

## **Top Educator Sites**

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I have a rule to determine good educational sites for teachers: will they make my teaching easier or harder? The truly great sites offer teachers help in understanding how to implement technology into the classroom and developing a curriculum, which will prepare kids for the next millennium. It's a challenging goal for many sites, which bill themselves as educational. Unfortunately, the Internet landscape is dotted with haystacks of educational information and resources. The best sources are as elusive as the proverbial needle. Many of the sites tend to offer links to more links with little or no explanation on the links or how the information can be used in the classroom. The viewer is often confronted with information overload. Great educational sites are few and far between. They vary tremendously. Some fit the neat easy to follow magazine type format of parent and kids sites. Some are subject-specific, some are grade specific, and some are project specific!

The following sites however, do follow my rule. They have helped make my teaching easier and given students and others an exciting addition to their curriculum. They tend to inform rather than overwhelm. They are worth the most precious commodity a teacher has . . . time.

A to Z Teacher Stuff      <http://atoZTeacherStuff.com/>

This one-stop resource provides a variety of teaching resources for the online educator. Created by a teacher, it features quick and easy access to thousands of online resources. Find original lesson plans for grades pre-K-12, thematic units and theme resources, teacher tips, educational articles, children's literature activities, top educational sites, and teaching materials. Although the site is extensive, it has a search feature to help you find what you need. This is a one-stop resource area that you can productively spend your time.

An Internet Resource for Teachers      <http://www.gyrd.ab.ca/EducationLinks/>

This Internet Resource is a tribute to Alberta teachers who have spent much time and effort to organize educational resources on the Internet for the benefit of students and teachers. The Internet can still be a huge timewaster for students and teachers as they try to find unique educational resources. This site goes a long way in organizing and updating links to those unique educational resources. It is also a great find for Canadian sites. There are many links available here to provincial federal and other Canadian resources. For teachers who are looking for updated sites to supplement their lesson plans and curriculum, this is one site that is worth the time to do some browsing.

Book Adventure      <http://www.bookadventure.com/>

The Book Adventure site is a free, reading incentive program dedicated to encourage kids in grades K-8 to read. Created by the Sylvan Learning Foundation and sponsored by well-known educational associations and corporations. It is designed as a resource for both teachers and parents to help kids succeed in reading. Kids have over 6,000 titles and

descriptions of popular books to choose from. They then read the books offline. Once they've finished the book, they can return to the site and take a multiple-choice quiz on each book they read for prize incentives. This site is well worth the time to check out the extensive reading resources and a different reading incentive program for students.

Brainsarefun <http://www.brainsarefun.com/index.html>

Brainsarefun is a website that grew out of the personal experience of teacher Rory Donaldson in dealing with literally thousands of parents, teachers and school administrators--all of whom have asked, in one way or another, the same two questions: "What can we do with students who are failing?" and "How can our school get better results?" The site is packed with information on how to improve a child's success with homework and school, how to accelerate learning in the classroom, improving reading ability, improving behaviour and improving listening. There are also pages of support material for teachers and parents on basic teaching techniques, how to run a well-managed classroom, and blank forms for contracts. Whatever your teaching philosophy, I highly recommend taking the time to look at this site and picking up some ideas that might work with your teaching style and students.

Canada's SchoolNet <http://www.schoolnet.ca>

Canada's SchoolNet is packed with information on Canada as well as information for a worldwide audience interested in education. This searchable site has four main categories: SN Today, Learning Resources, Services and Partners. There are over 5,000 learning resources and a wealth of curriculum information. There are links to community programs, computers for schools, the SchoolNet News Network program, information on First Nations, and digital resources on Canadian history and culture.

Community Learning Network <http://www.cln.org/>

The main menu of the Community Learning Network is a well-organized source of educational resources for the K-12 teacher. The following links: Educational WWW Resources for K-12 Students and Teachers, Integrate the Internet into the Classroom, Learn More about the Internet, Professional Development in Information Technology and Province of British Columbia's K-12 Educational Community are followed by detailed descriptions and key words. A very useful and fruitful resource for teachers is the CLN theme pages. Here can be found links, which focus on a theme found in the K-12 curriculum. The curricular links provide informational resources for those interested in learning more about the topic while the instructional materials links provide support for teachers. The CLN staff has certainly made their site easy to use for the busy educator.

Digital Education Network (DEN) <http://www.actden.com>

The ACTDEN site is made up of seven DENs or subject categories. Each offers information and interactive features that encourage students to learn and to think. There are a number of features in this site that will appeal to students and teachers. One of the most important is the focus on content by combining traditional methods with

interactive ones. Content is presented with both the teacher and student in mind. Student lessons are presented in a very appealing format with graphics used sparingly yet very effectively. An added feature of this site is the use of computerized online unit multiple choice tests to evaluate student learning of the material. Once completed, the tests are submitted to the ACTDEN computer to be marked. A record is kept of all activities for students through a password system. These quiz tests are aimed at students in grades 7-12. Log into the ACTDEN and see how online curriculum can supplement your own.

DiscoverySchool <http://www.discoveryschool.com/>

As web companion to the very popular television show Discovery Channel, this website lives up to its slogan “The Thrill of Discovery in Your Classroom!” Resources for grades K-12 are easily available through a search engine, which covers major subjects in the curriculum. The link to the Puzzlemaker category is by far my favourite destination. This wonderful tool has saved me, and many teachers, hours of work. It’s fun, easy to use, and the puzzles are a hit with students. Another great resource found here is Kathy Schrock’s Guide for Educators. This well organized site is useful for enhancing curriculum and professional growth. It is updated daily to include the best sites for teaching and learning. There are more than 2,000 web links here!

Eduscapes <http://eduscapes.com/>

A great starting point for any teacher beginning his/her unit and lesson planning is the 42explore link on this website. This is a marvellous collection of topics for K- 12 students. Each week new topics are posted and previous topics are listed alphabetically and according to the dates they were posted. What I particularly like about the 42explore link are the authors’ understanding of the nature of the Internet, and the needs of teachers and students. With four to explore, the learning experiences for teachers and students will be a positive one. Head over to this site for excellent surfing.

Enchanted Learning <http://www.EnchantedLearning.com/>

This site has plenty to offer primary and elementary teachers (Pre-K-6). Wonderful resources are here for the clicking: astronomy, plants, Geography, explorers, inventors, rainforests, dinosaurs, sharks, whales, mammals, birds, butterflies, and many other animals. There are hundreds of printouts, online information pages, colouring pages, illustrated glossaries, question-and-answer pages, and interactive puzzles. You and your students will find plenty to do at this site and have fun learning it too.

Historica <http://www.histori.ca/>

Histori.ca is the website for the Historica Foundation whose mandate is to provide Canadians with a deeper understanding of their history and its importance in shaping their future. The most well known activity that can be found on the Historica site is the Heritage Minutes. The Heritage Minutes are one-minute highlights of some of the best and most exciting aspects of Canadian history that have appeared on television for over ten years. The Historica site also has resources available for teachers: very useful lesson plans, a

detailed synopsis of each Heritage Minute and the opportunity to order all the Heritage Minutes on VHS video for classroom viewing. It's a great way to introduce students to the wonderful and exciting achievements of Canadians throughout the years.