

A-Z Cool Tools

Use Technology To Increase Student Engagement,
Improve Your Productivity and Build A Caring
Classroom Environment

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Version 3

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my friend and coworker Liane Dattilo for editing this version of A-Z Cool Tools. In addition to major edits, she correlated the Common Core Standards to the various tools

Distribution

A-Z Cool Tools is a free publication and can be printed, distributed and used in an educational setting with no permission needed by the author.

For more Cool Tools be sure to subscribe to my blog at

<http://tablettalk.info>

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my parents who were my first and best teachers and my wife who is my very favorite teacher.



A is for Animoto. This Cool Tool allows you to create stunning videos. You will never create another slideshow again once you start doing things the Animoto way. Animoto is a service that will take images you upload and create a professional looking video. The images will display, transition and rotate with the tempo of the music you select. The finished product can be added to a website, shown full screen, or shared via email. Animoto is great for use in school for several reasons. The music is donated by the artists, and credit is properly given. While you can upload your own music file, it is certainly easier to use the items provided. Animoto offers several levels of accounts. As a teacher, you can apply for a free version of one of the higher level of plans, the "all-access pass." With this pass, you are not limited to the 30-second clips which restrict a regular free account. Check out Animoto and you will enjoy making awesome short movies for the end of the year, showing off your school to the world or even better, have students create short movies to complement their written work.



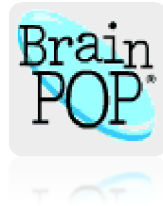
Animoto addresses these Common Core Standards: 2.W.6, 3.W.6, 4.W.6, 5.W.6, 4SL5, 5SL5

A is also for Award. You can easily create awards for your students at Certificate Street. The awards download as .pdf files with text boxes for you to customize with your name, the name of the student and in some cases a place to embellish the content of the award. When printed in color they are suitable for framing and the site frequently adds new templates. Certificate Street is easily navigated and free to use.





B is for BrainPop. Enjoy short animated films on a variety of topics. BrainPop is one of the few tools on this list that is not free, but it is good enough that it is worth the purchase price . If you strictly want to stick with the free tools, BrainPop does



rotate about 21 movies through its free collection. These movies are provided as a service and as a sample of the high quality content that is available to subscribers. The typical BrainPop film shares many characteristics of great children’s literature. All Brain Pop movies begin with their featured characters, Tim and Moby. They have a comfortable storyline, which starts with a letter from a viewer asking a question about a curricular topic. The short cartoon then explains the curricular topic in a kid-friendly way. The film is followed by a multiple-choice quiz that can be taken individually or as a group.

B is also for brainstorming with BubblUs. Use this free, online mind-mapper when brainstorming with students or colleagues. Use the service to create diagrams or flow charts.

Bubble.us addresses these Common Core Standards: 3W2, 4W2, 5W2, 3W3, 4W3, 5W3, 3SL4, 4SL4, 5SL4

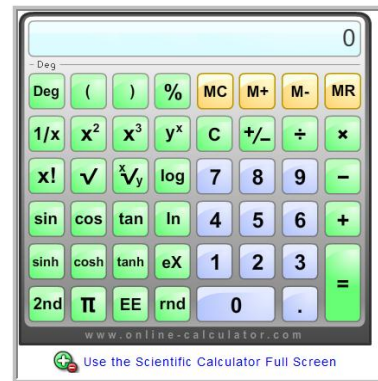
B stands for blogging. There are plenty of blogging tools available, many of which are free. The WordPress platform is popular for several reasons. Teachers enjoy the many ways WP allows you to post, including the “post by voice” option. With a phone call, you can create an audio post. Teachers who blog can invite students to comment and interact on their blog. A teacher blog is also a great place to link to helpful websites you want to share with your students and show off the wonderful things you are doing in your classroom.

Blogging with students will cover these Common Core Standards: KW6-5W6
1W1-5W1, 1W2- 5W2, 1W3 -5W3, 3W10-5W10



C is for calculator, as in, a really big calculator. Use this calculator for teaching the basic functions, working out multi-step problems as a group and playing number games.

For teachers of older students, there is an online scientific calculator as well (pictured).



C is also for Comic Creators. There are several Comic Creators out there, and it seems like more are unveiled all the time. Start with BeFunky for adding great effects to pictures that you already have. Add comic-like speech bubbles and captions to your images, they will make great additions to your bulletin boards.

Creaza will allow you to create more complex cartoons than BeFunky. Registration is required and the tool is more advanced, but the end results are well worth it. Once you are used to Creaza be sure to check out the other tools they offer. You can create a mind map similar to BubblUs, or a movie in the style of iMovie or Movie Maker. Choose from clips they provide or upload your own. The best comic creator I have seen, though is not a free tool. is Comic Life and you won't be disappointed. They offer a free 30 trial of their superior comic creating product, and even at full price it is a great value.

The concept of creating comics addresses these Common Core Standards: KSL5,1SL5,2SL5,4SL5, 5SL5



D is for drawing. If you want to use your Tablet PC or IWB for drawing or painting, here is a starter list of helpful sites:

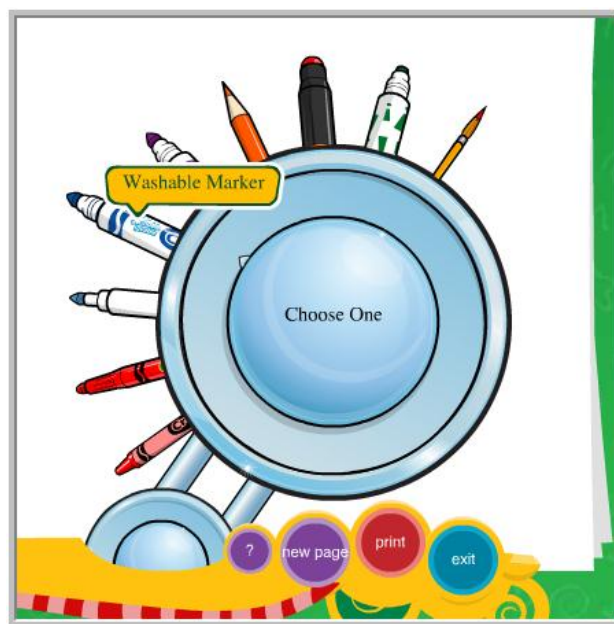
Modern Art: <http://bomomo.com/>

Picasso-Style: <http://www.picassohead.com/create.html>

Draw With A Partner: <http://cosketch.com/>

Crayola Tools: http://www.crayola.com/coloring_application/

Detailed Draw Tools, Replay Drawings: <http://slimber.com/>

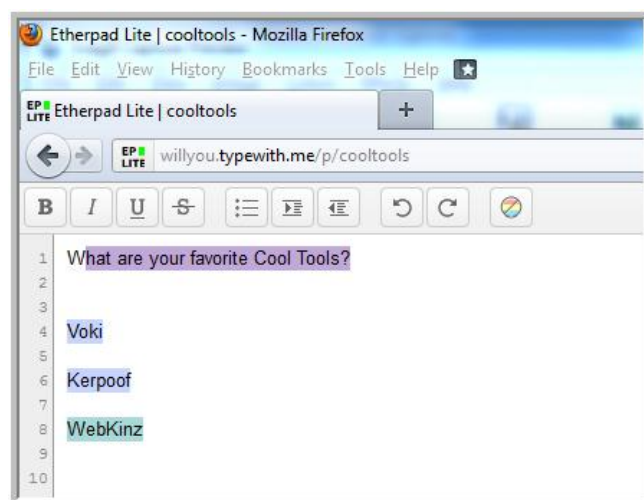




E is for EtherPad, which is a simple collaboration platform. Have you ever had the need to work on a document with several people at a time? The etherpad site TypeWith.Me allows you to create a simple online document which can be edited by as many as sixteen people at once. The best part is naming the document.

Navigate to <http://willyou.typewith.me> and enter a name for your pad. Share the URL with friends. Multiple people can take notes for faculty meetings and professional development sessions. Kids can collaborate in real time.

Etherpad, and writing collaboratively address these Common Core Standards: KW6,1W6,2W6,3W6,4W6,5W6





F is For Flickr. [Flickr](#) is a social photo sharing site. While I use a similar service called [Picassa Web](#) I think Flickr is great for searching through pictures to use in projects. The strength of Flickr is that it seems to be used by more pro photographers so the quality is exceptional. They also have a way that they tag their photos, which makes it handy for

searching.

Related to Flickr, check out [Spell With Flickr](#) and the similar [Metaam Words](#) to spell words and phrases with letters found in different Flickr pictures. I used this utility to find the letters in this eBook and for the logo on my blog <http://tablettalk.info>.

Flickr, and photo sharing, address Common Core Standard: 5SL5





G is for Graphic Organizers. Check out [Freeology](#) for an extensive collection of graphic organizers and other printable teacher tools. Download and print, or better yet, print them to Windows Journal and project them.

Graphic Organizers address these Common Core Standards: KRL9, 1RL9, 2RL9, 5RL3, 4RL6, 3RL9, 4RL9, 5RL9, 5RI9, 4RI6, 3RI9,

G is also for Google Docs. Google Docs is a free service, which allows you to collaborate on a file with colleagues. Another great feature of this service is the large amount of storage. Even if you never use the actual online word processor, it is a great place to back up documents and files of all types. When you back up files to Google Docs you can make them available (or not) to other people, which is a great way to distribute electronic handouts or create a simple webpage.

Google Docs addresses these Common Core Standards: KW6, 1W6, 2W6, 3W6, 4W6, 5W6

Google Maps are handy for showing students the physical location of the places that you are reading about and studying. When characters in various novels visit landmarks or buildings, consider mapping a trip from your current location to the location in the book. If you do this with several places, students will get a context for their relative location and gain map skills.



Use the driving directions for fun estimation exercises, and use the street view for "tours" of famous places (pictured).



H is for Homework. Not the boring old kind of homework we all used to give. Leveraging technology allows you to give personalized and differentiated homework. There are several places where you can create student accounts and have your kids work through lessons and simulations. In many cases you can assign different types of work to different students.

The best part? Instead of grading stacks and stacks of homework, you'll be provided with data such as time on task, levels accomplished, and suggested lessons for individual students.

Places where you can create student accounts for homework replacement:

TenMarks. Math only. Free for individual teachers and their students, Students earn certificates <http://tenmarks.com/>

Khan Academy. Math heavy, other disciplines being added. Free. Known for videos, there is a "coaching" piece where you can add your students. They work through problems, earn badges for accomplishments. Teachers have a "dashboard" for monitoring progress. <http://www.khanacademy.org/>

Spelling City. The paid for version of the site allows student accounts and record keeping. <http://www.spellingcity.com/teachers.html>

Test Prep (HS Students) SAT, ACT test prep. Monitor time spent, progress made of the students you are mentoring <http://www.number2.com/>

Free Rice. The popular "donate while learning" site has a log-in option. Great for competitions among classes and tracking year-long donations. <http://freerice.com>



I is for Images. You have tons of images of your students, right? You take pictures of your students on the first day of school, during the field trip to the zoo, and while they are performing. Have a blast with the pictures you have taken of your students. Some things you can do with your pictures:

Use Google's Picassa program to organize, crop and add text to them. Picassa will help you create wonderful collages, simple video slideshows, and online photo albums.

Use one of the many image editing sites available to do fun and crazy things with the pictures.

Image editing sites:

Photo Fun at: <http://www.photofunia.com/>

Cook up something creative at: <http://www.imagechef.com/>

Place photo on a sketch, and more at: <http://www.dumpr.net/>

Finally, display them. Use pictures of your students on your desktop, as your screensaver, and print them out for class bulletin boards.



J is for JCPS. My employer in Louisville, Kentucky maintains a list of kid friendly sites that are searchable by grade and subject level. Check out [Homework Help](#) and [Practice Your Skills](#) for exceptional student friendly links.



J is also for Join Me
(<https://join.me/>) Use join me

for quick screen sharing. If you want to have a training session or webinar, you can use Join Me to share your screen with others.

Last but not least, J is also for [JotForm](#). Use JotForm for professional-looking surveys and forms. You can place a JotForm questionnaire on your website or blog.





K is for Kerpoof! Kerpoof is an online multimedia content generator that is kid friendly. Kids can create drawings, greeting cards and even movies. Kerpoof is great for starting stories, especially when discussing story elements such as setting. Be sure to check out the Kerpoof

Teacher Guide, because it gives very clear directions about how to use the individual tools. It also gives lesson plan ideas and suggests great uses for the tool.



There are free and paid versions of Kerpoof.

Kerpoof is open-ended; there are a great deal of uses for this tool.

The activities on Kerpoof address these Common Core Standards: KRL3, 1RL3, 2RL3, KRL7, 1RL7, 2RL7, 3RL3, 4RL3, 5RL3, 3RL5, 4RL5, 5RL5, 3RL7, 4RL7, 5RL7, 4RL9, 5RL9

K is also for KidBlogs. Use this free blogging platform if you want your students to blog. They will be safe and secure behind a password; allowing them to communicate and collaborate online, but only with students in their school.





L is for Learning Games. One of my favorites is a [Coffee Shop](#) simulation from Cool Math Games. This activity's strength is that it teaches a lot of economic principle. Participants run a coffee stand over the course of fourteen simulated days (the game really takes about 30 minutes) and participants must purchase

supplies, set the price and provide service in order to maximize profits. The same site offers a [Lemonade Stand](#) simulation. Some other favorite learning games include the offerings at [FunBrain](#). (*FunBrain has been around forever, and was the original place where the "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" Series began!*)



There are also plenty of good learning games for younger kids at [PBS](#).

L is also for [Live@EDU](#). The free suite of tools from Microsoft has a lot to offer, including:

Free online storage space. There is plenty of room to back up your files. No more thumb drives!

Online versions of Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. Create and edit documents online.



M is for Magnets. You can use premade 'kits of magnets [here](#). If you are a SMART Board user, be sure to search SMART Notebook Gallery for the term 'fridge magnets' for the classic multicolored letters we all used to play with as kids. Your students will love making words, sentences, and poetry out of all of these options. They are especially useful on an interactive whiteboard or Tablet PC.

If you want to create your own word magnets, download the free suite of tools from [Tryptico](#). The word magnets are one of the 20 tools included. (*See also T for more details.*)

Word magnets address these Common Core Standards:

KRF3, 1RF3, 2RF3, 3RF3





N is for NewsQuiz, KET's high quality and kid friendly weekly news show. News Quiz is now available as a podcast, which means you can watch it at a time that suits your class schedule. Are you outside the great Commonwealth of Kentucky? CNN Student News might suit you if you have older students. The site has news that is of interest to students and the News Challenge is an engaging game-show style review of recent headlines.

National Geographic Young Explorers is a great site for young readers. The photography is excellent and the content is high interest. The site reads the content aloud to the kids; either a sentence at a time, or one word at a time.





O is for Online Stopwatch. Keep your students and your day on task by projecting the time remaining before the next transition. An advantage of the online stopwatch over the e.ggtimer is that it counts up as well as down. Some prefer e.ggtimer because you can see the time counting down when when you have multiple tabs open. A third option, The Countdown Timer plays inspiring music like the William Tell Overture and the like while counting down. Whatever makes you tick, use one of these clocks to keep instruction moving.

Using countdown timers addresses Common Core Standards: 1MD3, 2MD7, 3MD1, 4MD2,



P is for Pandora. Victor Hugo stated that “**Music expresses that which cannot be put into words and cannot remain silent.**” The acclaimed French novelist and poet must have held music in high regard, and many teachers feel the same way. Music can help create a caring community in the classroom and support academic instruction.

Once you are logged in to Pandora you will build stations. You can build multiple stations. Each station is based around one or more artists or songs. The interesting aspect of Pandora is that once a station is built, it can be accessed for a constant stream of music that is similar to the song or artist that it was built upon. If desired, songs can be rated with a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” to further customize the station.

If you need step-by-step directions (with illustrations) you can find them at <http://tinyurl.com/PandoraHandout> . A feature that Pandora does *not* provide is the ability to search for a specific song. If you need to play The Star Spangled Banner or My Old Kentucky Home or any other selection, you will want to use the music streaming service Groove Shark (<http://grooveshark.com>) or the video service YouTube (<http://YouTube.com>) to accomplish these goals.



Q is for Quiz. If you want to embed a quiz in your teacher web page try [QuizSnack](#) or [ProProf](#). If you envision a situation where you are really going to analyze the results you might go with the more robust and fun sounding [Survey Monkey](#).



R is for Read Aloud. The previously mentioned [National Geographic Young Explorers](#) is an online companion to the print magazine reads the articles to the students. The paper edition of the magazine is reasonably priced, but the site is valuable even without it.

For stories that are read aloud look at [Tumble Books](#) and [Online Audio Stories](#) and for very young readers try [Starfall](#). Audio Books for older students can be found at [LibroVox](#).

Reading Aloud activities address these Common Core Standards: KSL2, 1SL2, 2SL2, 3SL2,4SL2,5SL2



S is for Spelling City. Use Spelling City to create word games such as Hang Mouse with your spelling or vocabulary words. Start the year out by making puzzles out of your class list while you get to know everyone. Students can navigate around this site on their own and there are different levels of accounts available at the free and paid for level.

Spelling City address these Common Core Standards:

1RF3, 2RF3, 3RF3, KL2, 1L2, 2L2, 3L2, 4L2, 5L2

S is also for Starfall. Starfall is a wonderful place for emerging readers to gain skills and confidence. There are rhyming and high interest books and stories for the younger readers at Starfall.

T is for TabletTalk, my blog. Subscribe to my blog for a regular serving of new and different cool tools.



T is also for TaDa List. TaDa List is a dead simple list manager stored in the cloud. The strength of this service is that you can maintain multiple to-do lists and access them on different computers. Share a free account with your significant other and they can view and add items to your list.



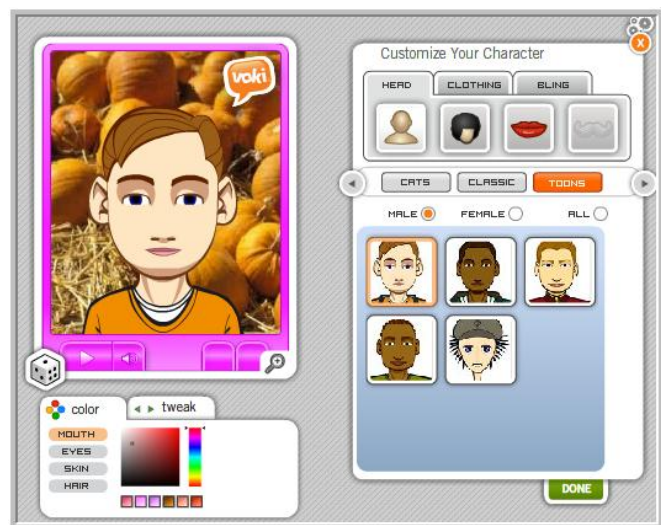
U is for Ustream. Ustream is a service which allows you to broadcast live video. With the use of a webcam or you can create your own little internet TV show. Consider broadcasting your special classroom events. The parents of students who are out of town or home-bound will appreciate the chance to be involved.



V is for VanGogh. This site will make a good impression on your students. It is a kid-friendly biography of the artist. Here is a wonderful read aloud story book using the artist's paintings as illustrations.

This read aloud will cover these Common Core Standards: K.SL.2, 1SL2, 2SL2, 3SL2, 4SL2, 5SL2

V is also for Voki. A Voki is an animated avatar, or cartoon, that you can place on your class website or blog. Use a Voki to welcome people to your site or give students directions. Make a Voki that looks like you, or create a funny avatar. A Voki can use your voice, or you can type your message and it will read it.



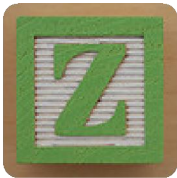


X is for Xtranormal. Click, drag and type to make animated movies. Choose from historical and fictional characters. This site will get your creative juices flowing and stretch your student's higher level thinking. They will have so much fun writing scripts and directing the animated films they won't realize they are learning, thinking and planning.

Xtranormal will cover these Common Core Standards: 4W4,5W4



Y is for Yola. Use this free website builder to create an attractive yet simple web presence for your class. Yola, and the similar site Weebly, allow you to use templates to point and click your way to the creation of a class website you can be proud of.



Z is for Zamzar, the free file conversion tool. If you have a file in one format and need it in another, this is the utility for you. It is a good way to be sure you have your online videos backed up offline. I recently needed a YouTube video for an important presentation, so I used zamzar to email me a copy of it so I would have it in case of internet failure.

There you have it... my list of cool tools. I invite you to share your favorite tools with me by interacting with me on my blog or twitter. I hope you have learned something that you can use right away with your students. Thanks for reading!



About The Author

My name is Jeremy Renner and I am a technology resource teacher in Louisville, Kentucky. I support elementary school teachers who have Tablet PCs integrate technology in their classrooms. I am interested in Web 2 tools, resources that increase student engagement, creative SMART Board usage and the ANGEL Learning environment. I work in Jefferson County Public Schools, where all 6,000 full time teachers have a Tablet PC and projector. I am a JCPS eMentor, a certified principal, a doctoral student, a National School Boards Association '20 to Watch' Educator, a SMART Board Certified Master Trainer and all around nice guy.



That's me, on the left.