

50 FAVORITE WEBSITES

For The Middle Grades

The Essential, the Helpful & the Just Plain Fun



**Major Sites For
News & Information**



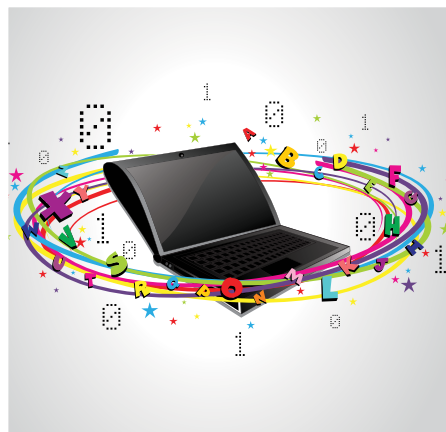
**Professional
Growth**



**Core Content
and Beyond**



**Teacher and
Principal Voices**



**Digital Teaching
and Learning**



**A Dazzling Dozen
NEW Apps & Sites**

MiddleWeb

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The Essential, the Helpful & the Just Plain Fun

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MiddleWeb



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Introduction

Thank you for subscribing to the thrice-weekly [MiddleWeb SmartBrief](#) and downloading our free guide to a diverse selection of websites that are among our favorite resources for the middle grades.

We could share many more sites, of course, but we've forced ourselves to settle on a Top 50, including a "Dazzling Dozen" apps and sites that are especially fun to explore. As you browse our suggestions, we hope you'll discover some sites you haven't encountered before, and perhaps learn something about familiar sites that encourages you to exploit them even more.

We're respectful of middle grades educators' broad professional interests, so we haven't limited our choices to teaching tips and lesson-plan collections (although there's plenty of that!). You should find a good mix of helpful insights about practice and policy, including many outlets that feature the authentic voices of teachers and school leaders who work with students every day.

We're planning to update this MiddleWeb guide twice a year. We hope you'll tell us about your favorite sites. We promise to check them out and consider them for our next edition. In the connected world, nothing is etched in stone!

~ Susan and John

A Dazzling Dozen Apps and Sites



DESIGN SQUAD NATION

@designsquad

Design Squad Nation is a near perfect companion site for savvy STEM programs in the middle grades. Developed as a spinoff of the PBS television series Design Squad, the content emphasizes the engineering design process that undergirds genuine STEM learning and curriculum. The focus is on the excitement involved in hands-on learning around STEM themes, with lots of opportunities for students to watch peers solve interesting problems and to pursue projects of their own. The biggest downside: A considerable amount of the content relies on Adobe Flash which is not iOS-friendly. [Learn more at this Graphite review.](#)

EVERNOTE

@evernote

We use Evernote in our MiddleWeb work to organize our work, but it took Jen Carey, a teacher and tech integration coach, to open our eyes to the classroom possibilities of this research and information management tool. Her article at [the PLP Voices blog](#) emphasizes its value to teachers for planning and keeping important teaching information at your fingertips. Also explore the Evernote blog for ideas about Evernote with students: [here's a post](#) by a middle school science teacher. Finally, see [this Edudemic post](#) about using the Evernote iPad app with 11-12 year olds.

GLOBAL READ ALLOUD

#GRA13

We'll let Global Read Aloud's teacher-creator Pernille Ripp explain: "The premise is simple; we pick a book to read aloud to our students during a set 6-week period and during that time we try to make as many global connections as possible. Each teacher decides how much time they would like to dedicate...." The project has grown and spread across the grades (pK-12). Four age-appropriate books are offered for selection but actual selection is left up to teachers. [Also visit the GRA wiki.](#)

GRAPHITE

@graphite

Recommended by school library guru Joyce Valenza, Graphite is a teacher consumer guide to education technology tools from the highly respected non-profit Common Sense Media. The site, [Valenza says](#), “promises to be the go-to platform for helping teachers make sense of an exponentially evolving number of digital learning tools.” Reviews are objective, the site is free, and there’s no advertising. Sample review: [Google Art Project](#). We predict you’ll visit often.

HOW YOUTH LEARN

A project of the What Kids Can Do organization, the How Youth Learn website brings together a portfolio of information about adolescent learning drawn from WKCD’s own experiences over a dozen years of work, plus relevant scholarly research, student voices, and newly created resources (including a [free e-book](#), *The Motivation Equation: Designing Lessons That Set Kids’ Minds on Fire*).

INFOGRAM

@infogram

Have you tried creating infographics for your school or classroom – or even better – involved your students in using their own research to display learning in visual ways? Infogram (not to be confused with the popular Instagram mobile app) is a free tool that helps most anyone create colorful infographics and attractive charts without artistic training. Infogram has added [an Excel app](#) that will instantly turn data files into visuals. If you use this with students, be sure to review the [featured infograms](#) at the site for age-appropriateness. Another similar service, [Easelly](#), was selected a “Best of 2013” by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL).

INFUSE LEARNING

@infuselearning

Richard Byrne at Free Technology for Teachers says that in the crowded field of “student response tools” (e.g., Poll Everywhere), this fairly new contender is rising on his favorites list. Infuse Learning works with most any device that can connect to the Internet, including Android tablets and iPads. It “allows teachers to push questions, prompts, and quizzes out to students’ devices in private virtual classrooms,” [Byrne adds](#). Among our favorite features: multiple languages and audio narration.

INKLEWRITER

@inklestudios

Another AASL top pick for 2013, Inklewriter supports digital storytelling in the “create your own adventure” style, with branching storylines that can lead readers in different directions depending on their choices. AASL’s review praises the free tool’s ability to keep the narrative threads organized while authors (students or adults) [focus on the writing](#). The tool can also be used to create games and puzzles that rely on decision trees. Stories can be shared or kept private.

KIDBLOG

@kidblogdotorg

Kidblog is designed for K-12 teachers who want to provide each student with an individual blog in a safe and secure space. Students publish posts and participate in academic discussions, create digital portfolios and share projects, written work, etc. in their blogs. (A Kidblog mobile app makes it easy to use with tablet cameras.) KidBlog is free and easy to set up. A popular alternative, also secure and designed for K12 education, is [EduBlogs](#) (some annual fees involved).

PADLET

@padlet

Imagine a wall that you can cover with content of your own creation. The browser-based Padlet is simpler than Pinterest (below) and well-suited for projects and class presentations. Padlet’s [knowledge base](#) has everything you need to know to create your first Wall. Check out [the Gallery](#) for examples of Walls, some created by students. It’s free and has choosable layers of security.

PINTEREST

@pinterest

Pinterest is already hugely popular among educators – what’s not to like about a digital bulletin board/scrapbook where each colorful image you post is interactive, not to mention easily collected, grouped onto “boards” and shared. You can follow other Pinterest users or individual boards they create. If you haven’t pinned yet, investigate some teachers’ Pinterest accounts. Here are three: [Vicki Davis](#) (the Cool Cat Teacher) was an early adopter. Erin Klein maintains the [Pinterest for Teachers](#) collection. And Jenni Clark has [Middle School Ideas](#).

THINGLINK

@thinglink

A few days before we came across ThingLink, we were wishing there was an easy way to add comments and interactive links to areas and objects within photographs and similar image files. [There is!](#) Click anywhere on the image to (a) add text or a caption; (b) embed a link to a webpage, Twitter feed, etc.; or (c) paste in an embed code for a video. Collections of images are gathered at ThingLink as “channels” which can be followed (similar to YouTube). ThingLink offers [a customized service for education](#). You can see many types and examples of education-oriented interactive images [in this gallery](#).

Major Sites for News & Information



Education Week

@educationweek

Begun as a weekly national newspaper in the late 1970's, Education Week is still available in print. But in keeping with the times (and to be more timely), its non-profit publisher Editorial Projects in Education maintains a large website supporting three interconnected online magazines: [Education Week](#), [Ed Week Teacher](#) and [Digital Directions](#). The site offers a mix of [free](#) and [subscribers-only](#) content. Our advice: If you're willing to pay, consider an online subscription (\$58 a yr) which provides access to all content at the site, including archives. If not, go through the site's free registration process to become eligible for access to a limited number of breaking news stories and all of the content in the Ed Week Teacher and Digital Directions sections of the site. Free registration also offers readers the opportunity to sign up for a variety of topical newsletters -- including a daily education news bulletin.

[All of the blogs](#) at the Education Week website are free. Some blogs feature news analysis by staff reporters; others offer advice and reflection from professional educators across the K12 spectrum. Middle-level educators will likely find timely information and ideas at the blogs Curriculum Matters, Inside School Research, Teacher in a Strange Land, and Classroom Q&A, among others. Also check out the [discussion forums](#) and the [webinars](#) (some of which are free thanks to sponsors). Editorial Projects in Education also posts research and annual studies online, including [Quality Counts](#), an annual state-by-state report on efforts to improve public education. Finally, educators looking for employment will want to check out Ed Week's [Top School Jobs](#) service, which offers both listings and useful articles.

ASCD

@ASCD

Believe it or not, ASCD isn't an acronym! True, the organization began as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development in 1943. But several years ago the international non-profit dropped its increasingly quaint name in favor of the four letters most people called it anyway. ASCD is one of education's largest membership organizations (140,000 members in 134 countries) and supports a vast website rich in professional content -- a portion of which is available to visitors at no charge. A [basic membership](#) (currently \$49 a yr) offers complete access to the entire site, as well as several print newsletters.

ASCD's flagship magazine, [Educational Leadership](#), provides free online access to a limited selection of articles that appear in the monthly themed editions. Each issue is supplemented by a dozen or more "online-only" articles (usually freely available) and an online study guide ([example](#)). Free newsletters by email include the biweekly [ASCD Express](#) and the weekday [ASCD SmartBrief](#), a partner publication with SmartBrief, Inc. Website visitors can also access [Inservice](#), a frequently updated, searchable collection of posts based on ASCD site content and offsite resources.

One increasingly popular ASCD feature is [ASCD Edge](#), a free online community that offers participants (over 50,000 as of January 2013) the opportunity to blog on professional topics and connect with K12 educators individually and through interest groups. ASCD also supports many [free webinars](#) featuring education experts and authors, including a continuing series focused on the [Common Core](#). (ASCD also offers online courses for a fee.) In 2012, the organization introduced another dedicated website, [EduCore](#), to provide ongoing news and resources about national implementation of the Common Core standards. Registration is free. [The Whole Child](#), a popular ASCD advocacy program, has its own free website.

Edutopia

@edutopia

More American Graffiti than Star Wars, since its founding 21 years ago by George Lucas, Edutopia has shared “what works in education” by providing free access to its content, blogs and interest groups. The site is organized around six strategies for learning: [Comprehensive Assessment](#), [Integrated Studies](#), [Project-Based Learning](#), [Social and Emotional Learning](#), [Teacher Development](#), and [Technology Integration](#). Educators can find resources by grade level (including [3-5](#) and [6-8](#)) or by content area or topic. Edutopia also hosts best-practice videos and offers guides, such as the Parent’s Guide to 21st Century Learning, to registered users. You can keep up with all the new and featured content by subscribing to Edutopia’s free weekly e-newsletter.

Among the [many](#) Edutopia interest groups are: the [middle school community](#), the [special ed group](#), the [PBL group](#) and the [classroom management group](#). Participants share ideas frequently and visitors are free to browse the conversations. The site welcomes “all teachers, administrators, parents, and others who are passionate about improving education” to participate, after free sign-up.

Edutopia hosts more than 20 bloggers, including Tweenteacher [Heather Wolpert-Gawron](#). These classroom and professional development experts write about instructional management, SEL, project learning, STEM, tech integration, and much more. In late fall 2012, Edutopia featured a series of blog posts on the [Common Core standards](#) written by Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins (authors of the Understanding by Design books). Their posts link to many of the site’s other CCSS resources.

Larry Ferlazzo’s Websites of the Day

@Larryferlazzo

Besides teaching English and social studies to Sacramento (CA) [teenagers](#) -- many of whom are English language learners -- and producing a steady flow of [articles](#) and [books](#), Larry Ferlazzo has gathered (and continues to collect) a vast bank of education resources at his Websites of the Day domain. Ferlazzo’s posts cover pedagogy, content, technology, policy and more -- and the site features over 1000 “[Best of](#)” lists. Also see his companion website, [Engaging Parents in School](#).

Professional Growth



EdCamp

@edcampboard

EdCamp is do-it-yourself professional development, and you don't need a backpack or tent to get started. K-12 educators are planning local EdCamps throughout America and beyond for 2013. The excitement about DIY PD has resulted in the creation of the [EdCamp Foundation](#), promoting "organic, participant driven" professional learning experiences. Typical EdCamp sessions take place on an inservice day or weekend; they're planned by volunteers and led by attendees. They're face to face and can be school, district or region-wide. They're always free. Local groups can contact the EdCamp Foundation by filling out an online form [to receive planning guidance and mini-grants](#) when funding is available. The [EdCamp wiki](#) links to the websites of planned and completed EdCamps and also offers helpful suggestions in text and video. Also see MiddleWeb's [EdCamp resource roundup](#).

Buck Institute for Education (BIE)

@biepbl

A 2012 Buck Institute blog post is titled [The Common Core is the 'what.' PBL is the 'how.'](#) Project Based Learning has been the heart of the institute's work since the late 1990's. Among the free resources offered by BIE are a series of [videos](#) and [webinars](#) on how to plan and implement projects and another video series portraying [student projects in action](#). There's also a [national projects database](#) with descriptions of nearly 500 K-12 projects from across the curriculum. Other [FreeBIES](#) include "planning forms, student handouts, rubrics, and articles for educators to download and use to design, assess, and manage projects." BIE also introduces and provides links to PBL research and provides access to its Edmodo community. With support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, BIE is implementing [PBL University](#) (PBLU) to provide free, online classes for teachers. If you'd prefer to just Do It Yourself, you'll find a [self-paced online guide here](#).

Classroom Q&A With Larry Ferlazzo

@Larryferlazzo

To get answers to your questions about teaching practice and related policies, send them to teacher and columnist Larry Ferlazzo. Since his [Education Week blog](#) launched in August 2011, Ferlazzo has welcomed questions from readers and invited leading authorities and classroom practitioners to respond. The wide-ranging topics have included student motivation, classroom management, effective instruction, technology integration, assessment, new teacher tips, parent engagement and more. Visit the [Ten Most Popular Posts of 2012](#) for a look at the scope of questions asked and the outstanding educators and other experts who help come up with answers.

The Teaching Channel

@TeachingChannel

This non-profit site, launched in 2011, offers a growing library of best-practice videos serving teachers across the curriculum at every stage in their careers. Most of the videos are produced inside classrooms and schools, as the Teaching Channel staff searches out excellence in teaching (they also welcome suggestions for topics from teachers). You can search the free K-12 videos by age, content area and classroom topic/issue. You'll also find thematic collections such as [“Let's Chat \(Common\) Core: A Go-To Toolbox for Teachers”](#) and the [New Teacher Survival Guide](#). Many PBS channels air an hour of the brief videos each week. You'll also find helpful posts at the [Voice blog](#). Sign up for Teacher Channel email newsletter [here](#).

TED Ed

@TED_ED

[TED Ed](#)'s collection of educational videos created by educators and animators numbers well over 200 and will continue to grow at this recently established webspace. Visitors can view the videos, searchable by [category](#), and then [flip](#) them to develop classroom lessons. Hundreds of teachers have responded to this 2012 TED innovation by creating over 13,000 flips which are shareable at several levels. Educators are also encouraged to [suggest topics](#) that might be produced by themselves or others.

Core Content & Beyond



New York Times Learning Network

@NYTimesLearning

Think of it as the Grey Lady's bright petticoat. The NYT Learning Network offers teachers, students and parents stories ripped from the headlines of the New York Times and turned into standards-aligned lesson plans written by educators. The weekday features touch upon current events, vocabulary, math, literacy, science, history and more. All 13 years of the Network's content is searchable. And it's all free, including hundreds of NYT stories directly accessed through Learning Network links. The blog-driven site also features guest commentary by educators, contests for students, and regular posts on themes like "[This Day in History.](#)" Get a weekly schedule of content area coverage and find suggestions for using the network [at this post](#). The NYTLN content is now aligned with Common Core standards and the Network features a regular Friday lesson designated as "[Common Core Practice](#)" during the school year.

Library of Congress

@librarycongress

The Library of Congress (LOC) is said to have at least one of everything. LOC has collected many resources for teachers on one [page](#): lesson plans available by Common Core and state standards, PD opportunities, guides for using primary resources, and links to other LOC resources. For example, under [Additional Resources](#), both the Center for the Book and the National Book Festival offer pages for teachers, teens, and children. Throughout the LOC, E/LA and social sciences resources dominate, but the arts and science are also represented. Online resources, including slides, video, and full text articles, are bountiful. At the Library of Congress [homepage](#) you'll find a link to [US government and legislative resources](#) arranged for educators and students.

PBS LearningMedia

@PBSLrnMedia

Already 30% of American teachers access thousands of resources through PBS LearningMedia. The site, developed by PBS in partnership with Boston's WGBH, offers free access by registration to K-12 educators and their students. The digital resources – videos, photos, audio clips, lesson plans and more – are aligned to Common Core and national standards. Searching is sharpened through filters for content area, grade, media and more. Professional development resources are also available. Among several collections is [Inspiring Middle School Literacy: The Walmart Middle School Literacy Initiative](#) which offers 40 online self-paced lessons in several subjects for grades 5-8. Also accessible through PBS LearningMedia is [PBS NewsHour Extra](#) with lessons based on the daily news. A custom fee-based upgrade is available to schools and districts.

Smithsonian

@SmithsonianEdu

Talk about "venerable." Building on its collection of books and artifacts (over 140 million) gathered over more than 160 years, the Smithsonian Institution offers a [website](#) for educators, students and parents. Teachers can [search for Smithsonian educational resources](#) that are aligned to Common Core or state standards by state, grade, and content area. The Smithsonian resources include lesson plans for most content areas. To save time and see if the topic you're interested in is included, look over the subject list at the [Resource Library](#). Elsewhere at the site, find [world-wide geography resources](#) and browse [videos](#) as well as recent findings at Smithsonian Science. Search the [Smithsonian Encyclopedia](#) for activities and games. Find [invention and innovation](#) materials at the Lemelson Center's education resources page. In addition to the resource-packed [children's section](#), students will likely find lots to explore in [Smithsonian Magazine](#). Free Technology for Teachers blogger Richard Byrne suggests even more Smithsonian sites in this [June 2012 post](#).

Thinkfinity

@verizongiving

The Verizon Foundation's Thinkfinity domain brings together several government and association sites so that visitors can search multiple resource databases at once. Partners include the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' [Illuminations](#), the National Center for Family Literacy's [Wonderopolis](#), and many others across the curriculum. [Visit the resources page](#) to get an overview of the participating organizations and begin searches. To search for lesson ideas, filter a topic by individual grade or select a state standard and find lessons which include it, also by grade. Through its [Community Hub](#), Thinkfinity provides a home for blogging and topical discussion threads. And in the Places area, you'll find a [variety of educator interest groups](#), some open and others private. Access to Thinkfinity is free, with registration for some parts of the site. For tips on getting started, visit the [Help Center](#).

Scholastic

@Scholastic

Literacy and learning have been the focus of Scholastic, Inc. for over 90 years, although the multi-billion-dollar company may be best known today as the publisher of The Hunger Games and the Harry Potter series. Scholastic continues to provide free resources reaching across content areas. A good place to begin: the dedicated [Teachers Site](#) (there's also one for parents, kids, and administrators, among others). Teachers can search for grade-specific [lesson plans](#) and extension activities, or visit the site's [video section](#) to access professional development materials, view book trailers and talks, and take their students on [virtual field trips](#). Scholastic has also assembled a team of K-12 classroom teachers to blog at [Top Teaching](#), where they write about classroom practice, subject-area matters, technology, classroom management, and more.

ELA, History & the Arts

ReadWriteThink

@RWTnow

Sure to become a Common Core hangout, this rich collaboration between the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, chartered 1911) and the International Reading Association (IRA, organized 1956) brings (mostly) free and easily accessed resources to teachers, students and parents. Centering on literacy, the [site's classroom resources](#) offer lesson plans, student interactives, calendar activities, printouts and podcasts, all organized by grade level. Among the [many PD resources](#) is a [strategy guide](#) about reading in the content areas. (Most archived [PD webinars](#) include a fee, which can range from \$5 to \$99.) The ReadWriteThink [Parent & Afterschool Resources](#) provide plentiful free projects, games, how-to's, and more. Don't miss the podcast series, [Text Messages: Recommendations for Adolescent Readers \(gr 6-12\)](#). ReadWriteThink's content providers include teachers, librarians, professors and writers.

Choice Literacy

@ChoiceLiteracy

You'll need to become a member to get the full benefit of Choice Literacy, a site that promises "the best of the tools, guides, literacy lessons, and sage advice" from "literacy coaches, teachers, and school leaders with experience in dozens of diverse classrooms."

However, visitors can access limited content written by Choice Literacy staff members and the many [educator contributors](#) recruited to participate since its launch in 2006. Teachers of reading and writing will find enough helpful [posts and interviews](#) to make browsing worthwhile. [If you decide to join](#), single membership is \$99 a year. A real find is [The Big Fresh Newsletter](#), Choice Literacy's weekly email loaded with free content as well as materials available only to members.

Kids.gov

@Kidsgov

Let's get out the organizational chart. Kids.gov is a branch of USA.gov, administered by an arm of the US General Services Administration (gsa.gov!). Promoted as "a safe place to learn and play," Kids.gov recommends resources for grades [K-5](#), grades [6-8](#), and [teacher/parent](#). Teachers will find lesson plans and activities as well as fuller lists of resources. Kids.gov draws on the Smithsonian and the Library of Congress for history links and is particularly strong in science, pulling together child-friendly segments of NASA, National Geographic, and more. The government section links to the National Archives and state government sites as well as the Government Printing Office [Ben's Guide to U.S. Government](#) (that's Ben Franklin, of course.) Kids.gov reaches beyond government sites to supply math, art and music resources and has lots about money, online safety, fitness, and nutrition. You can sign up for a [weekly Kids.gov newsletter](#), too.

iCivics

@icivics

Based on her belief that "Our democracy depends upon an educated and engaged citizenry," in 2009, retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor launched the iCivics program to counter the perceived lag in Americans' understanding of civics. The free online resources, created by O'Connor and the iCivics staff, target middle grades students [with engaging games](#), and teachers with [standards-aligned resources](#) including highly interactive curriculum units, lesson plans and web quests. Students can compare democracy to other forms of government as well as learn the structure of the US federal, state and local governments. Other topics cover federal budgeting, civil rights, citizenship and persuasive writing. In addition, iCivics links to a long list of [online teacher resources](#) such as C-SPAN Classroom and Landmark Cases.

The History Channel

@HISTORY

History.com is packed with freely accessible essays and videos reaching back to pre-history (and to an era before the cable channel became quite so interested in pawn shops and collectibles). At the education page, [History Classroom](#), teachers can access free [study guides](#) that relate to the

channel's programs. History Classroom also includes links to education resources at the [Biography Channel](#). History.com's content needs to be previewed for age-appropriate material. And keep an eye on the ads. History Channel maintains an active shopping space selling program recordings and related items (eager to purchase a Swamp People polo shirt?).

World Factbook

Who better than a spy agency to profile the nations of the world? The [CIA World Factbook](#) offers data about most every country on Earth, and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency updates sections of the Factbook weekly. Used by employees of the US government, the publicly available online version of the Factbook (we have to assume there's a top secret one) can also help upper middle grades students locate wide-ranging demographics, history, governance information, maps and photos for nearly two hundred countries. The [FAQ page](#) explains why some Factbook information differs from what countries report about themselves.

EDSITEment!

@EDSITEment

It may be a victim of overly clever naming, but EDSITEment! is “the best of the humanities on the web” according to its sponsors, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Verizon Foundation. From the [homepage](#), access EDSITEment!'s curated websites, lesson plans, interactives and multi-media resources, often searchable by grade. Topics stretch across American history and culture and reach into ancient civilizations and humanities around the world. Search the daily [Calendar](#) by subject or event for links to related resources. Access [NEH Connections](#) for NEH resources, many from PBS and NPR, as well as articles from Humanities Magazine such as [“The Civil War to a Seventh Grader”](#) about a series of middle school video projects. Though sections of the [Reference Shelf](#), including Maps and Images, are under construction as of Summer 2013, students and teachers can access a [literary glossary](#) and a collection of [Spanish language websites](#).

ArtsEdge

@artsedge

Washington DC's Kennedy Center has created ArtsEdge to showcase its online collection of education resources about the performing and visual arts. Teachers will find [detailed multimedia lesson plans](#) (with a grades 5-8 search band), inquiries into arts pedagogy, and arts national and state standards. Visitors can also search ArtsEdge by [theme](#), ranging from Ancient Greece to Life Cycles to Poetry & Literature to Outer Space. The new [Families portal](#) (at home & at school) is also worth a visit. You can also jump to the main Kennedy Center site and search more than a decade of [Millennium Stage video performances](#) featuring eclectic artists and even a sprinkling of school bands.

Math & Science

NASA

@NASA

It's hard not to rocket right into NASA's website, what with so many intriguing pathways to explore just on the homepage. With just a little restraint, middle grades teachers can click on [their own 5-8 page](#) and find options to involve themselves in a wide range of topics and media. Fourth grade educators may also want to [click here](#). Younger students can launch themselves into the [NASA Kids' Club](#) while tweens and young teens head over to a section that's [a bit more grown up](#). Women@NASA have developed the [Women & Girls Initiative](#) to introduce girls to NASA women in STEM professions and to let girls experience STEM-related activities. ALSO: [Aspire to Inspire](#) spotlights women leaders, and [NASA G.I.R.L.S.](#) invites grade 5-8 girls and boys to be part of the future through its virtual mentoring program, Change the World through STEM, if they are willing to commit to a 5-week experience and have access to the internet and a virtual chat program.

National Geographic

@NatGeo

Here's another engaging site that can lure visitors into endless summers of unplanned surfing, if you aren't careful. Once teachers make their way to the [Education site](#), they will find [lessons and activities](#) with several filters, [themed collections by grade](#), [mapping](#), [multimedia](#), and more. The [National Geographic Kids](#) section features lots of video

-- from [science fair prep](#) to birds that [fly underwater](#). The page also links to [participatory blogs for children](#), [simple experiments](#), and plenty more. Advertising is mostly limited to NG's line of magazines.

Science NetLinks

@ScienceNetLinks

Science from scientists themselves! At Science NetLinks, the American Association for the Advancement of Science provides copious free and up-to-date resources for K-12 students and their teachers and families. The Search tool dominates the top of the homepage. Just click on "filter your search" for a drop-down menu where you can select grades, themes, and content categories. The themes make it simple to access STEM related content and also include career related content. In addition, Science NetLinks offers [Collections](#), featuring lessons and other content clustered around particular topics. For example, [The Science of Energy](#) has very detailed units on fossil-based and renewable energy (with much of the information coming from government and not-for-profit organizations). On the NetLinks homepage students will also find [Science Updates](#) (60-second Science Radio podcasts) and [daily Science Facts](#) linked to explanations. As a reminder of the great resources here, sign up for monthly updates via the [site newsletter](#).

Math and Science Pathways (MSP2)

@MSPortal2

The PD-oriented content for math and science teachers found at Middle School Portal 2 (MSP2) has been developed over a decade by Ohio State's College of Education and Human Ecology and its partners. Accessed from the homepage, the MSP2 wiki is filled with [math resource guides](#) neatly organized by grade and topic (algebraic thinking, ratios, money, probability, geometry, just to name a few) and is standards-friendly. The same goes for the [science resource guides](#), covering lots of earth science, plus chemistry, physics, biology & life science and pedagogical topics like [Science Fair 2.0](#). Find an archive of helpful webinars [here](#). Find math and science games, simulations, activities and career news at MP2's companion site, [SMARTR - Math/Science Virtual Learning Experiences for Youth](#). It's easily searched and ready for kids to dive in.

Digital Teaching and Learning



Kathy Schrock's Guide to Everything

@kathyschrock

Remember [Bloomin' Apps](#)? (Think taxonomy, not onions.) That was Kathy Schrock's innovative attempt to bring order to emerging education apps via Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. Her Bloom's conceptualization keeps evolving, as does Kathy Schrock's Guide to Everything. Schrock, a former teacher librarian who now works as an educational technologist and professional developer, maintains a highly structured, easy to navigate collection of resources. Going beyond use of technology in the classroom, she provides guides to primary resources, pedagogical practices, and much more. So much, in fact, that we'll simply direct you to the navigation bar on the left side of [this webpage](#) and strongly encourage you to spend a few hours with Everything.

Edudemic

@edudemic

A recent Twitter comment by MiddleWeb friend and sixth grade teacher Bill Ferriter convinced us to include Edudemic in our Top 40 list. Bill (@plugusin) sent out this tweet: "My nod this week goes to @edudemic, an amazing blog that I finally stumbled across - and learned a ton from - this week." The [About Edudemic](#) page promises to connect four themes -- technology, emerging trends, social media, and culture -- to "support the progression of how people access and process information, collaborate with others, and combine existing wisdom with new thinking to create a better world." See whether you think they're accomplishing that audacious goal. While you're visiting, browse the [featured articles](#). And if you're an iPad user/teacher, check their bountiful [iPad news and resources](#).

MindShift

@MindShiftKQED

Slogan: How we will learn. From the blog: “Technology is revolutionizing the world of education – replacing familiar classroom tools and changing the way we learn. MindShift explores the future of learning in all its dimensions – covering cultural and technology trends, groundbreaking research, education policy and more.” Curator Tina Barseghian and the MindShift reporters stay on the leading edge of technology in education, with a mix of newsy articles, interviews, reports on digital learning trends, and contributions from cutting edge teachers. For a sample, see [13 Free Web Tools Students and Teachers Should Know About](#). MindShift is supported by KQED, San Francisco's public broadcasting station.

Free Technology for Teachers

@rmbyrne

If you're serious about connected learning, you need to be a fan. Former social studies high school teacher Richard Byrne is the owner and editor of this award winning news and "how-to" blog. For over five years Byrne has evaluated free web resources useful to teachers and shared his conclusions with thousands of readers daily. Browse and download Byrne's [free e-books for educators](#). His highly browsable [Pinterest collection of resources](#) is nearing 800 pins.

Teacher & Principal Voices



Connected Principals

#cpchat

At this busy group blog, principals and other school administrators with an abiding interest in technology integration and connected professional learning share ideas and comments they hope will build better education for children. In the left margin, you'll find a long list of contributors, including many familiar names from the ed tech community. All have signed on to a set of [principles](#) to guide discussion. Also in the left margin, you'll discover a list sorting posts into several dozen categories.

Education Week Teacher

@EdWeekTeacher

No highly visible education non-profit in the U.S. has featured more voices of teacher leaders over the last decade than Education Week Teacher. The free teacher channel ([register here](#)), supported by EdWeek publisher Editorial Projects in Education, offers teacher news, opinions, advice and discussion. Jump to any of these blogs and feature pages to read the ideas and perspectives of thoughtful classroom teachers and teaching veterans: [Teacher Voices](#), [Living in Dialogue](#), [Teacher in a Strange Land](#), [Teaching Ahead](#), [The Art of Coaching Teachers](#), and [Charting My Own Course](#).

The Tempered Radical

@plugusin

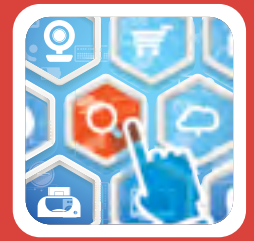
Bill Ferriter, a sixth grade teacher in North Carolina and the author of four books about professional learning communities and technology integration, writes about those topics and his own classroom experiences at this popular blog. For a sample of his current concerns, read '[How Testing Will Change How I Teach Next Year](#).' Learn more about his books, wikis and other writing at <http://williamferriter.com/>.

Voices from the Learning Revolution

#VFLR

Full disclosure: The lively group blog Voices from the Learning Revolution, sponsored by Powerful Learning Practice LLC, is edited by MiddleWeb founder and co-editor John Norton. John says it's yet another effort "to raise the voices of savvy educators around issues of professional practice and education policy." Like a sample? Among the more than 200 posts contributed by 30+ authors (so far), you'll find [Our 13 Top Posts for 2012](#).

Other Cool Websites



Great Websites for Kids

@alscblog

From the ALA's Association for Library Service to Children comes Great Websites for Kids (GWS). A click away (top right) is its collection of sites [for teachers and parents](#). Whether you are looking for content-specific sites for students or investigating sites that support teachers, GWS provides carefully evaluated options. Visitors can enter search terms or browse content areas and reference resources. Another ALA division, the American Association of School Librarians, has assembled the [Best Websites for Teaching and Learning](#). The 25 sites are free, easy to use, and emphasize creativity and collaboration. New for 2013: [Best Apps for Teaching and Learning](#).

DuckDuckGo

@duckduckgo

When searchers of all ages use [DuckDuckGo](#), their queries aren't tracked and their perceived interests don't shape or limit what pops up on later searches. The site's simple layout allows for typical keyword searches but also lets users limit results to Bing images, some Google options, or Amazon (a sponsor). Returns are relatively spam-free. For example, most results for "George Washington" were from government and education sites, but Conservapedia and eBay did pop up. To learn more about DDG and access lots of useful goodies, [visit here](#).

Edmodo

@edmodo

Edmodo, established in 2008, is a free social networking tool that lets teachers set up very secure spaces for classroom use. The [Edmodo platform](#), used by more than 20 million students and teachers globally, goes beyond the sharing of comments and images, giving teachers the ability to post and check assignments and much more. Edmodo makes it easy to integrate and use other Web 2.0 tools (enthusiastically described [here](#) by Patti Grayson), and in 2012 it introduced apps that seamlessly integrate with Edmodo communities (explained [here](#) by Adam Renfro). Learn about Edmodo's summer 2013 site update [here](#).

And finally - our favorite resource of all . . . #51:

MiddleWeb

@middleweb

MiddleWeb is all about the middle grades with a sharp focus on teaching and learning in grades 4-8. Since 1996, we've been providing resources for teachers, school leaders, parents and others interested in the success of young adolescents. Visit the site to discover [book reviews](#), [guest articles](#), [interviews](#), unique [resource roundups](#), and weekly blog posts by middle grades classroom teachers, writing about STEM, history, co-teaching, English/LA and teaching in the upper elementary grades. MiddleWeb partners with [SmartBrief](#) to provide twice weekly newsletters that zero in on middle grades news and resources.

Thanks for checking out some of our favorites. We'll be updating the collection twice a year, so feel free to send your suggestions to ask.middleweb@gmail.com

MiddleWeb

All About The Middle Grades