CTSP CENTER UPDATES

Upcoming Events

CTAT Education Open Source–Austin, TX

TIVA Professional Development Conference—Irving, TX—July 8-12, 2013

Texas Career Education Conference—Houston, TX—July 14-17, 2013

ACTE National Conference—Las Vegas, NV–December 5-7, 2013

SPECIAL EDITION—FREE TOOLS FOR YOU

Welcome to this SPECIAL edition of CTSP Updates. As we work with CTSP instructors in the state of Texas, we have come across some amazing and dynamic ideas that work in many different classrooms and with all students, including special populations. In sifting through these ideas, we found some common themes and decided to highlight them in special issues of our newsletter. This issue is the first in the series. We will focus on online, free tools that instructors have repeatedly told us they utilize to better organize their classroom and lab-related curriculum, as well as improve accessibility for all students.

TodaysMeet

TodaysMeet is a useful, free online tool that teachers and students can use to communicate with each other. Using a microblogging social media-type technology, TodaysMeet helps teachers conduct online discussions while feeding the results to a dedicated web page or an interactive White Board. The chatting is limited to a 140 character limit and has an easy-to-use interface. Once the teacher provides the link to the tool, students can login by typing their own name and clicking "Join." When students and teachers want to speak, they type in a short sentence or two and click "Say." This tool encourages participation among non-verbal students or students classified as English Language Learners. Teachers are encouraged to inform parents about their use of the tool, and establish accountability and etiquette rules to ensure fairness and a safe learning environment. To access the tool, go to: http://todaysmeet.com.

Gnowledge

Gnowledge is an online platform for creating, sharing, and taking multiple choice tests, assignments, quizzes, and exercises. Free for all teachers to use, the tool offers the choice of creating customized online assessments as well as sharing your expertise with other instructors. Users can search for assessments by title, subject, grade, and school, as well as country. Additionally, teachers can access their students' activity reports and the built-in grades.

Teachers can effectively use Gnowledge to provide their students with test reviews, practice quizzes, and group exercises. The variety of assessments allows students to build their confidence and improve their performance prior to taking standardized tests. For more details, visit: http://www.gnowledge.com/.

Moodle

Moodle is a free, web-based learning management system developed by educators for educators. It offers many channels for differentiated learning activities that are especially suitable for working with special populations. CTE instructors can upload handouts, notes, classroom assignment instructions, and links to web sites and media-based references, etc. Moodle is password-protected, and all learning is supplemented by chat sessions, discussions, group activities, and quizzes, as well as surveys. Instructors can organize all content by category, and students access it via a main course page. The calendar feature makes it easy to remind students of class schedules and encourages better time management. Moodle can be used to supplement traditional courses or completely online courses. For more information on this tool, go to: https://moodle.org/.

Prezi Presentation Tool

Prezi is a free online tool that allows you to create dynamic visual presentations. Free educational accounts are available for anyone with a school-based email address. Prezi can be used by both instructors and students to create presentations, ePortfolios, concept maps and other graphic organizers, or tell a story. It allows for closer inspection of visual details, highlights areas of special focus, and demonstrates how ideas or concepts follow a sequential process. As you create and edit your Prezi presentation, each item added to the canvas can be moved, resized, or rotated. You can change the overall look of the presentation by clicking on a gallery of styles. When you or anyone else views your presentation in a browser, what they see is an animated tour of the canvas instead of a series of slides.

The visualization in Prezi enables the use of limited text content, thus making it user-friendly for students with processing disabilities. To get started with Prezi, click on http://prezi.com.

Text2MindMap

Text2MindMap is an online graphic organizer creator, and it is free to use. An outline or a structured list of words or sentences can be turned into a visual map that is easy to interpret and modify. The font, colors, and line size are manipulated by using an online toolbox. The maps can be color coded by branch or level to help organize information, and they can be saved as .jpg files for future use in a word-processing program. To find out whether this tool is something you can use, go to http://www.text2mindmap.com/.

TeachersPayTeachers (TpT)

TpT is an open marketplace for lesson plans and other teacher-created materials. While teachers can purchase materials, many are also available for free. Available for pre-K through 12th grade and organized by subject areas ranging from Science to Arts and Music, over 900 items are available under the Career and Technical Education category.

In addition to lesson plans, buyers/users can purchase or download for free assessments, books, bulletins board ideas, worksheets, and games, as well as a variety of class-based activities. Teachers may also place custom requests for materials.

Teachers are able to rate the usefulness of the sellers' products. This site is also a platform for sellers to add to their income. Testimonials show that many teachers have added an immense number of tools to their repertoire for working with all students from special populations. For more information, go to http://teacherspayteachers.com.

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