris
- **Re: Wikis?** posted by **Katy** on Jul 24, 2009
Wow, I have some homework to get started on today and tomorrow... Thank you to all that are willing to share. This is great.
- **Re: Wikis?** posted by **KJanowski** on Jul 24, 2009
All the responses point to the importance of helping our students develop their own Toolbelt, a la Toolbelt Theory via Ira Socol. (<http://speedchange.blogspot.com/2008/05/toolbelt-theory-for-everyone.html>) His blog post has transformed how I present ideas to my students; we use a variety of different tools that work for us. It's imperative that we share tool option with our students to help them develop their own toolbelt. What works for me doesn't necessarily work for you.

Agendas (paper organizers that schools have bought into big time) are ubiquitous but how often are the agendas the disability?

- **Re: Wikis?** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 21, 2009
WYSIWYG = What You See Is What You Get. I used to think that term was some computer mumbo-jumbo. Nope, just an acronym.
As another example of a useful wiki check this one out. You may have seen it before: <http://udltechtoolkit.wikispaces.com/>
Note: In my school district <http://www.glogster.com> is blocked. The Home page of the above Wiki was created in Glogster. If it is blocked in your district check the links in the tree on the left side of the screen.
Chris

dividends down the road. In the case of social networking, it is virtually free- the only cost is time. The amount of time spent at the beginning, learning, will decrease as time goes on. Once that ball is rolling, you can keep it rolling with minimal effort (time) per day. One or two (140 character or less) posts about your organization a day won't take long. Some days you may need to do some more management of the Facebook site, like if you have a group and are moderating a forum over there, but even then, how long might that take a day, week, or month? Again, my only experience is for what I'm doing with the A.T.Tipscast and what I've seen some others do, but it doesn't seem like it takes that much time (necessarily). To put it another way- Could you squeeze in, consistently, at a minimum one post a day to keep followers up to date and interested? If so, would that time investment equal the potential benefit?

Chris

- **Re: Cost/Benefit of Social Networks for Organizations** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 22, 2009
We've just started a Facebook for our center- ETTAC. It's very small so far, and we're using it to get word out about events. One of our grants has a goal of increasing outreach to parents and families, which could be measured by increases in numbers of those accessing Facebook and checking on our events. We're just getting started on this so I'm not sure how it will go yet.
- **Re: Cost/Benefit of Social Networks for Organizations** posted by **kathleenn** on Jul 23, 2009
Chris,
Thanks for the resources...just added to my Google Reader:
 - **Re: Cost/Benefit of Social Networks for Organizations** posted by **kathleenn** on Jul 23, 2009
Oops, this was meant for Bridget in the post below:(
- **Re: Cost/Benefit of Social Networks for Organizations** posted by **Bridget** on Jul 23, 2009
While there are many who will never engage with social media the reality of our time is that many people are. As an organization we've discussed at great length the cost/benefit of tapping into social media. We currently have an organization facebook page and several department facebook pages where people can become fans. Mostly the fans for my center (Simon Technology Center) are family and friends. I'm banking on the "tell two friends" motion to increase our fan base and reach our ultimate goal of getting information to people that don't receive our newsletters or other outreach and drive them to our Website for more information. I've recently started to Twitter both personally and for the center. The more I twitter the more followers I get and the more people I follow. and while I don't know if it has increased traffic to our Website I do know that I have learned a lot and am now using twitter as a form of professional development. That is in fact how I stumbled on A.T.TIPSCast:-) and now we've added a blog (www.simontechnologycenter.blogspot.com). the content for both facebook and the blog are coming from our electronic enews so we're not investing (yet) too much time in creating content. We've linked the Blog to Google analytics (all I can say is WOW) and even before officially launching we have information we can use to decide if these tools are effective not to mention with the blog we've given people a way to interact with us that the Website, flyers, enews does not allow.
 - **Re: Cost/Benefit of Social Networks for Organizations** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 23, 2009
Google Analytics is something I have heard about, seen the website and such, and even recommended it to my father-in-law who owns his own business as a way of keeping tabs on the traffic he gets to his business's website but I still feel a bit in the dark about it because I have haven't used it myself. What kind of information does it give you?

I was thinking more about the cost/benefit of social networking in the shower today

(where all the best thinking occurs) and Bridget mentions it here in her first sentence- "While there are many who will never engage with social media the reality of our time is that many people are."

One of the barriers? hurdles? challenges? I face with promoting the fact that the A.T.TIPSCAST even exists is that only maybe 10% (guessing there) of my potential audience is comfortable with the technology behind getting a podcast. I think that might be a challenge/frustration for other organizations as well. What's the best way to get the word out? Social networking may only be one piece of the puzzle. As people become increasingly aware and comfortable with social networking that number (10%) should increase making the cost/benefit ratio shift.

Let me pose a question- When you think about educators in general (public school, private school, higher ed, etc) what percentage of that population are users of social media?

- **Re: Cost/Benefit of Social Networks for Organizations** posted by **Liz Lahm** on Jul 23, 2009

To be quite honest, I'm afraid of the social networking tools because I don't know enough about them (I'm hoping to get over that through this institute). Because Facebook, Twitter, etc. are unknown entities and the fear factor related to putting myself out on the web, I'm hesitant to try anything. That's the kind of people organizations need to reach. I think it has to be very obvious what it will do for me if I go to your site. And I have to be assured I won't feel like an idiot when I get there. And I consider myself very computer literate!

- **Re: Cost/Benefit of Social Networks for Organizations** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 23, 2009

Liz,

The good thing about these sites, like Twitter for instance, is that you can play as a pseudonym to figure it out. I actually have two Twitter accounts. One is my <http://www.twitter.com/attipscast> account which is the one I primarily use. My other one I generated as a goof for one of the characters in the podcast. So, you could make up a name for yourself, (<http://chriswetherell.com/hobbit/> - for some fun) and go anonymous just to test the waters. Here's the thing though, I don't think you need to. Twitter and social networking in its current form is still, relatively speaking, pretty new. People remember when they were first starting out learning it and I think you'll find that most are pretty helpful. Over course, that is a HUGE generalization, but that has been my experience so far. Of course there could be some bad apples, but I doubt they'd ruin the bunch for you. Plus, you have total control when it comes to these sites. If someone wants to "friend" you on Facebook or Twitter, you can kind of check it out first to see if that is something you'd be interested in because of the privacy settings.

"Geez, this attipscast guy found me on Twitter and because my profile <short bio saying whatever you want it to say> says that I'm interested in special education and technology he wants to 'follow' me. My settings are locked down in such a way that he can't read my stuff. Should I let him follow me? Let's just follow him for awhile and make sure that would be okay with me."

Also, I think it is helpful to think of social networking sites as less of a traditional website per se (You go, get info, you leave) but a service being offered as a way to connect to people (You go, You connect/share with others, you leave).

Does that help?

Chris

- **Practical ideas for kids with severe cognitive disabilities** posted by **Liz Lahm** on Jul 22, 2009
I teach elementary age students with severe cognitive disabilities. Some are beginning to build sentences. They all love the computer. I would like to hear from any one who has used these tools with this population. I am wondering if the tools can help them be interested in creating sentences and understand the value of communication. I envision a closed audience of parents and relatives, but people who are invested in the student and are willing to have simple "conversations" with them. Which tools are best? Has anyone tried it before?
 - **Re: Practical ideas for kids with severe cognitive disabilities** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 22, 2009
There are three websites that come to mind here. I think I posted this one before, but check out <http://www.edmodo.com>. It is like Twitter but for students. Second is <http://www.voicethread.com>. Again, I think I posted that already but it is great for making short, succinct comments and you have multiple formats to make a comment (text, audio, etc.). The third, for sentence generation might be <http://www.pimpumpum.net/phrasr/>. This last one allows a student to write a sentence and get pictures from Flickr. Test it out though, I'm not sure of content filtering.
Chris
 - **Re: Practical ideas for kids with severe cognitive disabilities** posted by **Jennifer Bull** on Jul 22, 2009
Awesome, thanks!
 - **Re: Practical ideas for kids with severe cognitive disabilities** posted by **KDrum** on Jul 22, 2009
Cool sites! I am going to pass these on to my son's teachers!
 - **Re: Practical ideas for kids with severe cognitive disabilities** posted by **bwojci** on Jul 23, 2009
I would add that using tools like Skype (<http://www.skype.com>) where students can chat via text, use the spoken word over the internet, and even video conference, would be helpful in establishing the importance and power of communication. Students can each have their own buddy list as well.
 - **Re: Practical ideas for kids with severe cognitive disabilities** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 23, 2009
Yes, Skype is a good one that requires an install. My wife sometimes uses Skype to tutor. For the most part, it works out really well for her and the students. In our personal lives we use Skype to chat with our friends and family. It's free and it is relatively easy to set-up. <http://www.wiziq.com> is another one that is similar, also free, and is web-based, meaning you don't need to install anything to the computer to get it to run.
 - **Re: Practical ideas for kids with severe cognitive disabilities** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 28, 2009
It could also provide a really motivating situation for students using communication devices to use their devices for a social conversation. What fun that could be! You could set topics or just talk! I've been using Skype with one of my clients and he really likes the immediacy of it. He's able to do all his own dialing using Discover Pro software.
 - **Re: Practical ideas for kids with severe cognitive disabilities** posted by **carolyn stiles** on Jul 22, 2009
I work for an agency that provides services to children and adults with cognitive disabilities. Although communicating with a family member may be motivating for the individual, it seems that the greatest motivator for the adults receiving services is to communicate with another person with a similar disability. Although I am a great proponent of inclusive activities, opportunities to communicate with others with similar needs does seem to be important as well.

there are only so many hours in the day and I just haven't had time to put into it though. I did some research for my school district on it for potential use as a staff development tool and, eventually, as a student tool. The recommendation was to start with interested teachers in the general Second Life world as like a pilot program. Then invite those teachers to see about using it with students in the classes they teach in the Teen Second Life world. Nothing has been decided yet though.

I agree that for students with social difficulties, Second Life could be awesome.

Practicing social skills with people online in Second Life, just as is, could provide a wealth of opportunities, but when I first saw it I envisioned setting up "Social Situation Island" where students with social difficulties could actually come and practice social skills. I envisioned setting up oh, let's say 50 or so scenarios where students could come with their avatars and practice. Examples might be mock interviews, ordering at a restaurant, asking for directions, giving directions, checking out at the grocery store, what to do when someone bumps into you by accident- that kind of stuff. Students could actually practice skills over and over again with other people and get feedback in a non-threatening way.

Ah, if I only had more time... If anyone out there would like a nice little side project, there you go! "Social Skill Island". Your paradise awaits!

Chris

- **Re: Virtual Worlds** posted by **debbied** on Jul 27, 2009

I just had to jump in, as my husband works at the Tech Museum in San Jose, and they have a psuedo Second Life station which seats 15 users. It is always full! The kids (and adults!) love to see themselves "fly" around, and explore the "places" in the software, and attempt to virtually interact with the other users, even if that user is sitting right next to them! You do need to be able to read, and of course, the filters are not great for the real one, so there are MANY inappropriate areas in it, which is why the Tech has a psuedo one. You would definitely have to watch 'em like a hawk in this one....

- **Re: Virtual Worlds** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 27, 2009

This was exactly our initial assessment as well, which was our reasoning for starting it off as an adult professional development model. I haven't tried it, but I was wondering if some screen capturing/optical character recognition software would work to help with some of the text. I imagine it would. I do know the Second Life does have voice now, which allows users to talk to each other, which is very cool.

Chris

- o **Re: Virtual Worlds** posted by **Liz Lahm** on Jul 28, 2009

I just spent some time going through some of the Second Life tutorials. I can see this as a great tool for kids who never get to make decisions about their life, like clothes, what to buy, who to be friends with, etc. But we need a safe, closed community. And one that lets children participate. Is there such a thing?

- **Re: Virtual Worlds** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 28, 2009

There are. <http://www.activeworlds.com/> is one that I know of where, I believe, institutions build their own, closed, virtual environments. I believe the site lists educational institutions using it.

<http://www.panfu.com/eltern.php> - Panfu is another, although I have just recently heard about this one. The notes to parents make it look promising but I haven't been on to really explore it yet.

<http://blog.wellsfargo.com/StagecoachIsland> - Here is one sponsored by Wells Fargo. Again, I only have cursory knowledge but it might be worth the look.

Also, Second Life has a teen version called Teen Second Life. There are age restrictions and other rules that apply.

Second Life presents an interesting challenge to educators when it comes to mitigating risks. Second Life is, by far, the most popular of these virtual worlds. Students guided by teachers can have amazing interactive experiences in different locations of Second Life. There is a place called the Exploratorium (<http://www.exploratorium.edu/worlds/secondlife/>) that has awesome science experiments which provides a unique experience unreplicated by other parts of the Internet. In this way, it adds a whole new level to differentiated instruction. Furthermore, you've got the possibility of setting up virtual world meetings with authors, scientists, CEOs, historians...the list goes on. Due to Second Life's popularity, the chances that someone else has heard of it or tried it is very likely.

Finally, you've got a wonderful opportunity to get student's involved in creation. Imagine what students could create if asked to design a virtual high school or to build something in Second Life as part of a community or class project that could be used by anyone else in the world.

Risks? Yes. Benefits? Yes indeed.

Chris

- **Re: Virtual Worlds** posted by **Dr. Brenda Scott** on Jul 31, 2009

Liz,

We too looked at Second Life as a possibility for students but concluded it was not safe enough to go there. Yet we would still like to find something that helps them with social skills other than software (which is just one on one) and video modeling, in particular for our students with autism.

- **Blogs- Favorites, How-To's, and What's The Big Deal?** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 23, 2009
The topic of blogs was posted in a different thread but I thought it deserved its own category/thread. Blogs with comment features enabled fall within the category of social networking. Patrick Black, an educator in Illinois put together a list of favored blogs on special education <http://bit.ly/favatblogs>

This is a good place to start but I'm wondering if there are questions about blogs, blogging, how to choose which blog site to use, and more. I'm curious too, what are your favorite blogs and why? Even if it isn't necessarily a blog site related to special education, technology or disability, I'd like to hear what you read and why. What makes the blog appealing to you? Any Mommy or Daddy bloggers out there?
Chris

- **Re: Blogs- Favorites, How-To's, and What's The Big Deal?** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 24, 2009
I read Patrick's post to QIAT yesterday, it's a wonderful resource. I keep my blogs in a folder in my bookmarks so that they're easy to find. I don't have any favorites as such. I give my University students an activity of joining a blog, webinar or podcast to have that experience, as I think it is the best way to keep up on new trends and to share ideas. I can post my list too but I think many are the same as Patrick's. I mostly read blogs related to AT, but I also have added things related to autism and personal interests as well. I'm an adoptive mom to a daughter from China, so there are related blogs that I check on and have added to my Facebook. I also have a brother with PDD and am conservator for an adult with autism and severe disabilities, so I try to keep up with things in that arena as I can. Often I check in on the blogs when I'm looking for something for a particular client or a new piece of technology, so I don't read them every day. I've also set up some RSS feeds in my mail account on my Mac so that I can prompt myself to read certain things that way as well. Looking forward to hearing what you all are reading!
- **Re: Blogs- Favorites, How-To's, and What's The Big Deal?** posted by **Liz Lahm** on Jul 30, 2009
Would a blog be a good format for having a closed ongoing conversation with a selected audience? For example, I have a student with a goal to write sentences in emails to family members. I would like to broaden this so a small group a relatives and friends could see the whole 'discussion' and chime in when they wanted to, rather than waiting for a specific email from my student. What do you think? I would like the person's email to be linked to a picture of

the person so he knows who it is from. Facebook scares me because it is too open. Would this be better?

- **Re: Blogs- Favorites, How-To's, and What's The Big Deal?** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 30, 2009

I'm not familiar with a way to set up a private blog where only invited readers may participate. That doesn't mean it doesn't exist, there may be a way to do it and it just isn't occurring to me. The solution that comes to mind in this scenarios is a ning (www.ning.com). Once you give your Ning a name one of the very next questions asked during the set-up process is if you want it to be public or private. When private is chosen only people invited by the ning owner can read and post information. It also has the ability for the user to see pictures of the people posting, assuming the people posting have uploaded a picture of themselves to their own profiles. That is, if I were this student's cousin and I was going to post I would create a profile with my picture in it so that when I posted he or she (and anyone else in the Ning) would see my picture.

Check it out, I think it is exactly what you're looking for.

Chris

- **Re: Blogs- Favorites, How-To's, and What's The Big Deal?** posted by **Liz Lahm** on Jul 31, 2009

Thank you. I think that sounds like it is exactly what I want.

- **Re: Blogs- Favorites, How-To's, and What's The Big Deal?** posted by **ned campbell** on Jul 31, 2009

Well, of course the default setting of all of these tools will normally be set to open connectivity. But with each of these networking technologies you have a number of ways to change those settings to limit or expand how "public" you want to be. In other posts my point has been that how are parents and teachers going to be able to teach our children and students how to use these tools appropriately if we are so afraid to try and also where schools are blocking us from access? Doesn't make sense to me. You can definitely in FB "private down" your profile and also set it so you do not "add friends" automatically but only when you have verified who they are. That's the way I set mine. You can set up a relatively broad but yet protected network of friends easily.

- **Re: Blogs- Favorites, How-To's, and What's The Big Deal?** posted by **Dr. Brenda Scott** on Jul 31, 2009

Liz,

I have set up blogs using the free Google blog tool and made them private. They don't show up on search engines and you get to invite only those persons you want to invite to access the blog. I do this for our group at work for our Exceptional Children department.

- **Ipod Touch or Iphone Integration with Social Media** posted by **mnichol1** on Jul 24, 2009

Hi All,

I'm curious if anyone has started (or has plans to start) implementing either the Ipod Touch or Iphone into educational environments where these tools can connect to school-based wireless networks for accessing & integrating various app's into the curriculum (especially social media app's).

- **Re: Ipod Touch or Iphone Integration with Social Media** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 25, 2009
- I don't have much experience with iPod Touches and iPhones. I keep batting my eyelashes at my wife and saying, "But honey, I need one for work to see how it can help students. Please can I have one?" It hasn't worked so far. Maybe I'll try batting my eyelashes at my AT Coordinator next. See if that works on him :)

So, now that I've stated that I'm not qualified to answer, here are my thoughts.

First, the major advantage I see to these devices are portability. Students can take them pretty much anywhere and use them as a tool. One button, turn it on, boom, you're learning. It would be a great tool to use on the bus, where the school is responsible for a student yet not typically instructing a student. Also, for specific students, I'm sure there are additional advantages, which is where I think the heart of your question lies. I'm eager to hear responses as well on that one.

Similarly, let's throw out a "hypothetical" question. Let's say the economy is in trouble so the federal government gives you some money to buy technology for your school/class. After it all shakes out you get say, roughly, \$250 per student (that part truly is hypothetical). Your school now has to choose what to buy. In this hypothetical situation you only have two choices- iPod Touchs (~\$229 for 8GB)(www.apple.com) or Dell Mini 9 (a netbook- tiny laptop- 16 GB)(www.dell.com). Hypothetically, which do you choose and why?

Chris

- o **Re: Ipod Touch or Iphone Integration with Social Media** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 26, 2009
I'm also trying to decide about an ipod touch. I've been a Palm user (we have them at my office) up until a recent computer crash (Win) that took my Outlook calendar with it. I'm now on Mobile Me with Apple because I just have to have my calendar secure-it's how I track my time for various grants. So I'm now looking to see if I can still use my Palm- I can export my Outlook stuff to ical but not sure about iCal to Outlook. It seems that going to the ipod would be best, but I'm still not sure. I'd also like to try out some of the new apps for some of my clients. I'm hoping that there will be a text to speech option that highlights the text as it reads, which isn't an option on the nanos or video ipods. And I also hope that someone will look at scanning options. My concern is always that when something like this comes out, that access issues are taken into consideration for all individuals, so that everyone can use them. There are some exciting possibilities, so I'm interested also in hearing what others are trying.
- **Re: Ipod Touch or Iphone Integration with Social Media** posted by **Patricia McDonald** on Jul 27, 2009
Sorry if this is the incorrect place to enter this--in the Mpls.St.Paul STAR TRIBUNE 7/26/09 an article "iPods may help Asperger's kids navigate life" gives information about the Fraser program at www.fraser.org.
The article also discusses other projects around the country using other social media.
Sorry also if this has been referred to in another area. Pat
- **Re: Ipod Touch or Iphone Integration with Social Media** posted by **Kathy Vining** on Jul 28, 2009
I have been thinking about hand-held technology and when it might be time to consider it as an appropriate option for a student. Thanks for bringing this article to our attention. Good food for thought.
- **Re: Ipod Touch or Iphone Integration with Social Media** posted by **Marie** on Jul 28, 2009
The iPhone has some unique accessibility options available: Voice Control recognizes the names in your Contacts and knows the music on your iPod. So if you want to place a call or play a song, all you have to do is ask. There are others as well. VoiceOver screen reader, a Zoom feature, White on Black display options, and I believe there are maybe some others too.
- o **Re: Ipod Touch or Iphone Integration with Social Media** posted by **Liz Lahm** on Jul 28, 2009
I have an iPhone and see lots of potential for apps. However, my school does not have a wireless network and does not allow the installation of programs, including iTunes. There is no way we could use them unless the teachers took them home to do all of the set up, installation, and updating.
- o **Re: Ipod Touch or Iphone Integration with Social Media** posted by **John Nedden-Durst** on Jul 31, 2009
I know that at the Closing the Gap Conference on October 14th there is a session on using the Iphone and Ipod Touch as AT.
Check out <http://www.closingthegap.com/conference/workshops>
Session Description

With brilliant graphics, great audio, a multi-touch interface and over 15,000 third party applications, the iPhone and iPod touch offer a wealth of possibilities for assistive technology. In this hands-on lab, you will learn about and get to try all the terrific applications that can make a difference for your students and clients. We start with Proloquo2Go, a completely customizable AAC solution for the iPhone/iPod, followed by applications for sign language, for planning/organization, for story telling, for reading/writing and much more. You will learn how the iPhone/iPod can make a difference to people with various disabilities, such as traumatic brain injuries, autism, downs syndrome, fluency disorders, dyslexia, mild CP, ALS and others. At the end of the day you will know how and when to recommend an iPhone/iPod; you will know what applications are available; and you will have learned to use some of the most promising AT applications. (Hands-on activities will be conducted on iPod touches — one iPod for every one participant.)

- **Re: Ipod Touch or Iphone Integration with Social Media** posted by **ned campbell** on Jul 31, 2009

Thanks for the post for closing the gap. Fantastic. In Virginia we have had several ongoing research using iphones and pda's for virtual job coaching with transition students and adults with autism spectrum disorders. It's a brave new word indeed and unbelievable how these technologies can be adapted. With regular students and VR clients we do not have enough of them to get a good read yet for AT but I do know that my kids connect their smart phones to their myspace and facebook updates. Pretty cool. I personally use blackerry to connect to LinkedIn and also to my agency's Exchange (Outlook) services. It has made me incredibly more productive and mobile. The key, I've found is to learn to turn that darned thing off. That being said, I'm signing off of this seminar. Thanks to all for these fantastic threads. I am a very happy participant. Look forward to networking with you again soon.

- **Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 24, 2009

As the first week comes to a close, I'm wondering what is still unclear. Are there particular questions, particular terms, or anything related to the week's posts that need to be clarified? Don't be shy in asking a question because chances are someone else has that same question.

I'd also like to hear about what one new thing you've learned from this first week. It can be a site, an application, an idea.... any one thing that has struck you so far.

Having an opportunity like this course is always like a breath of fresh air for me. It gives me a chance to think in new ways and revisit what I'm doing with my clients to see what I can do that is new and exciting. I hope it's been the same for you!

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **Dawn Allred** on Jul 24, 2009

I am searching for an online venue for my former students who are now special educators. I would like them to be able to keep in touch with me and each other, and ask questions and generally blog to one another. It needs to be somewhat official, since I am their old (and getting older) professor and am a representative of the college, but a loose affiliation. I will be the only one monitoring the site, but it is more a college site than a personal one.

Would you suggest Facebook, Twitter, or Ning for this? What would be the pros and cons of each?

For all the K-12 educators who have been posting, your statements regarding accessibility issues are very valuable and I plan on a lecture related to all we have learned here. Then again giving my students the link to read the transcripts on their own might better serve their learning needs. I look forward to each day's postings.

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **LindaJ** on Jul 24, 2009

Another option, not new but could meet your needs as described in your message, is Groups. Yahoo and Google both have groups. I belong to several and have for many years-- one for about 15 years! You can create a group for any topic and members can discuss and get threads or read by chronological order-- much as this discussion group--

or members can choose to get posts by email. I read from the web site because of the threading option there. You can make a group as closed or open as you want; invitation only or let anyone join. Moderators handle any problems that should arise. There are options to load files, photos, polls-- all sorts of things! Again, this is not the NEWest social networking but groups are great for discussions and are simple to do.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/>

<http://groups.google.com/>

Just tossin' in a couple of cents worth.... :)

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 25, 2009

Dawn,

Here is a quick breakdown and a suggestion

My guess is that some will already be users of Facebook and Twitter. This gives those sites a distinct advantage over creating a Ning in my view. Classroom 2.0

(<http://www.classroom20.com>) is an established Ning that is very similar to Facebook.

That might be something else to explore.

Having written that, here is what I would suggest. It sounds like you have an established method of communication with them already. Maybe toss the question out to them-

What would be the best/preferred way to communicate with all of you in the future?

Would you want me to create a group in Facebook? Would you want me to create a Yahoo group? Would you want me to create a separate Ning? Would you want to use Classroom 2.0? Do any of you have a better idea?

Then, pick the most popular answer. At the very least it would get them thinking about a problem, which is something my favoritest professors always did- like my old English professor who asked, "Is 'favoritest' truly a word if everyone starts using it?" :)

Chris

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **katy** on Jul 25, 2009

There is so much information flowing this week I have to take some time to absorb it all one piece at a time. I have made some lists of sites to check out for organization issues, virtual world, language help, sites to sign up for, along with setting a personal goal this week to learn how to use FB. I signed up today and my oldest daughter couldn't believe I did it. The old dog new trick thing I guess. I am determined to become more proficient with technology through this course.

Thanks for your help.

One question...

I have a friend with MS. She doesn't have much mobility with her hands anymore. What type of device can she use to help her with the computer, something with a large handle, voice activation??? What's out there?

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 26, 2009

Voice activation might be a possibility. Where does your friend live? If there is a center near you where she can go to try things first, that would be best. www.ataccess.org

Voice activation is built into the operating systems on both WIN and Mac.

Also look at something like Origin's HeadMouse extreme. She could use something like ClickNTypes' free onscreen keyboard. I'd see if you can find somewhere she can try a range of things out and if that's not an option, do a 30 day preview from some of the vendors.

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **Jonathan Cruce** on Jul 27, 2009

Another idea would be to put her in touch with your local Tech Act center or ATA (Alliance for Technology Access) center. These locations can provide devices and possibly full evaluations for her to look at the most effective means of computer access.

Or, if she has an employment goal, she could go through her local Vocational Rehabilitation department, who should also have AT specialists. There are loads of different access methods out there, and it takes hands-on evaluations to determine what will work most effectively. Could be that a trackball would work better for her than a mouse, or that voice recognition is an option, or a

touchpad, or scanning, or a joystick, or a larger keyboard, or a smaller keyboard, or... or... or...
:)

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **Katy** on Jul 27, 2009
Thank you both for your help. I will get the process started for her.
- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **Patricia McDonald** on Jul 25, 2009
I am very curious to know that since obviously there is no Federal mandate as to what should be used for a certain population of students, what criteria is used by a state, county, school district, etc., in determining the best possible resources for each student, or I guess I am wondering who actually determines all of this understanding of course the IEP, etc., but who says what will work????
- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 25, 2009
I believe there might be multiple responses to this question based on how large a group we're talking about. The question is layered. How do we know what will work for one student? How do we know what will work for the students in our school/school district/local area? How do we know what will work for the students in our country?

I'll tackle the first- How do we know what will work for one student? Truth is, we never 100% know what works for a student. We can be pretty darn sure, but we never know. As a speech therapist I'd like to think my therapy helped a student. After all, before coming to me they had trouble doing "X" but after seeing me and participating in my wonderful therapy they didn't have trouble doing "X" any more. So, viola! my intervention works, right? Well, not exactly. I don't know that for sure. All I know for sure is that behavior changed. I can (and did) measure that change- but I don't know for sure the cause of that change. I'd like to think it was my therapy but it could have been nasty Aunt Betty this past weekend to visit the student who just made fun of that student so badly that the student forever and always altered his behavior because Aunt Betty was so nasty to him. It could have been Aunt Betty. It could have been speech therapy. It could have been a combination of the two or a combination of a thousand other factors. I'll never know for sure. I only know one thing- the student changed.

This same philosophy holds true for technology, including social media. Before implementation of technology a student is one way- has a communication difficulty, has difficulty organizing thoughts into a cohesive paragraph, stating multiplication facts, whatever. A goal is established. Then interventions are put in place (How do we decide which interventions? I'll come back to that) and we measure the change by collecting data on that goal. If positive change occurs, great! We can assume (not ever, ever, ever know for sure) that the intervention (technology) worked. But if there is no change or regression then we need to re-evaluate the whole situation. We cannot necessarily assume the wrong technology was used. That is just one of many possibilities. For example, it could be the right technology, but not implemented long enough-The great educational Genie tells us that if we had waited just one day longer and it all would have clicked home for the student--Aww, too bad we pegged that technology as not working, it would have (so says the Genie).

So, we measure the goals and that is how we know that the student is making progress. But how to choose interventions in the first place? I told you I'd come back to that. Well, one way is by looking at research. What does the latest research tell us is working? That's one part of the way. Secondly, looking at the abilities of the student. Analyzing the student strengths gives insight into which interventions to use. If reading text is a strength then we know that technology that concerns reading text might be a good match. If the student is stronger with audible formats, then different technology might be implemented. Thirdly, we look at what's worked in the past for similar students we know coupled with our knowledge of interventions. Call this professional experience if you will

and this includes understanding that sometimes this requires learning something new/investigation of new tools. Fourthly, put it all together with a logical recommendation.

- Analyze the goal

- Analyze the student

- Look for tools that make sense for the student to use to meet the goal.

Does this help?

Chris

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **Patricia McDonald** on Jul 25, 2009
Thank you Chris. Great example of everyone's Aunt Betty! It's especially hard to see the changes in students that time off from the routine of school which is actually very important, possibly taking any meds regularly (if I can refer to that), and the comfort of being with their teachers and friends.

I realize there are computer sites that are off limits at schools as there are books that are not always included in media centers. I fully believe in the professional experience and knowledge to choose materials, but there must be some items that are OFF LIMITS--or I would assume all districts do not allow even the most tenured teachers to select anything they wish. Would we assume that everything mentioned this week would have no boundaries that need to be approved school by school or did I miss this?

Thanks, Pat

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 26, 2009
Pat,
There were some posts up in the Defining Social Media thread that relate to this topic and question. Do those posts help?
Chris
- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **Patricia McDonald** on Jul 26, 2009
Chris, I have in fact reviewed those again and I need to get my brain into the year 2009. If a person is at home previewing materials for school all items should appear okay to use as opposed to using a computer at school which would block any materials determined by a district to be not okay to go to... Sorry, I am aware but not thinking. Thanks, Pat
- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 26, 2009
Pat,
During the school year and now, during the summer, our AT team works on a variety of projects that requires us to look for resources. Many times we are doing this at home and we constantly run into this problem of having something blocked at school that we wouldn't have guessed would have been blocked while we were at home. For example, the A.T.TIPScast episodes are hosted on a website called www.cyberears.com. To my surprise www.cyberears.com was blocked in our school district as being "online radio". What? So, for awhile there, people in my own school district couldn't hear the podcast at school unless getting it from another source.
Side note here- With many of these projects where we are

gathering educational resources some of us (like myself) try to tweet the resources we find. If I'm building a PowerPoint of resources and I come across the coolest thing ever I tweet it out on Twitter. Right now I'm working on a summer curriculum project and I'm doing just that. If you'd like to see them you can follow me at <http://www.twitter.com/attipscast>
Chris

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 26, 2009
It just occurred to me that I should have explained how the A.T.TIPScast got unblocked. Honestly, I don't really know. All I know is that the AT Coordinator said he'd take care of it, which he did. I assume he talked to the person in charge of permanently unblocking things because we haven't had a problem since.
Chris
- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **carolyn stiles** on Jul 25, 2009
I signed up for this course because I have never visited a social web site, participating in blogging, etc. Nor had I ever taken this type of on-line course. I'm feeling at this point like I'm ready to jump in, but there are so many options that I'm not sure where to start. Any suggestions?
 - **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 25, 2009
Carolyn,
Of course this is a very personal choice based on your interests and work responsibilities, but here are some general suggestions.
Start with something that sounded interesting to you and matches your style. If you're the sort of person that kind of likes to dip her big toe into the water and swirl it around a bit to get the temperature then I'd start with a blog or a podcast. These allow you to get information but you don't necessarily need to participate until you feel you want to (if you ever feel you want to). To choose between blog or podcast, ask yourself which way do you best learn- from reading or from listening? There are ways to listen to blogs and some podcasters provide transcripts (especially the good ones- Note to self: Figure out how to get transcripts of episodes up on the A.T.TIPScast) so the two aren't necessarily mutually exclusive. Also, ask yourself which do you have more time for? Do you have time to read a blog post or two a day? Is it possible to listen to a podcast while doing the dishes, giving your pet ferret a bath, or on the commute to work?
Now, if you're the type of person who likes to dive right in (knowing how deep the water is- safety first, of course), then I might recommend Facebook as a place to start. You will connect with friends and family there first, usually providing a positive experience. Once comfortable branching out in Facebook looking for professional organizations to connect with might be the next step.
Does that help?
Chris
 - **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 26, 2009
I agree with Chris- start with something that works for you. Facebook is a good one, because it gets you going by keeping up with friends and family. You'll find the time to check in-even if it isn't every day you can read old posts- just to see how things are going with the folks in your life. Then you can go looking for other things. I haven't done much in the way of podcasts and hope to try that out. I've been on Chris' site but haven't had a chance to download a podcast yet- but will in the next week. I keep all my blog sites in a folder, and go to them as I can or as I have a need to find out something for a client. Chris- do you have other

suggestions? Are there ways to get transcripts of blogs and podcasts or does it depend on the site manager?

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 26, 2009
The way I manage which blogs I read is directly through Internet Explorer (IE). I can't speak to Mozilla, Google Chrome or Safari because I don't use those browsers but in IE when you visit a blog the little RSS FEED button in the toolbar lights up orange. When you click on it you are taken to a page asking if you'd like to subscribe to get updates when new content is posted on that site. When you subscribe it puts that in a list of feeds under your favorite star (on the far left of the toolbar). Bolded feeds mean new content is available since my last visit. I placed a photo here (<http://bit.ly/ierssfeedat>) for a visual of what I'm talking about. This is a pretty easy way to manage what I've read and what I have yet to read.
Other people like Google Reader as their way of getting feed updates. I think someone already posted the Common Craft video link for that one so I won't include it here.
With regard to getting transcripts- a blog is in text format- so that doesn't require a transcript. There are some sites (<http://www.odiogo.com> , for instance) where you can have your text converted to audio, which is a nice accessibility feature. With the podcast it is, indeed, up to the site manager. Providing a transcript of something unscripted isn't easy and usually costs some cash as a service someone provides for each episode.
Does that help?
Chris

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **Katy** on Jul 27, 2009
I signed up for FB last week on Friday. So far I have posted a few messages, have a friend base that is growing, and am somewhat in a daze. Your information is so public, friends friends can read what you write. This has been a bit uncomfortable for me but at the same time I have had some old students (long since graduated from high school) and friends of my own older children request me as a friend. This is an inviting feature. I don't have it all figured out yet. Remember, don't become a FB "friend" with a school age student, I think this could be a problem. Any comments on this from those that are experienced? How can I use this tool with students?
- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 27, 2009
I found the same problem when I joined. I send private messages mostly- you can do that under the user picture-send a message. While it seems redundant like sending an email, it is often the case that people are getting their Facebook messages on their phone or checking it more often than their email. See if this works for you. You can always ignore a friend request as well. I have a client who wants to stay in touch with a friend of mine in another state. She doesn't get on Facebook that often and prefers to get emails. Does this help?
- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **katy** on Jul 31, 2009
Thanks for the input. It generated a lot of good information and help. I too thought about how my being on FB and how the younger generation may think twice about what they write or post. At first I felt I didn't want to intrude on their ground but now I feel different(it's my ground also). I did see a photo I would have rather not seen at a "friends site". I imagine he may think twice about what is posted with me around but I figure they have all okay'd or requested me as a friend. Doing some positive clean up on the internet is a good thing. Enjoy your last day. It has been nice reading all the posts and getting used to this kind of course.

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **Sonya Skramstad-Breyemeier** on Jul 27, 2009
I am facebook friends with my nieces and nephews who are in school and them knowing I am watching has kept their posts appropriate. If I find their post offensive I pick up the phone and tell them so. I usually get my point across without being brashy.

- **Re: Muddy points and New Ideas** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 28, 2009
Sonya,
You definitely touch upon a point here that I hadn't considered before from a student's perspective. I too am friends with many relatives on Facebook. They see what I post and I see what they post. In that way, they know that "Uncle/Cousin Chris" is going to see this. Whenever I comment on something they've posted it is a subtle reminder that I'm there. I'm watching. I care. It is a reminder to them to ask the question, "Would I want my cousin, uncle, or grandmother to see this?"

Also, each time I post, I present a model for those younglings. It probably isn't occurring on a conscious level for them but over time they can get an idea of what is appropriate and what isn't through my example. That's some heavy responsibility to shoulder, but a good one nonetheless.

I would say there might be a perception out there that Facebook just allows students to communicate within their own circle of friends, but that isn't necessarily the case. When I think about my "network" of friends on Facebook it spans just about every aspect of my life - family, HS friends, College friends, professionals, etc. All of my "circles of friends" overlap on Facebook - Making it that much more imperative that I think about what I post.

Here's my final thought about using social networking with students and adults being a model (well, for this post anyway). Content is one thing to consider. Tude is another. Consider the following example "status updates" on Facebook from an adult.

"Ugh, Another day of work today."

"Went to the beach today. Gosh I look awful in a bathing suit."

"My kids will NOT stop screaming at each other. Calgon take me away. I need a vacation from them."

"My wife made another tasteless dinner. Chicken ala yuck. Thanks honey!"

In all of those posts, there is something negative. A subtle negative vibe that runs throughout the theme. When thinking of adults posting to Facebook with teens who look to them as models reading those posts, the responsibility falls to the adult to make sure the message (even the subtle messages) is a positive one. Consider the following alternatives:

"I went to work today. Today wasn't great but tomorrow will be better."

"Went to the beach today. It was great to lay in the sand and read my book."

"My kids will NOT stop screaming at each other. Time for me to unleash my parenting talents."

"My wife made another chicken dinner. Thanks honey! I'm making the next dinner and it won't be chicken. Get ready of the surprise!"

My point is simply this- As the adult, sometimes it is not just getting students to think about what is appropriate or inappropriate before they post, but it is modeling how to be the best you can be.

Chris

have helped me better understand Wikis and everything else discussed. Thanks so far for the first week!

- **Delicious resources** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 26, 2009
Social bookmarking anyone? Let's start with an appetizer. Any users of <http://www.delicious.com>? If so, how do you use it? Why do you use it? Does it live up to the name? Don't keep these tasty morsels to yourselves. The best treats are shared amongst friends (unless you're my wife- then God help you if you try to sneak a taste off her plate. You could lose a finger).
Chris
 - **Re: Delicious resources** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 27, 2009
If you aren't familiar with social bookmarking I leave it to the people at Common Craft to do the explaining. This short video explains it in a nutshell and even used www.delicious.com as the example:
<http://www.commoncraft.com/bookmarking-plain-english>
 - **Re: Delicious resources** posted by **efrerichs** on Jul 27, 2009
I love www.delicious.com. It is a lifesaver for me as I jump from computer to computer and often recommend sites to others. Someday I will actually organize my bookmarks, so that I can direct people to a specific page. But guess what, delicious is blocked from my schools system, as well as twitter, facebook, youtube, and streaming video. We can access iTunes now though!
 - **Re: Delicious resources** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 27, 2009
I've tried delicious somewhat but haven't used it as much as I thought. I'm needing a way also to organize my bookmarks from home to work and back again. I work on multiple computers a lot. I was looking at DropBox last night and set up an account there to try. I don't know if it would be blocked in the schools or not and space is limited to 2 GB for free, but it's an option. <http://www.getdropbox.com/> I'm also not sure how it differs from delicious. Any thoughts?
 - **Re: Delicious resources** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 27, 2009
I found that it took a little "umpf" for me to get myself into Delicious too. In fact, I feel like I'm still getting into it. For years I'd been bookmarking things locally to my PC using Internet Explorer. I primarily only use one computer so it wasn't a problem for me to have everything bookmarked on that one computer. Social Bookmarking came along with a "better" way and I've had a hard time switching over.
As our AT team grew we kept collecting web-based resources and we needed to find a way to share them amongst ourselves. Our AT Coordinator set up a delicious account for our AT Team which any of us can log into using the same shared username and password. When one of us finds a cool resource that person bookmarks it in Delicious and gives it a "tag". Then, when someone else is looking for resources he or she can go directly to the delicious account and search the tags. Everything ever bookmarked by any team member gets searched that way.
The success of this prompted me to finally create my own delicious account and I've been using it for the last few months.

www.getdropbox.com looks like a cool online file storing system. You can save your files (documents, videos, audio, etc.) and get to them anywhere. It is like a hard drive on the web. One potential roadblock I see for teachers (in our school district anyway) is that it requires you to install something. In our district teachers can't install to computers.
It does sound like an easy way to back-up files though. Unfortunately, I can speak from experience that backing up files is extremely important.
Chris

of children and youth. The following URL's should take you to the pages within each organization's website that provide the contact information for these state-based programs. (I know that some of these links were provided earlier.) In some cases, an organization might be on several lists, as it might serve as both an ATA Center and a Technology Act Center. We very much need qualified experts in the field, as there's a paucity of available technology expertise within the disability and education communities. So if you're counseling anyone about career paths...

Parent Training and Information Centers: <http://www.taalliance.org/ptidirectory/index.asp>

National Assistive Technology Act Programs:

<http://www.resnaprojects.org/nattap/at/statecontacts.html>

Alternative Financing Technical Assistance Programs:

<http://www.resnaprojects.org/AFTAP/state/RESNA.html>

Alliance for Technology Access Centers: <http://www.ataccess.org/community/centers.lasso>

- **Last three days of the institute** posted by **Jackie Hess** on Jul 29, 2009

Hello all,

Just a reminder that we're in the final three days of the Institute. If you have unanswered questions, now is the time to post them. We expect to have a consolidated list of resources and links that have been suggested to date available to you by the end of today.

We'd also like to suggest to those of you interested in trying your hand at creating a Facebook group, a blog, or other social media tool, that Chris, Alice, Annette, Joy, Ana Maria and I would be happy to "hold your digital hand" while you do so. You can practice sending and receiving messages in a "safe" environment before going public with your ultimate target audience. Facebook may be one of the more intuitive tools to start with, although I personally preferred their old interface to their "upgraded" one. Ahhh, change.....

- **Re: Last three days of the institute** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 29, 2009
Thanks for posting this, Jackie! Think about any thoughts, questions or issues that have come up for you. I do know that some of you have posted your experiences on diving into trying certain tools, and that's great. Perhaps setting up an individual action plan for yourself might assist you in setting more specific goals for your work, especially as the academic school year begins. It's often easy to get lost in our day to day and not get back to something that you've picked up here. Just some thoughts on how you might set some goals to apply what you've learned with your students.
- **Re: Last three days of the institute** posted by **Liz Lahm** on Jul 30, 2009
My action plan is to continue working down this resource list and trying everything. I'm so glad all of our discussion etc. will not disappear at the end!
- **Re: Last three days of the institute** posted by **katy** on Jul 31, 2009
How long will this site be available to explore after the course is complete? I have not even gotten close to getting through everything that is in the resources and posts. How do we receive our CEU's?

- **Does it matter what hardware you use?** posted by **Angela** on Jul 29, 2009

Here's a really basic question for you that I don't think I've seen any discussion of. With all the discussion of twitter, facebook, wikis, and so forth, can you get and send messages and files on all of them with every type of hardware: PC's, cell phones, mp3 players, PDA's, etc.? Is it just a matter of getting to the internet any way you can and then you can get to all social media tools? Do you have to have a screen or can you download a file, say on an mp3 player, and transfer it to a computer with a screen? (I said it was a basic question.) Are there any statistics about what is most popular? (If I'm going to try to reach parents, for instance, it would be good to know what they're likeliest to use.) Thanks for helping an old dog learn new tricks (or die trying).

- **Re: Does it matter what hardware you use?** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 29, 2009
You're right on target. You are accurate when you say "Is it just a matter of getting to the Internet any way you can and then you can get to all social media tools". That is exactly the case. If you can get to the Internet directly from your phone, then you probably can get to these social media tools. If you have a phone like that, go ahead and try it.

To speak directly to your .mp3 player, which I'm guessing does not have a screen (not an iPod or a Zune), I would imagine you can only house .mp3s on it. That is, you can download an .mp3 from the Internet (like your favorite podcast on assistive technology). If you're not sure how to do that, here is a quick video: <http://bit.ly/lcpsatsta>

Once you have downloaded your .mp3 you transfer it to your .mp3 player. Different players might have different ways of transferring that file, but it probably is via a cord connected to your .mp3 player and PC.

Does that help?

With regard to data on which social networking tool is most popular, I would guess Facebook. I mean, my mom, who is just learning to use a computer, is on Facebook. But, rather than trusting me and my mom here is some other evidence:

<http://social-networking-websites-review.toptenreviews.com/>

Chris

- **Re: Does it matter what hardware you use?** posted by **Bridget** on Jul 29, 2009 regarding surfing and finding these sites from phones and smaller players many sites are setting up m. accounts. for example you can find a version of twitter that works better with the screen size of something like a Palm Treo at m.twitter.com. There are many more sites each month that are tapping into mobile surfing on those smaller screens.
 - **Re: Does it matter what hardware you use?** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 29, 2009 That is very cool to know. This is the first I have heard of m accounts. Thanks for sharing that Bridget. Very cool!
Chris
- **Re: Does it matter what hardware you use?** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 29, 2009 My coworker has her Facebook sent to her cell phone, so I do know that works. I agree with Chris that an mp3 player may not work if it doesn't have a way to input text.
- **Accessibility for people with visual impairments** posted by **Jackie Hess** on Jul 29, 2009
The Alliance for Technology Access has an active online group that responds to a wide variety of questions about assistive technology. Recently there has been some discussion of the accessibility of tools such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter for people with blindness and visual impairments. I've taken the liberty of posting two of the messages below, with their authors identified. Hopefully they won't mind.
From Sandra J.:
Facebook and Myspace both have a lot of dynamic content that may cause some barriers for adaptive software. I believe blogs would be much easier for someone to navigate as they rarely have much ad content or scripting like Active X or Java.
From Karen S.:
From the QIAT listserv I was forwarded these two links talking about Facebook and the work they have done with AFB to make their site accessible. One is to a Tech Crunch blog:
<http://www.techcrunch.com/2009/04/07/facebook-commits-to-making-social-networking-more-accessible-for-visually-challenged-users/>
The other was posted on bub.blicio.us at <http://bub.blicio.us/accessible-social-media/>.

I was also forwarded this link regarding Twitter accessibility efforts: <http://accessibletwitter.com/>
It's great to see companies moving forward with accessibility issues!
- **How does Twitter actually work?** posted by **DR** on Jul 29, 2009
OK, I looked at the video you suggested and read the wikipedia entry. Well, I scanned it, definitely too much information. Then I figured I should just jump in and try it so I went to twitter.com and created an account. So far so good. But then I couldn't figure out how to find anything of interest to me. I knew the Twitter name of one friend so I typed that in and got a bunch of messages TO that person, but didn't see anything FROM him. I tried typing in the names of other people or organizations that I knew Twittered and it kept coming back "no name found." What am I doing wrong and how do I find all those organizations and people who are supposed to be interested in my following their "tweets"?

- **Re: How does Twitter actually work?** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 29, 2009
 First let me applaud your Gung-Ho approach and just jumping right in. I thought your answer might be best answered with a short video or screenshot of a "how-to" but Twitter is blocked from my computer at the moment. Having said that- let's turn to our friends at Common Craft for another quick explanation:
<http://www.commoncraft.com/twitter-search>
 Common Craft gives you the overview- but here is a quick "How-To"
<http://www.searchengineguide.com/mack-collier/so-how-do-you-find-people-on-twitter.php>
 If those don't help let me know and I'll find (or make) a short video tutorial.
 Chris
- **The Fringe- Other Social Networking Sites** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 29, 2009
 The vast majority of our conversations these past few weeks have centered around mainstream social networking sites and media. Facebook and Twitter have taken center stage. I felt like we'd be remiss if we didn't mention the fact that there are other social networking sites out there that are similar but different. There just isn't enough time in each day for me, personally, to participate in them all, but in the spirit of offering up choices I thought it best to share some other options. As you explore these options you might find that one of these might strike a chord with you. Maybe the lay-out makes better sense to you. Maybe the interface fits better for your way of thinking. Here are some alternatives:
www.orkut.com
www.plurk.com (visually different, like a timeline)
www.linkedin.com (Professionals use this for networking within their professional lives)
 If there are any users of these sites, please feel free to chime in with your opinions. If you check one out we'd love to hear your take on them.
 Chris
- **Re: The Fringe- Other Social Networking Sites** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 29, 2009
 Also consider things like Skype, which would allow for video contact. For some individuals, being able to see the person or connect to a context (like a training for example) may be more motivating and more meaningful. It also takes out the typing/literacy issues for some.
 - **Re: The Fringe- Other Social Networking Sites** posted by **katy** on Jul 31, 2009
 I love Skype. I usually talk to my 87 year old Dad in AZ on this with video. It's good to see him when I live so far away. We had a foreign exchange student living with us from Germany last year and he spoke to his family on Skype on a regular basis, free of course. I also did some on- line training with the individual that owns a company I do some part time work. He was in Israel and I, here in MN. Sometimes there are tech problems when so many people are on at the same time but I have found this a useful tool. Give it a try if you have family, friends, or business in another city or state.
 - **Re: The Fringe- Other Social Networking Sites** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 31, 2009
 My family and friends use Skype too. With my parents in Buffalo (Go Bills!) and my wife's parents in Boston (Boo Patriots!) and us living near D.C. it is one of the best ways for the kids to connect with their grandparents.
 My wife, who does tutoring, has even used it to tutor online. Rather than driving 30-45 minutes to get to a student she can stay home and help them right from home. She even charges a bit less for sessions over Skype because she is spending less time and money (gas) so she passes those savings on to the customer :)
 Chris
 - **Re: The Fringe- Other Social Networking Sites** posted by **Katy** on Jul 31, 2009
 What a great idea to help kids. Thanks for the feedback.
- **Re: The Fringe- Other Social Networking Sites** posted by **ned campbell** on Jul 31, 2009
 I have used linked in for some time now. It is more oriented for professional and business connections, that's the focus but it works similar to Facebook in the way it connects people. We

have used it for Virginia's Rehabilitation Association (VRA) and there is also a site for the National Rehabilitation Association. There are also sites for professional organizations oriented to assistive tech. Highly recommend checking it out for teacher organizations and connecting to other professional organizations.

- **Re: The Fringe- Other Social Networking Sites** posted by **ned campbell** on Jul 31, 2009
Not familiar with ORKUT. Anyone using it? Looks like the Google attempt to create a FB like environment.
- **Re: The Fringe- Other Social Networking Sites** posted by **ned campbell** on Jul 31, 2009
Thanks for the mention of plurk. This is new to me also. Interesting interface. Oriented more like a journal than the user interface on FB. It also let me link the plurk journal entries to my FB wall. That's an interesting way to integrate.

- **Making it Work for You!** posted by **AWershing@aol.com** on Jul 30, 2009
As we move to the end of this course, I wanted to summarize how I use some of the tools. I logged into Twitter for the first time last night. When I logged in, it looked at my address book and found the people that were already on Twitter. I was able to look at those posts (Chris has some awesome posts!) and went to one called Night Lights, which are books written for kids. I've bookmarked it for later viewing. This is typically how I use any of the tools. If there is something of interest, and I have time, I'll go directly to the resource. Otherwise, I'll put it in a folder where I have things to look at later. It's been helpful to me to have my favorites organized so that I can find things later. And if I have folks that I think would be interested in what I've found, I'll send it to them- either on Twitter or Facebook, or just by good old email. And then in the best case, I use what I've found with a client or in a training or with teachers. Of course, whatever I've found that's new bubbles to the top of my memory, but I also can go back to those other posts and find things to share too.
Hope these tips help you as you apply these social network tools. They really help me keep current as well as keep me excited about using technology.

- **Re: Making it Work for You!** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 30, 2009
Thanks Alice for the nice compliment about my Twitter posts. I've been working on a curriculum project lately that has me looking for web-based resources each night. When I find one that is good for the project I also quickly send it out via Twitter. If it is a good resource for our school district it might be a good resource for some educator following me on Twitter.

The Night Light Stories you mentioned is a podcast featuring audio stories for children (www.nightlightstories.blogspot.com). The stories are written by my wife and I as a fun thing to do together. Being a podcast the stories are in audio format that you (and your kids) can download and listen to "anytime, anywhere". The blog also features activities, questions and contests for students to participate in. It's all free so, if it sounds interesting to you as a resource I hope you check it out.

Chris

- **Re: Making it Work for You!** posted by **katy** on Jul 31, 2009
You said Twitter looked at your address book. Did you OK this some how first or did it do it automatically? Kind of scary all that looking around stuff, or is it really not a problem? I have not Twittered yet.
New bubbles, hmmm mmmmm :) Like the way you wrote that!
 - **Re: Making it Work for You!** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 31, 2009
Yes, you can select the ones you want to use. I knew the four addresses that were selected, so it wasn't a problem. Then I went to their Twitter sites to see what they posted. I haven't used it a lot yet, but wanted to give it a try.

- **Talking With Your Mouth Full** posted by **attipscast** on Jul 31, 2009
Today is the last day of the Institute. I sincerely hope that you've had a chance to nibble on some of what has been served in these past two weeks. As you chew on what you've learned you might get the feeling that you've taken too big a bite. You might feel like there's just too much information to swallow

(let alone digest). Well, right here, right now, I'm giving you permission to talk with your mouth full.

After the Institute has ended you might still have questions. The conversation doesn't have to stop here. As you're chomping on one of the resources suggested here, as thoughts and questions occur to you, feel free to make contact. Making connections has never been easier. I encourage you to try them, using the resources listed in the discussion as a menu, to see how they taste to your palate. When you find something that tickles your taste buds, I encourage you to share it with others. After all, a meal is always better when served with company.

Thank you for a tremendously enjoyable two weeks. I know I have learned so much from this institute. The resources, and thoughts about these resources, have been truly enlightening but, I hope, those will pale in comparison to the resources yet to come by sharing through the connections we've made. I suppose, in a way, that's what this whole discussion has been about...finding and keeping connections with people in order to share resources, implementation strategies, and personal experiences.

I have one last resource to share before I head off to the dessert table. It is a plug, to be sure, so feel free to skip it if you're not interested. In my Speaker Bio it referenced the fact that I've co-authored a book to be published by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). "The Practical (and Fun) Guide to Assistive Technology in Public Schools: Building or Improving Your District's AT Team" will be available for pre-order in February of 2010 from <http://bit.ly/istebookstore>. The book addresses all of the major questions plaguing school districts with regard to assistive technology implementation including how to consider AT on an IEP for every student, when and how to perform evaluations, and much, much more. The book uses fun analogies and entertaining stories to create an engaging experience for the reader. If you've enjoyed the posts here during this institute, you can expect the same sort of style in the book. I hope you "save the date" by writing a note in your calendar to check out the book in February.

Again, thanks for such an enjoyable experience and I hope it doesn't end here. I hope, like me, you're still hungry. :)

Chris

- o **Re: Talking With Your Mouth Full** posted by **unserk** on Jul 31, 2009
Thanks for the access to your book. I am excited to share this with my Special Education director so that we can budget for it and use it for a resource for our whole staff!! Kim
- o **Re: Talking With Your Mouth Full** posted by **awershing@aol.com** on Jul 31, 2009
I've also learned a lot and have enjoyed the experience as well. There are many things I want to explore, and then put into practice. I hope that you all have found new things to explore and will continue to post what you find.
- o **Re: Talking With Your Mouth Full** posted by **ned campbell** on Jul 31, 2009
Thanks for the plug. Have put it in my Outlook calendar and will purchase a copy. Thanks again for facilitating this two week discussion. It has been a "tastey" experience and pleasure to participate. I've learned about new resources that will help me in my job.

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