

Software Review/ Interactive Curricular-based Web Site Review
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Discovery Education

Discovery Education provides both teachers and students lots of unique learning experiences. While a subscription is required in order to access all of the teacher available resources, students, parents, and teachers can utilize different parts of Discovery Education for free. Discovery Education can be used effectively in any classroom. For example, in my English classroom one way I use Discovery Education is through the writing prompt resource to develop varieties of writing prompts for my students, while a geography teacher may often use the Discovery Atlas Interactive Map.

Another great feature of Discovery Education is the STEM Connection. My school is a STEM school, and each year we have a STEM Fair, in which every class is to present a STEM Project they developed throughout the year. The STEM Connection is provided by the STEM Fair coordinator each year as a resource to teachers to get ideas, develop ideas, or create new ideas for their project. While I personally, have not used this feature, I have heard great responses among colleagues.

Spelling City

I love Spelling City! Spelling was never my favorite as a student. If my teachers had Spelling City, I think I may have felt differently! Spelling City is free and easy to use. All teachers have to do is upload their spelling/vocabulary words, and it is ready!

Spelling City offers students a way to practice and study spelling/vocabulary words in an interactive way. Students can play games using their words or even have the program “teach” them. The graphics are bright and the responses are quick! I highly recommend this program.

iMindMap

<http://www.thinkbuzan.com/us/>

A mind map is a graphic organizer used to represent words, ideas, or other items linked to and arranged around a central key word or idea. Mind maps are great for brainstorming, sorting, or identifying! Mind maps can be used in any class at any level! This is a great resource for creating computer generated mind maps. iMindMap provides free access to the basic features that can be downloaded from its site.

iMindMap provides easy tutorials and guides to creating a map. One downside to the program is that it is harder to create one from scratch than to just use an already made template and edit. Another downside is that without paying, you do not have all-access.

Accelerated Reader!

This is the first year my school is using Accelerated Reader by Renaissance Place. Accelerated Reader is an interactive computer program that allows students to take individual reading comprehension tests. My school is planning to use Accelerated Reader this year as a reading incentive program. We hope to encourage students to read and then come to school to take the computer generated comprehension test.

I see both positives and negatives to this program. First, as with anything, it needs to be planned, tested, and evaluated. Currently my school is in the planning and testing phase. On a positive note, this program will allow students a chance to read their chose of novels, stories, etc. Accelerated Reader has an extensive database of comprehension questions for more books than you can imagine! When used correctly, this program will give students an opportunity to practice necessary test taking schools and encourages reading! Anything that encourages my students to read, is a wonderful thing in my book! On a negative side, I am still wary of how the implementation of this program will work. I have 25 students in my 45 minute, 4 day a week reading class and one classroom computer. Yes, my school does have a laptop cart I can use, but given the time constant, and the carts availability it is not a guarantee I would be able to use the laptops at a given time each week. This limited access to computers, as well as, short time period, makes me wonder when will each of my students be given an opportunity to use the program?

As with any new program my school promotes, I am very willing to do what I can do make it a success!