



## POWER LIBRARIES BEST CURRICULUM WEB SITES SEPTEMBER 2006

### **National Constitution Center**

<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/education/WelcomeEducatorsandStudents/index.shtml>

The National Constitution Center offers a goldmine of standards based lesson plans for elementary, middle and secondary levels. Topics for the lessons include the Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, the Electoral Process, Executive Branch, Federal Powers, First and Fifth Amendments, Jury Duty, Suffrage and Separation of Powers. The section on Teaching with Current Events provides news stories pertaining to the Constitution, Supreme Court confirmation frequently asked questions, discussion starters for current events, and viewpoints from leading scholars on constitutional issues. Resources also include an Interactive Constitution where students can get a clause-by-clause explanation of the Constitution along with basic constitutional facts and interpretation. It is fully searchable by keyword and Supreme Court cases. Students will also find the Constitutional Timeline that chronicles 200 years of our Constitution's history, a host of founding documents such as the Magna Carta, the Mayflower Compact and the Articles of Confederation and puzzles and games for a little fun while learning.

### **Hurricane Digital Memory Bank: Preserving the Stories of Katrina, Rita, and Wilma**

<http://hurricanearchive.org/>

This site is focused on the historic Gulf Coast storms of 2005. This project is a joint effort of George Mason University's Center for History and New Media and the University of New Orleans, in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution. It features first-hand accounts, on-scene images, blog postings, and podcasts that create a digital record of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma. This digital memory bank of first hand accounts and individual responses to the storms of 2005 that hit the Gulf Coast of the United States currently includes 247 stories, 523 images, 50 audio and other files, a collection of photos from the Smithsonian and a video of St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana. Additionally, the featured collection is a set of stories from PBS's NewsHour with Jim Lehrer that includes text, video and audio of the events that led up to the hurricanes and the aftermath.

### **Beyond the Fire**

<http://www.itvs.org/beyondthefire>

This interactive site allows users to explore the stories of fifteen teenagers, now living in the United States, who have survived war in seven war zones. The site is hosted by Independent Television Service (ITVS) a nonprofit organization that funds independently produced programming for public television and the Web. This site tells the stories of fifteen war refugees and the challenges they have faced as they survived the traumas of war in their homelands. Stories include such war torn countries as Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia and others. Each of the stories is accompanied by an interactive timeline that gives a brief history of the conflict and a fact sheet about the country.

## **Forensics in the Classroom (FIC)**

[http://www.courttv.com/forensics\\_curriculum](http://www.courttv.com/forensics_curriculum)

Court TV has teamed up with the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) to present these free curriculum units on forensic science for middle and high school students. "By incorporating key scientific concepts and lab experiments into creative, forensic-based mysteries and activities, FIC provides a way to engage and teach students about the expanding and fascinating world of forensic science."

## **Visible Proofs: Forensic Views of the Body**

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/visibleproofs/index.html>

This site is sure to spark the interests of students as well as anyone interested in the area of forensic medicine. The Exhibition section explores the history of forensics from its rise to the technologies of surveillance to the new forensic science to public perceptions. The Galleries include significant cases, technologies, biographies, artifacts, media and exhibition images. For example, in the media gallery visitors can view video clips of an actual autopsy or see medical examiners at work. Technologies explore the key accomplishments in forensics including DNA and toxicology. One interesting case is that of a soldier shot down over Vietnam, laid to rest in the Tomb of the Unknown in 1984. A decade later, thanks to DNA, he was identified as Michael Blassie and his remains returned to his family. The Education section offers three online activities for students that explore forensic developments, techniques and careers. There are also three lesson plans for middle and high school students that promote active learning and explore the stories of people, technology and science that have contributed to the development of modern forensic techniques. Additionally, a resource section offers links to a k-12 bibliography, archived interviews featuring forensic topics, and Web links to other resources.

## **The Poetry Archive**

<http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/home.do>

This site has as its goal to help "make poetry accessible, relevant and enjoyable to a wide audience." It contains hundreds of recordings of poets reading their own work as well as resources for teachers and students. Included are readings from contemporary poets as well as poets from the past such as Robert Browning, Langston Hughes, and Rudyard Kipling. There is a section just for children that features readings from twenty-three poets that children will enjoy. In addition to the recordings, visitors will find a wealth of background information about the poets, filmed interviews with some of them, and tips for getting the most out of the archive. The "Lucky Dip" feature takes users to the work of a poet selected at random from the Archive. Resources for teachers include ready to use lesson plans and classroom activities

## **Engineering Is Elementary**

<http://www.mos.org/doc/1545>

This is a wonderful site that promotes engineering amongst the youngest students. Engineering Is Elementary provides curricular materials for grades 1-5 that integrate engineering and technology concepts and skills with elementary science lessons. Each unit integrates an elementary school science topic with a specific field of engineering and engages students in the engineering design process. Storybooks that correlate to each unit are available for purchase but the units can be used independently. All of the units include lesson plans with detailed instructions for the teacher, ready to use duplication masters and assessment tools, background information and additional resources for teachers. Many of the lessons are provided in at two levels (basic and advanced) and student materials are available in English and Spanish.

## **Animated Engines**

<http://www.keveney.com/Engines.html>

This is a good resource for helping students understand how an engine works. The engines are grouped into three categories: internal combustion, steam and stirling. Visitors to the site can see the inner workings of a variety of engines such as the locomotive, jet propulsion, oscillating, and many others work. The animations are accompanied by explanations of how the engine works and other diagrams to enhance understanding. Included is an interesting article on how the animations were created. Perhaps the best thing about the site is that the animations are made in the animated GIF format, which just about any Web browser can handle without any additional plug-ins!

## **Geologic Time: The Story of a Changing Earth**

<http://www.nmnh.si.edu/paleo/geotime/main/index.html>

The Paleobiology Department at The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History developed this site to provide an interactive timeline of geological history. The story of a changing Earth explores the history of geology from the Hadean eon to the present day. The interactive timeline allows users to use a drag tool to move to the eon, era, period or epoch of choice and then click on the icon to bring up an overview of the segment with embedded links to more information, pictures and information about the fossil evidence and the conditions of the earth at the time. The Foundational Concepts area explains the importance of the different dating methods and an introduction to earth processes and life processes.

## **The Astronomy Center.org**

<http://www.astronomycenter.org/>

The Astronomy Center.org offers a vast database of links to a wide range of reviewed teaching and learning resources related to the study of astronomy. It is a service provided by the American Astronomical Society in collaboration with the American Association of Physics Teachers and the ComPADRE project. Anyone can use the database, but participation requires the creation of a free account. It is a rich resource for teaching about astrobiology, cosmology, galaxies, asteroids and comets, lunar geology, terrestrial planets, satellites and telescopes, black holes, the Big Bang Theory, eclipses and lunar phases, the Milky Way, stars, planet formation, space exploration, and many more such topics. Teachers will find information about a wide range of materials including curriculum and lesson plans, laboratories, lecture demonstration materials, simulations, images, projects, reference materials, and education research.

## **Calendars Through the Ages**

<http://www.webexhibits.org/calendars>

Calendars Through the Ages gives visitors an overview of how calendars of various cultures were developed. It covers calendars that are still in use such as the Chinese, Christian, Indian, Islamic, Jewish and those not in use such as Ancient, French, Future, Mayan and Roman. The section "Our Year" gives an overview, the astronomical basis of calendars, the history, definitions of our year and a chronology of the international acceptance of the Gregorian calendar. The origins of the week and the names of the days are explored in the section "Week" and there is a timeline of interesting calendar facts.

## **Ancient China**

<http://www.ancientchina.co.uk/menu.html>

The Ancient China Web site utilizes objects from the British Museum's collection to present this online resource for teachers and students. It includes resources that can be used independently by students aged 9-11 as well as background information and support for teachers. This educational and interactive site is geared to independent use by students and their teachers. It offers information and classroom resources that explore different aspects of ancient Chinese culture including Crafts and Artisans, Time, Geography, and Tombs and Ancestors. Each section includes the story (background information), explore (interactive activity) and challenge (classroom activity) for students. The staff room provides teachers with the tools and information to use the site effectively in the classroom.

## **North American Mammals**

<http://web4.si.edu/mna/>

This site from the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History is a "searchable database of all living mammals of North America". The database features detailed descriptions, images, diagrams and distribution range maps for more 400 mammals native to the North American continent and particularly the United States. The wealth of information is extensive from the printable and customizable field guide to the interactive Geographical Information Systems (GIS) maps of species distribution. Teachers or students will appreciate the ability to select and create a personal field guide for the animals that are specific to their study. Additionally, users can make use of a variety of other search options such as; location and have the results displayed as a list or as a set of images; family tree to find all the taxa included within a group; conservation status to find the endangered species; and special collections of bones and teeth to help identify species or compare functional parts of the skull and skeleton.

## **Visual Math**

<http://www.visualmathlearning.com>

Visual Math Learning is a great resource for teachers, students and parents. It provides free interactive tutorials for elementary and middle age students that can be used in the classroom as a supplement to the curriculum, by parents helping their children with homework or by home schools. The tutorials are animated and visually teach concepts such as number bases, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, integers, natural numbers, and more. The games and exercises include interactive multiplication, addition, subtraction and division tables, factogram, equivalent fractions and more. Each of the exercises includes easy to follow directions that can be found by just clicking on the question in the lower right corner of the game. Rounding out the site is a list of suggested related resources on the Web.

## BEST PROFESSIONAL WEB SITES

### **EconEdLink**

<http://www.econedlink.org/>

Economics is "the dismal science," but this is a lovely Web site! Spice up your economics classes with Web-based economics lessons. This site gives teachers all the tools they need to teach economics using the Internet, including model lessons and templates to create their own. The database includes lessons on a broad variety of topics and a range of grade levels. Have your students assume the role of detectives searching for the new places where advertisers are promoting themselves and their products, learn how to effectively seek redress for a consumer problem or explore different types of inflation and terms associated with it. The Standards section makes finding lesson that correlate to your state's standards easy. Just click on your state on the map for a complete list of standards and the lessons that address them. Another interesting part of the site is the Current Events section that provides access to the latest economic news and information and the lesson plans that relate to them. Included is a list of reviewed Web links that are organized by topic and include resources for curricular activities and economic data and a list of data links for finding macroeconomic data, primary source materials, charts and simulations.

### **ESL Gold**

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

Gold is a precious commodity, and the quest to obtain even modest amounts of this substance has consumed the lives of many men and women throughout recorded history. To find a website titled "ESL Gold" may raise the skeptical eyebrows of some, but truly many of the resources on this site will be just that valuable to English as a Second Language educators, students, and other concerned parties. The homepage is a bit busy in its visual design, but users navigate it fairly easily. The site's primary materials are thematically organized into categories such as "Speaking", "Listening", "Reading", and "Writing". Within each of these sections, visitors can take a look through topical resources that compartmentalize different more digestible themes, such as "Topics for Writing" or "Organizing and Composing". As might be expected, visitors can also find materials for beginning, intermediate, or advanced level students.

### **The History Lab**

<http://hlab.tielab.org/index.php>

This site offers teachers a framework for teaching history through primary sources. Teachers simply complete a fill in the blank template and choose the available resources and primary documents to create the lab. Teachers can store their lessons in the History Lab database and retrieve or modify them at any time. The archive of labs includes

lessons in American History, World History, Ancient History, and European History that cover a range of grade levels from grade 3 through grade 12. The available labs cover such topics as the Cuban missile crisis, Watergate, the decision to drop the atomic bomb, civil rights vs. states rights, and much more. Included is a resource section that can be used for creating the labs or just for teaching with primary sources. It includes links for each of the history topics as well as multimedia sites.

### **Many Books.net**

<http://www.manybooks.net>

If you are interested in EBooks, this site may prove to be quite a handy application. From their homepage, visitors can download literally thousands of works for their PDA's. The titles range from the colonialist adventures of the "King of the Khyber Rifles" to "Julius Caesar". The site also allows visitors to browse by title, author, or category. These downloads are compatible with all platforms, for PDA's or iPod's.

### **Verizon Literacy Campus**

[www.literacycampus.org/index.asp?ref=LILe](http://www.literacycampus.org/index.asp?ref=LILe)

The National Center for Family Literacy and ProLiteracy Worldwide, two nationally recognized literacy organizations, supported by generous funding from Verizon Communications, produce Verizon Literacy Campus (VLC). This Web site offers a wealth of information for literacy volunteers and literacy programs that want to recruit, orient, and support volunteers as well as train literacy tutors. There are free online literacy-related courses, a searchable database of literacy programs across the country, and other resources to support literacy organizations, volunteers and anyone who wants to know more about the literacy challenges in this country.

VLC features several self-paced, online courses related to adult literacy including:

- Before, During, and After: A Reading Comprehension Technique
- Graphic Organizers: Tools for Instructors and Students
- Principles of Adult Learning
- Writing Without Fear
- Citizenship, culture, English Language Learning, and more!

Each course takes approximately 45 minutes to complete and all are offered at no charge. There is also an adult literacy section in the resource center library with links to adult literacy organizations, resources, and research.

## **Programs for Your Flash Drive**

[http://www.snapfiles.com/features/ed\\_usb\\_software.html](http://www.snapfiles.com/features/ed_usb_software.html)

This is a site listing small applications that run directly off of a USB flash drive. Students can use them at school, at home, or in public places. (More ideas may be found at <http://kathyschrock.net/soap/>)

## **"Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds" Study**

<http://www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia030905pkg.cfm>

This site gives the results of a study which examined media use among a nationally representative sample of more than 2,000 3rd through 12th graders. Survey claims high school grads' research skills are less than perfect. Achieve, Inc. conducted a study of recent (class of 2002, 2003 and 2004) public high school graduates and found that research skills were one area identified as lacking by both students who went on to college and those who entered the work force. The grads surveyed found gaps in their ability to do research -- 40% of college students and 45% of those who are working. Get detailed study results at <http://www.achieve.org>

## **Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE)**

<http://www.ed.gov/free/index.html>

This web site makes it easy to find teaching resources on federal government Web sites. The site was developed with the cooperation of more than 35 federal agencies and is updated each week with new materials and highlights. FREE offers quick access to more than 1,500 resources in the arts, sciences, history and other subjects from the Library of Congress, National Archives, Smithsonian, NASA, the National Science Foundation and other federal agencies

## **Puzzlemaker**

<http://puzzlemaker.com/>

Puzzlemaker is a puzzle generation tool for teachers, students and parents. Create and print customized word search, crossword and math puzzles using your word lists.

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### **WORKS CITED**

You can receive weekly reviews such as the ones cited by subscribing to two review services. The first is provided by the Department of Computer Sciences from the University of Wisconsin and is called "The Scout Report". They review websites about research and education, general interest sites, and network tools. You can subscribe to receive the weekly Scout Report at <http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/report/sr/current/> .

Another great service is free newsletters from Education World. One of the newsletters, "Education World Reviews", provides great ideas to engage your students. In addition, the whole Education World site is designed especially for teachers, administrators, media specialists and everyone interested in integrating the Internet into education. With more than 100,000 links to education-specific Web sites, original lesson plans and weekly articles, Education World is one of the most comprehensive education sites on the web. There are six different newsletters you can subscribe to for education news and lesson plan ideas. This free resource and search engine can be found at [www.education-world.com](http://www.education-world.com).