

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND EDUCATION

Application 2: Emerging Technologies and Education

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The world as we know it is quickly changing. Some say that the Industrial Age is finally over, giving way to the Information Age. Others claim that companies that make products will soon be quickly overtaken by companies that specialize in expertise and creativity, commodities that can't be duplicated by machines or exported to another economy on the edge of the globe. As the global situation changes, then, a new host of emerging technologies is surfacing.

This week, as I explored various emerging technologies on the Internet, I came across a unique web site called Journal Zone (<http://www.journalzone.com>). I believe that this product and the ideas behind it have the potential to change the way that the modern classroom works.

Journal Zone, a product created by LCSi, is an online tool for reflective collaboration. Using a journal environment, this software allows students to record and follow their thoughts and plans, discuss their project investigations, and create interactive online presentations. In one sense, it's a social networking tool that is built specifically for the classroom.

Journal Zone is unique among social networking solutions, because it allows students to enter not only text, but also animation, graphics, and illustrations. Other students can comment on each piece of work, discussing its merits and providing

suggestions for improvement or change. This possibility brings about an opportunity for higher-level thinking, questioning, and exploration.

Moreover, One of the more unique characteristics of Journal Zone is that it can be installed on a local network, giving a school system complete control of permissions, access, interactions, records, and improvements. This helps a school provide a safe and scalable way for students to learn about collaboration and interaction while sharing creative content.

With the use of this software, then, the teacher's role effectively becomes that of a facilitator, guiding students through learning experiences and interactions. After setting up a framework that encourages successful exploration and learning, the teacher can sit back and let students take initiative and ownership.

Furthermore, LCSI, the company that produces Journal Zone, is well known for its interactive educational software, MicroWorlds. Consequently, it has a broad user base and well-established resources to improve its products, giving future viability to the Journal Zone learning platform. It should be around for years to come and will probably be regularly improved.

Overall, much like the handheld computers that Trotter describes, Journal Zone is an emerging technology that offers a unique and safe collaborative environment to schools, teachers, and students (2001). Through the framework it provides, students can

learn to create and comment on work. This, in turn, expands their ideas, encourages critical thinking, and helps students learn to struggle with competing ideas in a discussion-based environment. Ultimately, this emerging technology could be the basis of a new way of learning in the classroom.

Resource:

Trotter, A. (2001). Handheld computing: New best tech tool or just a fad? [Electronic version]. *Education Week*, 21(4), 8.