

Issues to consider in using Web 2.0 Tools

Student Safety & Privacy

Unlike traditional projects, Web 2.0 projects are typically created and stored on a website's server- a place outside of the district's control. While some Web 2.0 sites offer privacy options, don't risk it.

- Policies must be reviewed constantly with students
 - Don't assume students know
 - No chat rooms, etc.
- Remind students about protecting personal information
 - A student's real name should not appear in Web 2.0 projects
 - Any pictures of students should not appear in Web 2.0 projects
- Remind students what to do if they encounter something inappropriate
 - Turn off the monitor (if separate from the machine) & inform the teacher
 - Hit the back button on the browser & inform the teacher

Login Methods for Web 2.0 Sites

Most (not all) Web 2.0 sites require users to login, especially sites where projects are stored for long term use or where users save their work and return later to make changes. Keep in mind that some websites prohibit children under 13 from creating accounts.

- One generic login per class
 - Many sites won't allow this
 - Students have access to freely edit/delete other students' work
 - Students have access to change profile settings, including the password
 - This may be best for projects completed within one class period
 - Teacher should direct students to stay out of the profile and change the password immediately after class
- OtherInbox.com
 - In private beta testing at the moment but works well!
 - User creates an email stem with a registered userID such as jsmith.otherinbox.com
 - An infinite number of email addresses can be created using the stem
 - student1@jsmith.otherinbox.com
 - john@jsmith.otherinbox.com
 - anything@jsmith.otherinbox.com
 - All emails are funneled into the main account, separated into folders
 - OtherInbox can forward any emails to any main email account
- Individual student logins (false email)
 - Many sites require an email address only for lost password retrieval
 - Students could enter teacher's email address (though some sites will only allow an email address to be linked with one account)

- The Google Solution
 - Teacher creates a Gmail account (Google's email system)
 - Ex: coolteacher@gmail.com
 - Students can then “piggy-back” on this email
 - coolteacher+jsmith@gmail.com
 - coolteacher+nickname@gmail.com
 - coolteacher+student2period3@gmail.com
 - All emails arrive in the main gmail account, yet you can tell by the address who it was sent to
- Students should NOT use any real information
- Some sites require users to validate email addresses before beginning- this method would not work in this case (ex: Slideboom.com)
 - For these sites, individual accounts with authentic email must be used (see next section).

Student Email

There are so many benefits to student email, including learning how to communicate, collaboration, etc. But the dangers of email must be taken into consideration as well. Hotmail, Yahoo, and Gmail may be fine for students to use personally at home, but within a district, we must take steps to protect students from being exposed to or transmitting inappropriate material.

Consider using either ePals or Gaggle (both of which are free)!

“Protected” Email

- Only teachers can create accounts, not students
- Teachers get copies or have access to email sent and received
- Built-in filters for inappropriate content are flagged and are not sent to student accounts until the teacher approves
- Variety of permissions/roles
- Can suspend accounts and change student login credentials at any time
- May include blogging and other features

Issues to Consider

- Filtered email (like any web filter) is not 100% successful
- Students must be taught how to handle inappropriate content
- Communicate with parents what you are doing and why (parent letters are available on the product websites)
- Actively monitor student email

Other Web 2.0 Issues to Consider

- Keep a spreadsheet for all your logins (then password protect your spreadsheet)
- Many Web 2.0 tools are in **beta** mode (there could be bugs & future versions of the tool may be completely different in terms of usage and cost)
- A reliable internet connection is required- many Web 2.0 sites don't allow you to download what you have created but only access it via the web
- Wikis, blogs, virtual desktops, and other social websites usually allow embedding of widgets (widgets are mini-windows that deliver some content to the user)
- Many Web 2.0 tools make use of Flickr and other image hosting sites to allow for direct importing of images into the tool- while you may not want to turn students loose on Flickr, it may be beneficial to create a Flickr account for your class that you load images into yourself (students don't need the login information, just the URL).
- Some districts may block websites when inappropriate content is found- your Web 2.0 tool could be useless overnight