



Connection Reflection

Reading—This Month's Focus

It seems that every school in the State—probably Nation—is focusing on reading. What an excellent choice! In this Month's Connection Reflection we will attempt to give you some technology resources and ideas to help you contribute to the cause AND focus on reading with your students. Warning: Now that you are back to school with a "plan" for the year, this may make you rethink the "plan." At least we hope that's true!

Classrooms Need Essential Pieces of Technology to Support Reading and Learning

By: **Dr. Henry Thiele**
President



Dr. Henry Thiele

A question I have been asked several times over the past few months is what are the essential pieces of technology that have to be in a classroom to foster 21st century teaching and learning? Over the next year we will have lots of cool new technologies presented to us and thousands of sales people reaching out for our limited technology dollars. What should we be focusing on purchasing?

I am not a big believer that just adding technology changes instruction, but even the best craftsman likes a good set of tools. Here are my most important classroom technologies:

1. A **computing device** with reliable, fast, and open access (only filtering what CIPA requires) to the Internet. Even one of these

devices in a classroom opens the world's information and people to our students.

2. A **projection device** that is visible to all students in the room. This allows all of the students in the classroom to take advantage of the information on the computer at one time.

3. A **good set of speakers**. This is an item that is often overlooked. Sound is important, especially in today's multimedia world.

Give me those three items, and I have enough to bring the world into my classroom. After that, things can get really exciting. It opens up access to videos and other visuals, great questions and answers with a variety of points of view, and an expert on any topic you can imagine. You are only limited by your creativity, which is limited by your time—which I still believe is the largest limiting factor in developing our instructional practices. Unfortunately, no piece of technology we add to our classrooms will give us more time; that is something we create for ourselves and dedicate to the things we find to be most important in our lives. However, dedicating a little time to learning to leverage three key pieces of classroom technology can make a big difference in the

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Special points of interest:

- A computing device, projection device, and a good set of speakers—classroom essentials.
- Read 180 could possibly help your struggling readers.
- Log onto the Ning and add to the discussion about reading.
- Save the Date for the next SET Connections meeting—November 3, 2010, 5 to 7 p.m.

Age-Appropriate Reading Materials—Hard to Find!



Alice Schmitz

By:
Alice Schmitz
Director of
Education and
Professional
Development

Reading . . . Such an important skill. What student will be successful in

school without being able to read? And, is it just being able to read that is important to us or is our goal that students enjoy reading? Of course, we would wish the enjoyment of reading for every one of our students, but, reality sets in and we settle for trying to help each and every student read and comprehend at an acceptable level. That may be grade level or it could be something deemed "acceptable."

We have a huge task to accomplish this. In our diverse classes where each and every student has individual needs, how will we work on their reading skills?

Dr. Thiele wrote about having the proper equipment in the classroom—certainly a necessity. Mrs. Okazaki wrote about a variety of technology

tools. Excellent list. I, however, would like to suggest a concern when teaching reading to your students: Age-appropriate materials. This sounds easy, but in my experience, it is not! I have a hunch that you spend a lot of time searching for and, hopefully, finding age-appropriate materials on a daily basis.

I would like to suggest one (not the only) tool that works very hard to supply age-appropriate materials while working on reading skills. **Read 180**. It is a reading intervention program by Scholastic. Read 180 is able to hold readers' attention with age-appropriate topics. Eighth grade students reading at a third grade level do not have to read about the cuddly puppy named "Snoop" who finds a bone!

Of course, Read 180 requires a commitment of not only resources but also time and is touted for Grades 3 through 12. In order to successfully run the program, a 90-minute daily block of time is required (20 minutes of whole-group instruction, a 60-minute rotation at stations—software, independent, small group instruction—and a 10 minute wrap-up.)

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Tools Available in Every Aspect of Reading

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generated and can be saved for future reference.

Intervention

Free Reading is an open source free intervention reading site http://www.free-reading.net/index.php?title=Main_Page.

This article is of course by no means

exhaustive in its recommendations reading tools. It is meant to hopefully introduce some new sites, provide reminders of some of the good ones and possibly inspire a desire to utilize and research online resources.



ANNOUNCING

Creating a Digital-Rich Classroom:
Teaching & Learning in a
Web 2.0 World

by Meghan J. Ormiston

Paperback— \$13.57

Visit the [SET Connections](http://www.SETConnections.org) website for a direct link to order.

Love Dogs?



We have all read information about how helpful pets are to people in a variety of situations. Senior citizens, people with disabilities, children who are ill, and many other groups seem, through much research, to benefit significantly by having pets around. This past week, I observed a classroom with "Reading Dogs." Yes, the teacher trained two of her own pets. The two dogs are now able to come to her classroom every Friday so students can read to them. Wow! The pets were a hit with the students, loved the attention and seemed to be engaged in the stories. I was in awe. Plus, every student I came in contact with that day had a story about the dog she/he read to!

I like dogs, grew up with them, but have to admit reading dogs are not an area of expertise for me. I do know, however, that I witnessed an awful lot of engaged readers that day. Some were flopped over the dog, some on the floor next to the dog, and some just reading with an arm around one of the dogs. That experience, however, made me curious enough to check a couple websites. You may want to do so as well. It could be an investment of time that makes the difference for your students—and allows you to spend more time with your pet!

[About Library Dogs](#)
[Featuring Illinois Library Dogs](#)
[A Place to Begin](#)

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Connecting
Special Education and
Technology

Join Us

Log on to our website at
www.setconnections.org
OR
Email us at
info@setconnections.org
for information

Have You Joined the Ning?

Reading is a "hot" topic
in all of our classrooms.
Therefore, we invite
you to help each other:



1. Join our Ning at
<http://setconnections.ning.com>
 2. Scroll down the opening page to the Discussion
Groups.
 3. Double click on the title, Reading in the Classroom
 4. React to the question posted or pose your own!
- Hopefully, as a community, we will be able to help each
other with resources, ideas, and motivation to help our
students reach greater competency in reading!

Check Out Read 180

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A plus is that it allows a variety of methods of instruction during the block of time. Students are on a rotation and do not attend to one type of activity for more than 20 minutes at a time.

There is much information about this program available at Scholastic's site including a search tool to narrow information to the specific criteria you select.

Depending on the needs in your school and classroom, it may be worth taking some time to research this product.

Scholastic's Read 180:

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/read180/>.

Dates of Interest

September 23-24, 2010—IAASE (Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education) *Leadership and Learning for the 21st Century*, Holiday Inn Select Hotel and Conference Center, Tinley Park. Information is available on the [IAASE website](#). SET Connections Board Member, Meg Ormiston will present the morning of September 24. Her sessions: **Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum: Empowering Students with Technology** and **Math and Technology: Practical Strategies for Classrooms**.

November 15-19, 2010—**Global Education Conference**, co-chaired by Steve Hargadon (of Classroom 2.0) and Lucy Gray. There is no formal registration as all sessions are on the web, open and public. Watch for more information on the [conference site](#). This is not a special education-technology conference per se. However, it is an opportunity to "try on" a web conference. Pick a topic of interest, download a free trial of the Elluminate software ([available here](#)) and see what you think!

Save the Date—November 3, 2010

Tech for Special Ed (sponsored by SET Connections)
After School Workshop, 5 to 7 p.m. (Light dinner included)
Additional information will be available at www.setconnections.org