

A Current Internet  
Educational Site  
Review Newsletter:  
Researched by  
Teachers for  
Teachers

## The Best of Educational Web Sites

# SKEWL SITES



Summer  
2002

Department of the Navy

### Science & Technology Focus

Ready for a long title? The site is called *The Office of Naval Research's Science and Technology Focus Site for Students and Teachers*. It may be a mouthful to say, but if you're looking for any topic related to the ocean, you've come to the right place. "This site is packed with exciting ocean facts and information. Ocean related topics include *Ocean Life*, *Ocean Habitats*, and the *Ocean in Motion*. A section on *Research Vessels* provides information about an amazing vessel that can actually 'flip' in the water! Each subsection contains information and photos followed by a *Quick Quiz*, consisting of just five questions to help students absorb the information they've read. Other areas of the site describe how naval research is used to study the sky, the seasons, the motion of the planets, constellations and more. It's fascinating stuff.

To aid you in any research projects, the site provides a *CyberMail* area, where you can submit your "questions about ONR, its research, or topics covered in this website". If you wish, you can browse the archives of questions and answers previously submitted. The site goes the extra mile in helping students with their research by providing tips on research writing, links for additional research writing resources, and links to Science Fair sites.

<http://www.onr.navy.mil/focus/default.htm>



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email:  
skewl@uniserve.com

website:

www.skewlsites.com

Issue 5 Volume 6



## Time's Running Out...

September's just around the corner and there's no time like the present to get ready for fall. This issue is packed with sites that will 'ease' you into the new school year.

## Wondernet

*Wondernet* is a 'wonderful' science site you can use in the classroom, recommend to parents to use with their child at home, or use in a homeschool environment. This collection of hands-on experiments and activities is "adapted from *The Best of WonderScience*, Volumes 1 and 2, the hands-on elementary school physical science activity books for teachers and students". Every few months, the site brings you a new feature topic. You can do the currently featured activities or choose any of the topics listed in the past issues. For each topic there are three activities from which to choose. With intriguing topics like *Stuff that Sticks*, *Volcanoes*, and *The Science of Soda Pop*, it's hard to know where to begin! Take your pick, or choose a topic that fits in with your current science curriculum. Speaking of curriculum, you'll notice a section called *Grown-ups*. This is the place to get background knowledge on your experiments. It's definitely worthwhile for the teacher or parent to read this information so you can really help the kids understand what's going on in the experiment.

Another area of the site you won't want to miss is called *What's Up?*. This interactive area is for kids and adults to explore together. It takes the science topic on which you've been doing experiments and puts them into real life situations. The entire site has a pleasing interface, but steers clear of flashy graphics or cluttered pages. Since it's produced by a not for profit organization called *Chemistry.org*, you can be sure it won't have any annoying banner ads!

<http://chemistry.org/portal/Chemistry?PID=wondernetdisplay.html&DOC=wondernetindex.html>

Visit Skewl Sites Online at  
[www.skewlsites.com](http://www.skewlsites.com)

COMPLETE WITH FACTS, CRAFTS, LINKS, AND GAMES



## Ladybugs

This is my friend Lucy Ladybug. She is going to tell you some neat facts about ladybugs.

"Everyone loves ladybugs! Kids love them because they are colorful and easy to catch. Gardeners and farmers love them because they eat aphids which destroy crops. Ladybugs, which are actually a beetle which is an insect, are more than just pretty visitors to the garden. Explore the *Ladybugs* website and learn all about these fascinating insects." The *Ladybugs* website has all you need to develop a unit on these lively little beetles. The site provides a page of fascinating ladybug facts. Did you know that "a single ladybug can eat up to 5,000 aphids in its lifetime?" Other pages provide diagrams and easy to read information about the life cycle and anatomy of ladybugs. A crafts page has

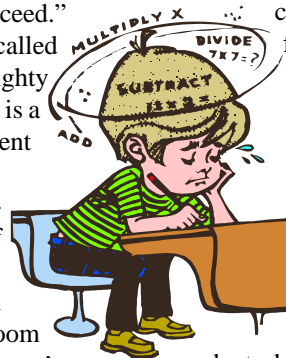
directions for lots of easy crafts for little hands, like a cut ladybug pin made of plaster of paris. The *Teacher's Guide* provides work-sheets and suggested books about ladybugs. With online ladybug games, the site is a good hands on resource for kids, too. The site is a creation of Mrs. Seagraves and you can link to her classroom site as well. Since all the information is written by the teacher or her students, you know the text is 'kid-friendly' and easy to read.

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Atrium/5924/schoolyardscience.htm>

A COLLECTION OF 80 MATH CHALLENGES FOR FAMILIES

## Figure This

"Family members—as children's first teachers—are crucial to student success. And the more adults become engaged in their children's education, the greater the chances that children will succeed." That's the purpose behind a site called *Figure This*. It's a collection of eighty math challenges for families and is a great site to recommend to a parent who would like 'extra homework' for their child. It's ideal for homeschool families, or a change of pace for families in the summer. You can even set it up as a math challenge centre in your classroom by printing out the activities. If you're in any doubt as to how engaging the challenges are, here's just a few of them: "Can you make money selling Beanie Babies®? Do



women live longer than men? Why aren't man-hole covers square?" As you can see, the challenges use math in the real world. Each challenge features a hint to get you started, the complete solution, and resources for further exploration. If you're looking for a challenge that uses a particular math concept, click on *Math Index* for a description of the important math concept involved. "Cartoon characters named *Polygon*, *Tesselation*, *Exponent*, *Tangent*, and *Axis* illustrate the challenge features" and add to the fun. The challenges are designed for middle school students, but you can probably find challenges for younger students as well.

<http://www.figurethis.org>

# KIDREACH

the online reading center

**K**idreach is an online resource and teaching aid that teachers in the public classroom can use to motivate students and cultivate reading skills". Whether you teach Kindergarten, Grade 12, or any grade in between, you'll want to look here for lesson plans you can use for book and novel studies. Two areas of the site will be especially helpful to teachers. The first is the *Anticipation Guides*. Anticipation guides are a meaningful way to introduce a new story or book. The anticipation guides "present statements about topics that will be presented in the books and novels" and are useful in developing greater understanding and discussion around the themes of the book. Check out your grade category to see if there's an anticipation guide for the book you want to explore. All the anticipation guides are submitted by real teachers in real classrooms. You might even have one you'd like to submit.



## KidsCarnival.com

For kids in the four to seven year old range, there's nothing quite as fun as a carnival! *Kidscarnival* is a commercial free website where kids can play math and early literacy games in a carnival setting. The best part is that the tickets are absolutely free! It's an ideal destination for a safe, friendly place for the younger set to play and learn online. Colourful balloons provide a cheery background for the 'ticket window' on the home page, where kids can choose games that develop math, letter recognition, and assorted skills.

The early literacy games include a game in which you must spell a picture, match describing words to a picture, and select the correct initial consonant for a picture. How about practising number recognition skills while you compete against the computer in a bingo game? Have fun

The *Lesson Plans* are the second area that will be very helpful to teachers. Some of the lessons are actually entire novel studies, and include, depending on the grade level, discussion questions, activities, and projects related to the literature. General suggestions for activities to use with a broad range of literature, such as dioramas, collages, and writing logs, are listed under *Extra Activities* within the *Lesson Plans* section.

A helpful resource for students is the *Online Writing Centre*, provided by the Writing Centre at the State University of West Georgia. It "contains various documents and handouts designed to help students with common writing problems. The page is divided by topic", with helpful advice on writing an argument, responding to poetry, analyzing literature, improving writing style, and avoiding grammatical errors.

<http://www.westga.edu/~kidreach>

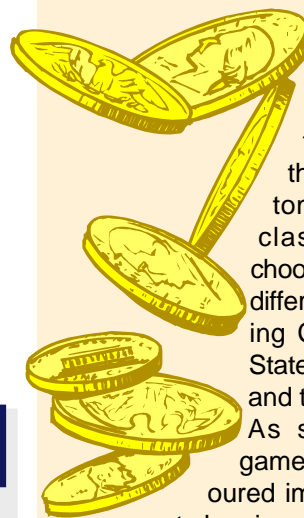
building words as you play hangman. There are clues to help you out, but you must try to make a word before all the bites are taken out a teacher's apple. The *Math Games* include setting a cute cat clock face to the correct time, matching the geometric shapes to their name, adding and subtracting penguins, and more.

With so many games from which to choose, kids can come back again and again if you have the site loaded as a classroom centre. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the site to parents of Kindergarten, grade one and two students. The games load quickly, without distracting, flashy animations.

<http://www.kidscarnival.com/games.htm>

## Change Maker

If you buy a toy for 81 cents and you give the cashier one dollar, how much change should you get? Making change can be quite a challenge for primary and some intermediate children! That's why I was very excited to come across a site called *Change Maker*. It's an online game in which kids practise making the correct change. The idea of the game is to "get as much money in your piggy bank as possible, by figuring out the correct change. If you get the answer correct, the amount of change is added to your piggy bank. If you get the answer wrong, the correct amount of change is subtracted from your piggy bank.



The more money you get in your piggy bank, the harder the questions will get". The game has two special features that allow you to customize it to suit your class. First, you can choose currency from five different countries, including Canada, the United States, Mexico, Australia, and the United Kingdom. As students play the game, they are using coloured images of their country's coins. A second special feature allows you to choose four levels of difficulty, from easy amounts using coin amounts less than one dollar to the *Super Brain* level where items cost over 100 dollars. As students work through each question, the game monitors how accurately they are working. The questions get increasingly more difficult when a player is answering most questions correctly. This is a great resource for your classroom or as a recommendation for parents to play with their children. It's part of the many quality educational games found at *FunBrain.com*.

<http://www.funbrain.com/cashreg>

# The Inspiration Behind KidsRunning.com

*The best teachers have a passion for teaching. What happens when you add a passion for teaching to a passion for running? You discover a synergy that keeps on giving inspiration to others.* ■ BY CAROL GOODROW

I have two jobs; one as a teacher and one as a Web designer. I love them both. As a teacher, I get to sit across from children who have special needs and encourage them to do something that does not come naturally. I use purchased materials when I can and I enjoy the sometimes tedious pace it takes for them to learn. When they aren't making any progress, I use my own common sense, intuition, creativity and insight and I break the block; be it writer's, reader's, or speller's block. I do the same with math. Because I have two jobs and not too much time, it's a 'no brainer' that I would put both together as much as I could, just for the practicality of the situation. So as you will see below I integrate school work (which does not always come naturally) with the most natural physical activity known to mankind; running. This led me to my second job as a web designer.

During my thirty year career as a teacher, I became a runner (or actually a jogger by many people's standards). I ran a little; ran longer; went to my first race; got my first running number; and learned to love to do something for myself. As soon as I received that first running number, I knew that I wanted to collect more and hang them from the ceiling in my class to post as a giant number line for my kids to learn their math strategies.

With that first race, I started integrating running and learning. Before long I got involved with the Web. First, I posted information about my running on forums. Next, I had my kids write a 'Dear Runner' letter asking for more running bib numbers for our collection. As the numbers started pouring in, we began integrating all aspects of the curriculum with running:

- We ran
- We wrote in journals
- We wrote thank-you notes to the runners for language arts
- We logged our mileage across the U.S.
- We developed a home exercise program, made a mock 100 mile route and awarded our progress with an end of the year family fun run.
- We added, spelled, wrote, and read, the word 'running'

I was contracted by *Runner's World* magazine to build a kids' running web site for them. Now my web involvement is almost entirely with KidsRunning.Com. The site is full of information for parents, coaches, teachers, and running kids: from news, to advice, to school curriculum. The activities are open ended in order to appeal to all learning styles. The design concept, which is my own, was programmed directly using HTML. I didn't use a web editing package. I designed all of my own graphics with *Appleworks Paint* or *Adobe Illustrator*. Its design is simple and 'low tech'. There's nothing fancy on KidsRunning.Com. The graphics give the site a whimsical look, but there is nothing flighty about this site. It's based on current health and fitness research and its message is powerful. Stay healthy and fit through running, but learn and have fun while you do so.

There are a myriad of ways this site can be used in the classroom. Here are just a few: **INSPIRATION and IDEAS FOR HOME OR THE CLASSROOM HEALTHY SNACK:** Teachers can read articles on classroom snack programs and get ideas how to implement a healthy snack program in their own classroom. It will inspire and guide teachers to design their own programs.

#### INCENTIVES

The site offers free incentives to kids who complete various running programs. These are earned by children at home or in the school setting. The incentives consist of colored ribbons, each with a different reward:

- **Blue:** Log-a-Mile program. Kids are rewarded for running distance.
- **Green:** Run the Seasons. Kids integrate running and nature.
- **Rainbow:** Toddlers and very young run and learn to read their color words.
- **Red:** Kids integrate running with reading and writing skills.

#### ONLINE PUBLISHING

There are many themes presented on KidsRunning.Com. Stories, essays, and po-



*"The site is full of information for parents, coaches, teachers and running kids"*

ems are accepted from writers of all levels and many of these are published. *Cutout Kids*, *Running in Different Lands*, *Running in Different Seasons*, *Heart-healthy Poetry*, and *Running with Family* are just a few of the themes. Kids are also encouraged to submit their own original theme ideas.

#### ART

KidsRunning.Com accepts and publishes health related art from kids of all levels.

#### ADVICE

Kids can write letters to the editor or ask a question about fitness. Most letters are answered by an editor or coach and many are printed.

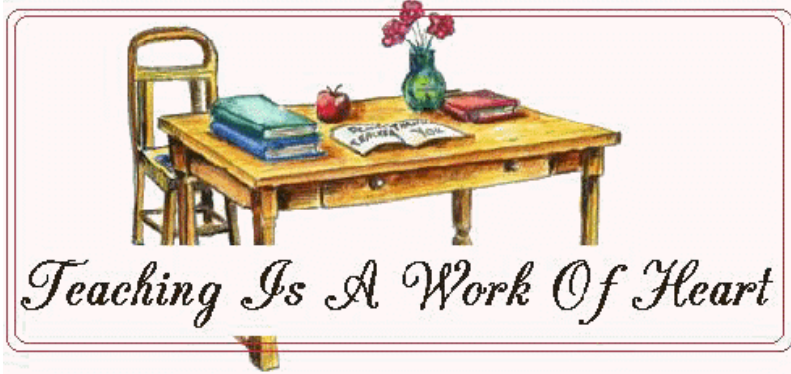
#### PRINTABLES

Materials can be printed for use in the classroom or at home. Here are a few: Running journals, spelling tricks, valentines, birthday invitations, running numbers, creative writing blanks, charts to log mileage, and more.

#### NEWS

From time to time I add news flashes from health and nutrition research. Sometimes elite runners are featured on my site and once a year I am official press at the Boston Mar-

*Continued on page 5*



**T**eaching Is A Work of Heart is a web resource for primary teachers. Mrs. Gallagher, a primary teacher from the state of Washington in the U.S. shares "teaching ideas, inspiration, links, lessons, units, and activity sheets. [She has] designed this site as a learning tool for herself and as a helping tool for other teachers". The site is bursting with ideas to enliven your classroom as you gear up for the school year. New teachers will appreciate her links for *1st Year Teachers*, *Behaviour Ideas*, *Bulletin Boards*, and *Themes*. For organizational and assessment tools click on the links to *Rubrics* and *Graphic Organizers* and *Report Cards*. Just click on *The Reading Rug* for all the tools for K - 3

reading you can imagine; fingerplays, reader's theatre scripts, phonemic awareness activities, online authors, and much more.

Whether you're looking at the math or language arts resources provided, it's clear that Mrs. Gallagher enjoys using children's literature to teach concepts. You'll find dozens of picture books and teacher resource books for just about every subject area. Watch out, or you'll find yourself following the links to Amazon.com to load up your shopping cart with great books for the classroom!

**http://  
www.teachingheart.net/**

*Continued from page 4: The Inspiration...*

thon. I do my best to relate the stories I report on at the marathon, to kids and families.

My work with KidsRunning.com is a passion. It comes from my heart, but I'm a good listener too and when I get suggestions I ponder over them and then I also use my head. I have had many respected people that have inspired me over the years and will keep inspiring me. People, such as Amby Burfoot, Editor of *Runner's World Magazine*, who has challenged me to reach my dream of becoming a published author.



*Carol Goodrow (in the middle) has been teaching since 1972 in the area of Primary and Special Education. Currently she lives in Massachusetts and works at Parker Memorial School in Tolland, Connecticut. She is married to a massage therapist and has two grown children. She stays fit by walking in the morning, riding her bike for 15 miles at midday and running 3-5 miles later in the day! You can visit KidsRunning at [www.kidsrunning.com](http://www.kidsrunning.com)*

Visit Skewl Sites Online at  
**[www.skewlsites.com](http://www.skewlsites.com)**

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Aldergrove, B.C.  
CANADA  
V4W 1G6

OR EMAIL US AT:  
**[skewl@uniserve.com](mailto:skewl@uniserve.com)**

## Proton Don

*Proton Don* provides a fun game format for learning the elements and symbols of the Periodic Table of the Elements. I came across this site when looking for a web resource to help my son memorize the Periodic Table for his science class. "There are two ways to play: You are given an element's name, you must click on the element's symbol. Or one of the element symbols is shown in red, and you must type in the element's name." You can vary the level of difficulty by opting for the most common elements or all the elements. The game also provides a tutorial format; this version gives you the answer. With this option, you can use Proton Don to teach your students the names of the elements and the symbols. Students enjoy the game format, and get immediate feedback when they make an error.

This site is part of *Funbrain.com*. Be sure to check out this 'megasite' for tons of learning games in all subject areas.

<http://www.funbrain.com/periodic/>



See you  
next  
month!!

DISCOVER HOW GOVERNMENT AFFECTS YOUR DAILY LIFE

## The PBS Kids Democracy Project



**T**he *PBS Kids Democracy Project* is designed to help children in grades 3 - 6 learn about an important topic; how government affects their everyday lives. It's U.S. based, but will be useful for students in any country whose government is based on democracy. To learn about the role government plays in our lives, kids can click on different buildings in a community, like the hospital, the police station, and the courthouse. The information is useful to kids because it provides information that is relevant to their lives. When they click on the school, for example, they can find out how the government is involved in deciding "what food goes on a school lunch tray". The explanations are short and sweet, and kid-friendly.

Kids can get a first hand look inside a voting booth to discover what having the right to cast your vote is all about. By stepping inside a time machine, students get a chance to "walk in someone else's shoes". By stepping back to the year 1920, for example, kids can find out what it was like for women to get a chance to vote in a presidential elec-

tion for the first time.

They may just come away with a new appreciation for the voting rights that we tend to take for granted! U.S. children can voice their opinion on an important issue in an online vote, and find out just how important it is to exercise one's right to vote.

How would your students like to be the president for a day! In this online activity stu-

dents take on the role of the president and get a chance to hold a press conference, have lunch with foreign dignitaries and pass important bills. Teachers can click on *Classroom Resources* for some more great lesson plans that pertain to each of the three main sections of the site. Teachers will ap-

preciate the uncluttered, advertisement free layout of the site, and kids will enjoy the hands-on activities that make this a top notch learning resource!

<http://www.pbs.org/democracy/kids/mygovt>

"Kids can get a first hand look inside a voting booth to discover what having the right to cast your vote is all about."

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25104 58th Avenue  
Aldergrove, B.C.  
CANADA  
V4W 1G6

[skewl@uniserve.com](mailto:skewl@uniserve.com)