



## Connection Reflection

### ACE Model Categorizes Tools For Use

*SET Connections has set as its mission a commitment to help promote the use of technology for Special Education. We know keeping track of the latest technologies available can be an overwhelming task. We also know that just learning about the technologies will not be helpful in itself. In addition to identifying and understanding the technologies that exist, it is important to know and experience how the technologies can be used. Practical and real world or real use examples are needed.*

*In order to make this knowledge process easier, we have developed the ACE Model. The ACE Model provides a three-tiered grouping of technologies for use. The ACE Technology categories are: Administrative, Communication and Education. Administration includes organization and planning tools for both teachers and students. Communication addresses communication between educators, between teacher and student, between school and home and between administrators and staff. Education covers tools for assessment, learning, research, thinking, producing, skill reinforcement, and content review.*

*In this issue of SET Connections' Connection Reflection we will introduce each of the categories and discuss examples of the technologies within those categories. We are sure you will find something valuable to you and your classroom!*

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#### Special points of interest:

- The ACE Model Categorizes a Variety of Tools for Students, Teachers, and Administrators.
- Wikispaces Offers Space to Share Information.
- Remember the Milk Keeps a List of Tasks.



Dr. Henry Thiele

By: **Dr. Henry Thiele**  
President

With spring starting to peek out at us, I thought it would be appropriate to take a look at some tools that can help all of us get a little more organized—spring cleaning time, if you will. Most of these tools can also be used for a little tidying up in your student's

### "A" is for Administrative Tools

lives. I want to point you in the direction of organizing your calendar, tasks, and goals—Administrative tasks in the ACE Model.

There are many calendar options out there, but my



favorite and the best one for

the price (in my opinion) is **Google Calendar** (<http://www.google.com/calendar>). You can use the easy interface to quickly add events in an aesthetically pleasing dis-

play. Don't just get caught up in the good looks though, this product has real power. You can search for public calendars that other people have created to add to yours. I subscribe to the US Holiday calendar and have also quickly added the games of my favorite sports teams to my calendar. You have the option of making your calendar public, private, or can share it with particular individuals. Both my wife and I share our calendars with each other so that we have one common calendar.

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Judy Okazaki

## "C" is for Communication Tools

By: **Judy Okazaki**  
Executive Director

Because so many people are often involved in the process of guiding and evaluating a special education student, communication tools can make a difference; maybe more so than in any other area of education. As RTI evolves, good communication will help to assure implementation of a successful RTI plan.

Some of the obvious needs for communication for special education are email, automated IEP systems and content management systems (an electronic means of storing and making available data such as student records, procedure manuals, calendars, staff information, and homework assignments.) For schools fortunate enough to have these tools in place there remains numerous others that can enhance effective communication. For those who do not have the basic systems, there are tools that can perform some of those functions as well.

The area of communication can be further divided into four sub-categories which are; communication between teacher and student, communication between educators, communication between administration and staff, and communication between school and home.

### *Communication Between Teacher and Student*

The better the communication between teacher and student the better the chance for student success. However, as educators know, time is short and class loads are often high. Two examples of teacher to student communication software are **Edmodo** and **Poll Everywhere**. Edmodo (<http://www.edmodo.com>) is a wonderful utility for private microblogging or journaling.

It provides space for teachers and students to exchange notes, links, files, assignments, post schedules and even talk to each other directly. Software such as **Poll Everywhere** (<http://www.polleverywhere.com>) allows a teacher to create quizzes or review lessons that students can complete on their own, either at home or at school on a website or by email.

### *Communication Between Educators*

Another of the sub-categories is communication between educators. A **NING** (<http://www.ning.com>) which may be described as a social and interactive digital bulletin board could be the perfect answer for educators to share ideas, post questions for help, or share pictures or a video. A wiki, like one from **Wikispaces** (<http://www.wikispaces.com>) is another way for educators to share among themselves, though it is not as directly sociable a tool. **Cover It Live** (<http://www.coveritlive.com>) can be described as an ongoing, online conversation using video or a picture is very easy to learn and implement. Individual comments are tracked in a unique way and polling is an option.

### *Communication Between Administration and Staff*

Communication between administration and staff is also important. Administrators can quickly poll teachers to get answers about selecting times for a meeting. Professional development presentations can be videotaped and posted on a site such as **UStream TV** (<http://www.ustream.tv>). With UStream you can experience live interactive broadcasting, live video in just minutes, broadcasting and chatting with a private audience or an online global audience. Completely free, all it takes is a camera and Internet connection. **Dimdim** (<http://www.dimdim.com>) is a web con-

ferencing service (free for up to 20 people). You can share your desktop, show slides, collaborate, chat, talk and broadcast via webcam with absolutely no download required, Think about the ease of hosting or attending meetings. **QipIt** (<http://www.qipit.com>) turns many models of cell phones into portable scanners, copiers and fax machines. It also works with a digital camera.

### *Communication Between School and Home*

Communication between school and home is unquestionably important. However, often we find time available for communication with parents is more limited than we would like; and, therefore, the communication is too often limited to a weekly or monthly newsletter and possibly some phone conversations. But the tools today allow personalized communication to occur on a regular basis, and there are so many tools in this category. **Constant Contact** (<http://www.constantcontact.com>) provides easy-to-use templates that produce aesthetic email letters with formatting that is readable on all computers. This can be a great replacement for the often time-consuming production of a newsletter. Emails can also be created using a word processing mail merge feature to produce personalized messages.

Mentioning all of these tools might sound overwhelming; yet, the list is by no means exhausted. The best thing to do is to look at each of the sub-categories above and identify the area of communication that needs the most attention. Once, identified, think about your specific need, pick a tool from that category and give it a try. Also, continue to look to our website for more details on how to use these tools. For specific questions always feel free to contact us at [info@setconnections.org](mailto:info@setconnections.org).



# "E" is for Educational Tools

By: **Alice Schmitz**  
Director of Education &  
Professional Development



What better purpose for technology than to educate! Today's students comprise a broad audience who need a broad variety of tools to learn, live, work, and compete in our changing society. The ACE model can give you some tools and ideas for infusing technology into the classroom (or your personal life) to help your students and make your classroom come alive.

You've heard it before . . . this "video gaming" generation of students, also known as digital natives, do not have patience for a teacher who asks that they sit quietly in rows, read the assigned pages in the textbook and then answer the 20 questions at the end of the chapter to be turned in tomorrow for a grade. Students want a lesson that not only has content worth learning but engages them and leverages their prior knowledge, creativity and curiosity. And, please remember, they are also collaborators. They have learned to use a social network built on collaboration and communication AND technology.

So, why not create a digital story filled with rich (and fun) images to illustrate your lesson, or better yet, use a program like **Voicethread** (<http://voicethread.com/#home>) to have students create, share and edit a presentation adding text and voice which teaches a classroom concept?

I just finished reading an article about a classroom teacher who used **Youth Twitter** (<http://www.youthtwitter.com>). His students wrote and published a book by collaborating with students around the world. What a learning experience

and not only from the writing standpoint! Time zones, language, customs, locations, and on and on.

Why not take the mundane out of teaching by allowing technology to do some drill and practice? Spending 30 minutes on a software package that places a student at his/her level of need has a lot of benefit. There are many tutorial software packages out there. Though not free, one that comes to mind is **Skills Tutor** (<http://www.achievementtech.com>)

Reviewing a chapter? Why not encourage students to create original flashcards (<http://www.flashcardexchange.com>). They can practice on their own or share with their classmates. Then there are the game templates that can be loaded into PowerPoint to create a little competition in the classroom (<http://jc-schools.net/tutorials/PPT-games/>). Throw in a few extra credit points for the winner, and you have a great lesson plan, invested students, and better test scores.

Need to be out of school for a day? The substitute may not be able to fully explain the finer points of your lesson. Try experimenting with and developing a screencast which can include demonstration on a computer/white board and a verbal explanation (<http://www.screencast.com>). Take this a step further. You could post a screencast of a difficult lesson on your webpage. Students could then review the lesson. Parents could use it to help students with school work being completed at home. Where was this when our son was taking geometry?

Good student projects require collaboration. Shared documents (Google docs or Zoho) can give busy

students 24/7 access to each other's work. And, what could be better than a presentation with a video uploaded to the internet so it can be viewed by the entire class? Do you have a **Flip video camera** (<http://www.theflip.com>) in your classroom yet? An iPod-sized camera that takes video, plugs into the USB port of the computer, and then makes editing an option, for under \$200, could turn a mundane project into a star presentation! Concerned about how the project will be transported to your classroom? Allow students to upload it to a video sharing site—most can be made "private." And, in the midst of the video editing, uploading and the addition of music or voice, you may want to remember that there are a variety of sites on the Internet which do file conversion (document, image, music, or video) to make things go a little smoother.

And, last but not least, how about honing those critical thinking skills? Much of this can be done with thinking games, quizzes, etc. Having at one time been a proponent of a middle school gifted program where the "guts" of the "work" students did was playing chess, Mahjongg, Tetris, etc., I still believe there are a lot of games available on the computer that help students OF ALL LEVELS hone their critical thinking skills . . . and enjoy what they are doing. I know you've been up way too late at least once because you got hooked on a computer game—chances are it was testing your thinking skills!

So, use this newsletter to see if you can add some "pzazz" to your classroom. I'm not promising it will be easy. You still have to plan your lesson, practice the technology skill, acquire the equipment, and prepare the students. But I am promising it will be worth it!



## SET Connections

PO Box 3872  
Barrington, IL 60010

Phone: 847-732-3823  
E-mail: [info@setconnections.org](mailto:info@setconnections.org)

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[www.setconnections.org](http://www.setconnections.org)

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## Organize with Google Calendar, RTM and Joe's Goals

(Continued from page 1)

You can share your calendar via a web link as well. I will commonly send someone a link to my calendar that shows times when I have already booked appointments so that they can find an opening in my schedule. I have the option to block out details and only show times that are booked. Google calendar now has applications for your Blackberry and iPhone, and it can be used offline. You can even take calendars to a whole new level and embed them into a website, blog, or wiki. Google calendar offers just about every feature you would want for free!

Besides keeping a calendar I also keep a list of tasks. Google has recently started to offer a tasks list within Gmail Labs. However, my favorite is the most robust online task list program—**Remember the Milk (RTM)**. Remember



remember  
the milk BETA

the Milk can be found at

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

RTM is an intuitive program that seems to be able to understand whatever you tell it. You can add tasks to multiple lists all with reminders. You can view these lists through the web and be reminded of due dates by SMS or email. The professional version costs \$25/year and allows you to email yourself tasks. There is support for the Blackberry, iPhone, iPod Touch, or Windows Mobile. It is by far the easiest and most efficient task management program I have ever used. This makes it not only an excellent tool for Administrators but also an easy tool for students to use when making "to do" lists.

To help you (or your students) be successful, set goals! This is one of the most positive tasks you can do for yourself (or your students). The best online program out there for setting and

tracking your goals is **Joe's Goals**

(<http://www.joesgoals.com/>). It has a quick and easy-to-learn interface for adding goals and tracking them. You can create goals that represent positive or negative behaviors, decide which days of the week you are going to work on them, and categorize your goal lists. Goals can be shared with others so that you can get some encouragement to keep moving forward (a great feature for students) and offer quick reports to document your progress. You even see a graph charting your achievement (or lack thereof) for the previous week. Then, embed your graph on another webpage to show off your progress.

Hopefully you can take advantage of some of these free tools to help clean things up and propel yourself forward to finish the year out strong. Give them a try and see how easy they are to use!