51 Fun Tech Tools and Resources for Busy Educators
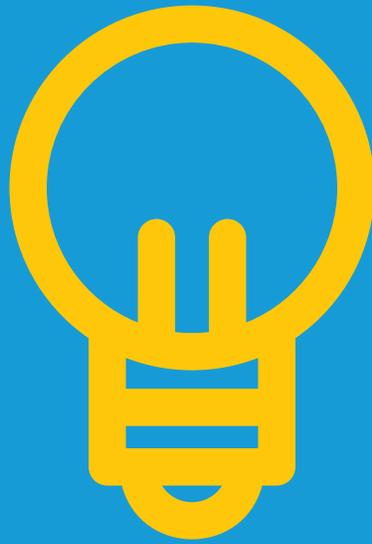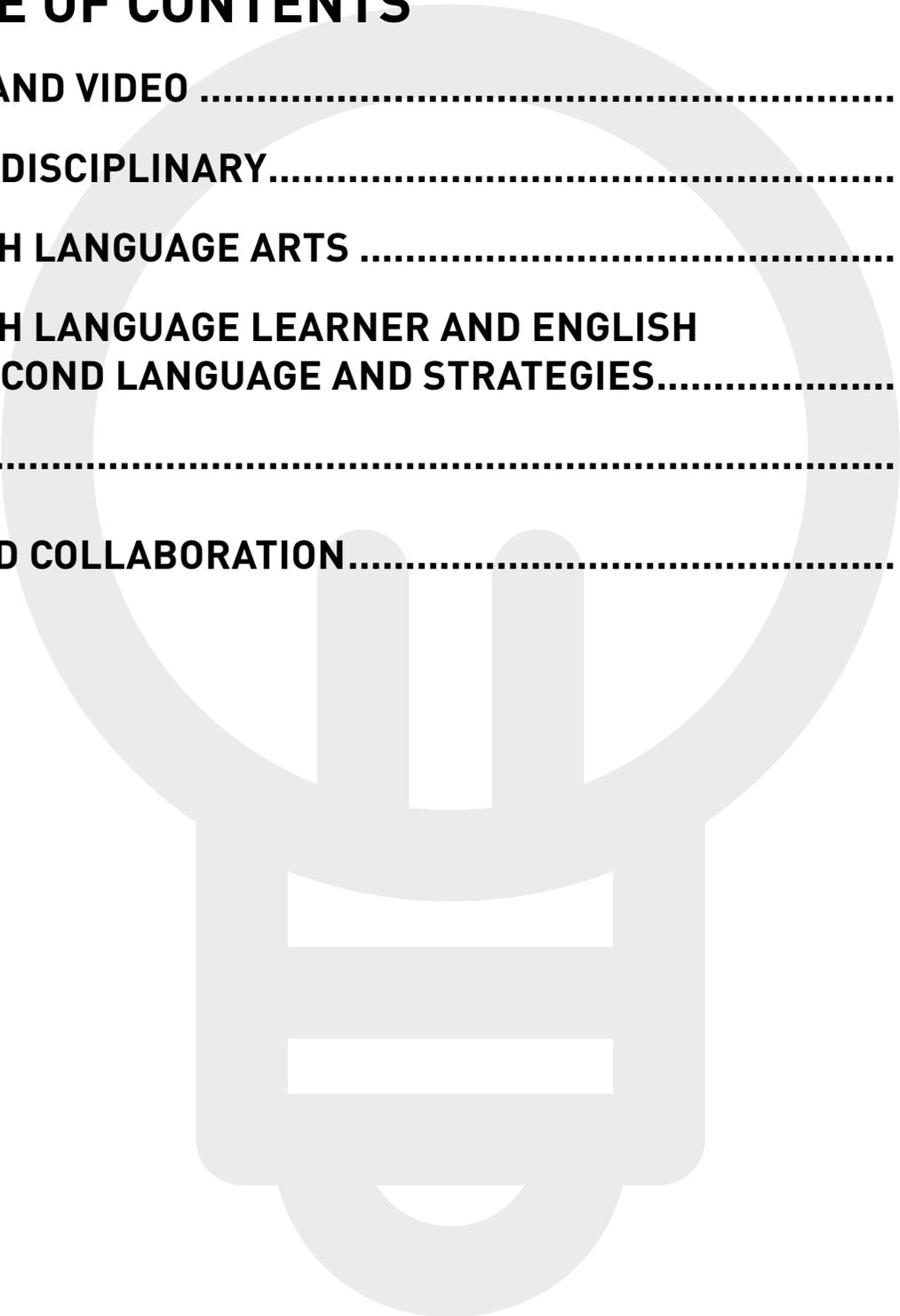
tcea

So often in education, we struggle to find the right tools and strategies to make learning happen. The fact is, there are only so many hours in the day. It's often helpful to have a trusted guide to point you to the most effective technology, methods, and ideas.

That's why TCEA has put together this ebook filled with powerful tools that you may not have heard of before. TCEA supports educators in a number of ways and is always on the lookout for great resources to use for learning.

All the tools in this ebook were free at the time of its publication and follow sound instructional practices. We hope you enjoy them — and that they help to save you a little time and better engage your students!

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AUDIO AND VIDEO

Audio and video tools have been popular for decades. Check out how contemporary digital A/V resources can help students connect with your material.

Adding Sound to Virtual Meetings or Classes

If you want to help keep your audience involved during your next meeting or class, try using some of the fun sounds on this **soundboard**. There are 15 to choose from, and they include a laugh track, the trumpet call that starts a race, people "ooh-ing and ah-ing," and more. The sounds last only about three or four seconds each.

Sodaphonic 👍

Sodaphonic is an online audio editor that lets you record and edit your recording easily. You can cut, copy, and paste sections of sound in order to make a perfect audio clip. What's really nice about it, (besides the fact that it's free), is that it runs in the browser, so you don't have to download and install software to your computer. There is also a Chrome extension. It's also simple to use, which makes it great for student use. A free registration is suggested, but not required.

Blob Opera*

Google Arts and Culture provides this fun sound activity. Drag and pull cute singing blobs to create harmonies, songs, and more. No music skills are required.

*Image of Blob Opra

Classroom-Safe Video Learning and Creation

Zigazoo, available at no-cost for both **Android** and **iOS** devices, encourages "short-form video" creations from children. Billed as the "TikTok for kids," Zigazoo offers a variety of creative options and enables children to generate video responses to educational content in a safe environment. You can read more about this tool **here**.
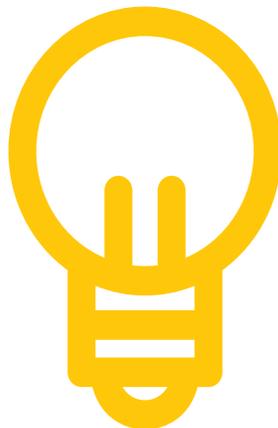
Free Music and Sounds for Elementary Projects

Looking for free music or sound effects? **Audio Library** from YouTube Studio is our go-to source because no attribution is required. Check out some of our favorite fun sound effects, too: Muscle Car Rev, Calimba, Jigsaw Puzzle, and Cartoony Bounce to Ceiling. You will need to log in to your YouTube account and find the audio library.

Online Screen Recorder and Video Editor

RecordCast brings the functionality of **Screencastify** and **Loom Pro**, but without requiring browser add-ons or downloads. That, and its "FREE" label make it an amazing find. It has a 30-minute time limit for recordings and offers a timeline that allows you to add audio tracks and overlay text. You can also record your screen, screen and webcam, or webcam only. To use the program, you will need to create an account and verify your email.

Crowd Buzzer

Need a fun, free way to provide buzzers and a leaderboard for some classroom competition? **Crowd Buzzer** has you covered. As the host, the teacher goes to **http://ccg.buzz/host** and puts in a title for the game. Students then go to **https://ccg.buzz/** and enter the game code they see in the top left hand corner of the teacher's screen. The teacher asks questions and students try to be the first ones to buzz in with the right answer.

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY

Some tools and resources provide solutions tailored to specific education challenges. Others, like that ones highlighted in this section, can be used in many teaching scenarios. How will you put them into action?

Unbelievable Teacher Tools

Flippity has one of the most useful collections of free online tools for the classroom. From flashcard makers to randomizers, scavenger hunts to timelines, bingo games to badge trackers, this site has it all. Each tool includes a demo video, detailed instructions, and a template. Amazing!

Classroomscreen

Classroomscreen was designed by teachers to help students focus on their immediate tasks and activities, and it works like an educational multitool. It provides 13 different widgets for free, including a timer, traffic light, random name picker, sound level monitor, drawing tool, poll, and work condition symbols (i.e work together, ask neighbor, whisper, or silence).

Save the Planet with the Ecosia Search Engine

Ecosia works like all the other search engines, except for one major difference: With their profits, they plant trees around the world, more than one million of them so far. As if that's not enough reason to use them, they are also completely privacy friendly, which means they don't sell your data to anyone or use third party trackers. And they have a **Chrome extension.** Make your search count!

Bamboozle for Gamification

If you want to gamify learning in your classroom, check out **Bamboozle**. The setup to create a game is simple and fast. The games can then be played as a whole class or by individual students. A free, basic account is available for educators with limited access. But the Plus version is really nice, includes a huge library of already-constructed games, and is only $7.99/month or $59.88/year.

Assessment-Based Feedback Tool: Blooket

With a free account, teachers can use **Blooket** to host a question set with a specific game mode. There are eight possible game modes that use the same question set. Students can earn points in different ways in each game mode, including a "classic" mode that is like **Kahoot**. This game is displayed via screen or projector, then students compete on their own devices tracks student progress, keeping a record of student responses. In turn, students can track their statistics via a global leaderboard.

Creating Infographics (and More) with Icograms

If you've ever enjoyed building things in SimCity, then **Icograms Designer** will bring back fond memories. To start with, Icograms opens to a plain screen with a big box. Into that box you can click-and-drag all sorts of icons that are provided. You can save your infographic to PNG or JPG image formats without creating an account, which is a big plus. The Basic account, which is free, offers more than 3,050 icons, 390 templates, and lets you save eight designs. It requires attribution.

Digital Tool for Semantic Maps

Use **yED Graph Editor** to create beautiful word or concept maps. While you can use the program on your Windows, Mac, or GNU/Linux computer, you can also use it in your browser. **yED Live** is the online, live version that features Google Drive integration (as well as other cloud storage tools) and the ability to export files. And yes, of course, it's completely free.

Rebrandly

Rebrandly allows you to quickly and easily create shortened URLs for students (or adults) to use to access websites. You create a domain name that makes sense for your classroom and then get started shortening long web addresses as needed. Unlike other shorteners, Rebrandly is not blocked by school filters. The free version provides up to 500 branded links.

Loru Games for Learning Practice

Loru Games is a newcomer to the ed tech world. Teachers create question sets or use ones already created, and students play engaging games to master the content. The site works on all devices with access to the web and has been optimized to work on Chromebooks. It offers a free version as well as a paid one that includes individual student learning tracking.

Avatar Yourself

Your students can use this **free avatar creator** to design what an author or a character from a book they are studying should look like. It can also be used for social-emotional Learning and much more. The completed avatar can be downloaded as a PNG file.

Introducing Vimboard

A modern puzzle-making tool, Vimboard creates an interactive learning experience by combining puzzle making with a multiple-choice question set. As students respond with correct answers, an image is revealed. Vimboard is free and you can use any of its pre-existing puzzles and content to get started.

Increase Student Engagement with Videos

Edpuzzle is a life saver when it comes to assigning videos to students to watch. This tool allows teachers to embed questions, narration, or notes throughout any video from a variety of sources to check for comprehension and ensure students are fully engaged. The free version of the tool allows space for up to 20 videos at a time.

Make Learning Visible

GrokSpot is a feedback, reflection, and discussion tool that helps make learning visible in the classroom. The teacher assigns a prompt for the students to answer using any device with web access. In addition, he can ask a "how confident are you that you can…" question to follow the prompt. The Basic version is free and includes unlimited custom prompts, real-time response tracking, unlimited student responses, and unlimited collaborative discussions. The Professional version ($25/year/teacher) also offers access to their extensive prompt library, individual student reports, and group reports.

Have Students Create Their Own Logos

Text Giraffe lets you type in your text (like the title of your presentation, for example) and then select what you want it to look like. There are so many different graphics, colors, and font styles to choose from. It also offers a powerful opportunity to help students learn what is good and what is bad when it comes to design.

Carrot2

Carrot2 organizes your search results into topics. You can see them in a list, a treemap, or a pie chart. And it includes a safe search feature. With an instant overview of what's available, you will quickly find what you're looking for.

Finding Alternatives

If you are looking for an alternative to a piece of software that you can't quite afford or to a website or tool that has gone away, use **AlternativeTo**. This site uses crowdsourcing to find alternatives to all the most popular resources that we use in our digital lives. Just type in the name of the product that you need to replace, and lots of ideas pop up. You can even filter the ideas by device or operating system. This is a powerful way to find free resources for your students to use at school or at home.

Release Your Inner Artist and Destress

Many of us at TCEA are old enough to remember fondly hours spent creating with the Spirograph, a fabulous drawing tool for those of us who really aren't able to draw. Now there's a free, online version available called **Inspirograph**. Since you're using your mouse instead of a pen or pencil, it's a little bit harder to maneuver. But it's still tons of fun and very relaxing in these stress-filled days.

Another Free Assessment Tool

DOOZY lets you create free multiple-choice and short-answer quizzes, then share them easily with up to 100 students. No account registration is required for either the teacher or the kids, which is great. But that also means that data from the quizzes taken is not saved. You can also modify existing quizzes to save time.

Photo Joiner Collage Maker

Create beautiful photo collages with **Photo Joiner**, a free, online tool. You can join images vertically or horizontally, make memes, and even more.

Notetaking and Organization

With its beautiful design, multimedia file support, and a great price point (free), you will absolutely love **Zoho Notebook.** Notebook boasts a robust GUI editor with about every tool you could want, including:

- Font styles (e.g. bold, italics, underline, strikethrough, and highlighting background color)
- Alignment
- Indent
- Ordered and unordered lists
- Checkboxes
- Links
- Image insertion
- Horizontal rule
- Tables
- Quotes
- Insert code

In addition to those wonderful features, you get spell check, reminders, and the ability to change the color of the background. What's more, it allows for private/public sharing of a note, note-merging, versioning, copy and move, and locking of the note. When locking a note, you simply enter a passcode to access it. You can attach files, draw, and make to-do lists on the fly.
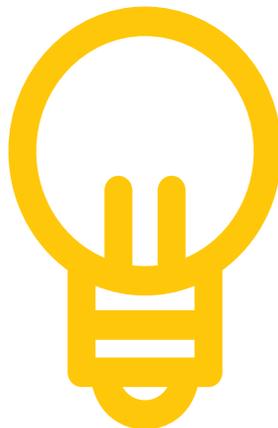
Cloud Stop Motion
[Cloud Stop Motion](#) is a powerful, free stop-motion animation package which runs directly in the browser on any device. There is nothing to install, everything is saved to the cloud. You can switch devices seamlessly at any point. Work with your animation on a zoomable, scrollable timeline. Add sound effects, music, titles, credits, and speech bubbles. And you can render the finished product to an MP4 movie. There's also an extensive library of audio, backgrounds, and styles included.

WordWall Shape Spinners
[This site](#) offers several different shape spinners, which are great for random writing assignments, identifying pictures of countries, matching shapes, and many other things you can dream up. Most of the spinners on this site require a free account, so you can use a Google authenticated

AnswerGarden for Instant Feedback and Brainstorming
Create an [AnswerGarden](#) by entering a topic for discussion. Students then respond via the web, entering their own answers or selecting answers from ones provided by the teacher. All the responses are then used to create a word cloud. Even better: No registration is required by the teacher or the students.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

These handy resources can help build literacy, encourage creative writing and thinking, and engage learners of all types in language learning.

Readworks

One of the best resources to help students improve their reading comprehension is **ReadWorks**. This site leverages "cognitive-science research to create high-impact instructional materials and tools that are designed for immediate use within the practical realities of current U.S. classrooms." What makes it even more astonishing is that it is completely free.

Students can access their reading online to highlight, annotate, and complete assignments or they can be printed out. Teachers can access progress reports and automatic grading. And again, it is all free with a simple teacher registration. ReadWorks has content and resources for grades K-12, so it is a must-have tool in your arsenal.
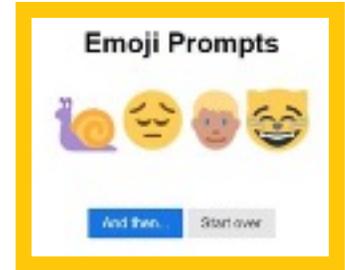
Google's Reading App Rivet

The main benefit of Rivet is that it includes a fast-growing library of over two thousand free ebooks. These books cover a wide range of topics and have been leveled by context experts. It offers the following features:

- **Tap for Help:** Tap a word to have it read to you.
- **Say the Word:** Readers can read aloud. The app will let them know what they pronounced right or wrong. It will assist them in getting their incorrect pronunciation, right.
- **Definitions and Translations:** Definitions are available for every word. Translations into more than 25 languages for non-native speakers are also present.
- **Follow Along:** Students can follow along as Rivet reads full pages of text aloud. Highlighted words appear so readers can follow along.
- **Real-Time Feedback:** As students read text aloud, Rivet will offer support if it detects a struggling reader. At the end, students can see how they did. To protect privacy, all processing of speech takes place on the device (not the web).
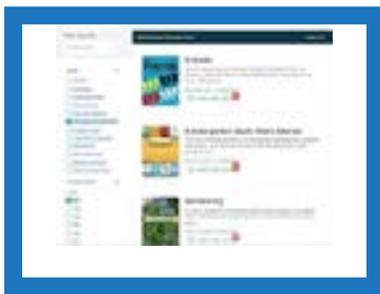- **Earn Digital Badges and Points:** Students earn digital points and badges.

Get Rivet for your **Android** or **iOS** device. What's more, it's globally available for Chromebooks in 11 different countries including the US. There is also a **Teacher's Guide** for classroom use.

Random Emoji Generator Writing Prompt

Ian Byrd designed this quick and easy Random Emoji Generator writing prompter for busy teachers. Opening the page will produce an emoji that the student should write about. When he runs out of things to say about the first emoji, he can select "And Then" and another random emoji will be produced next to the first one to continue the story. This can go on for as long as the student likes.

(Note: Some of the less than perfect emojis are included in this, so your student might get a toilet or the infamous poop emoji.)

Reading Vine

Finding good reading passages that have comprehension questions and Lexile ranges can be difficult. And finding them for free is almost impossible. But luckily for strapped educators everywhere, there is Reading Vine. "Rather than a one size fits all curriculum, Reading Vine offers supplemental reading practice that can be personalized to fit a student's or group's exact needs. Teachers, parents, and tutors simply choose appropriate passage text/questions as desired, and then save, download, or print it out and share with the students." The site has reading sets and reading passages for grades K-12 and for Lexile ranges from 0 to 1300+. All of it is searchable by skill set, age, word count, Lexile, genre, and topic. The teacher has to register to use the site, but there is no other charge for its use.

Room Recess

Room Recess has online games that reinforce important skills vital to students in grades K-6. It was developed entirely by an elementary school teacher with the goal of reinforcing fundamental learning concepts in math, reading, spelling, language arts, typing, and problem solving. Because their learning games are free, students do not have to register or have an account to use the site.

Teaching Students about Media Bias

Teaching high school students to understand and see media bias can be difficult. AllSides, however, can help. News articles about current events are shared from a variety of sources, which are identified, based on a study, as "from the center," "from the right," or "from the left." It's a great way to compare and discuss the differences in reporting. The site also offers media bias ratings for more than 800 sources.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

These tools are designed with the specific goals of English language skills and supporting learners whose first language is not English (ELL and ESL).

For Your Elementary ESL Students

Games to Learn English has more than 20 free games to help students practice grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and more. A student can play the games from the website or the teacher can create an account. The website has detailed information about each game. The GTLE site also gives information on their updates. It's a great site for your ELL or young beginners.

Create Your Own Rebus Activities

Solving a rebus puzzle can be a great learning activity for students of any age. Because it uses non-linguistic representation of familiar things, it is one of the high-effect-size strategies. And it can help with spelling and vocabulary skills as well. You can create your own rebus at **this free website**. The site will let you choose between using their own images or emoji characters. You can also turn on the ability for hints about some of the drawings to be shown.

A Safe Place to Collaborate and Share

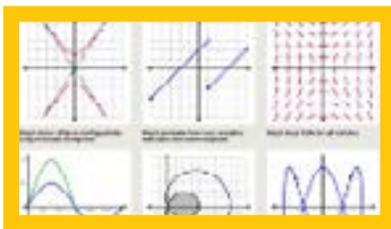**YourKnow** is an online collaboration area where the teacher creates a group and invites students to it. It lets you upload texts and create private or public discussion groups about them. ESL students can post their own writing here and get feedback, and comments in a private group.

MATH

Math is integral to tech. But tech can also help students pick up crucial math skills. Check out these nifty math resources.

Math and Emojis

Solvemoji is a free website that makes math puzzles using emojis and they are great for math warm ups and "bell ringers." There are ten levels of difficulty in classic, grid, or word types. You can create an account to join the leaderboard or just solve puzzles on the website without an account. You can also follow @slovemoji on Twitter. Note, there are ads throughout the website.
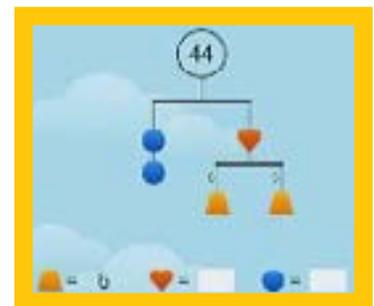

Graph Free

Graph Free was specifically designed for high school math teachers (and their students). It can be used with a wide variety of graph types and is very simple to use. No registration is required.

Would You Rather... ? Math

Would You Rather Math is awesome! It offers a number of two-statement scenarios that will spur debate, discussion, reasoning, and writing in the math classroom. One example is this: "Would you rather receive a gift of: $1.50 for every month of your life OR a nickel for every day of your life?" The questions are separated into four grade levels: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

SolveMe Puzzles Who Am I?

In each **Who Am I?** puzzle, a number robot offers clues about who the puzzle represents. The goal is to fill in the blanks for its digits and solve the mystery. Logical thinking is critical here. There are currently more than 200 visual, interactive mathematical puzzles or students can create their own puzzles to share with friends or the SolveMe Community. Students can play without an account or log in to keep track of their progress. And all SolveMe activities are self checking.
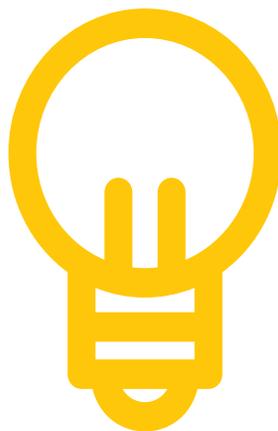
SolveMe Mobiles

[This great tool](#) provides equations practice using mobiles. Imagine a hanging sculpture made with shapes, strings, and beams. The beams and strings are weightless, but the shapes have weight. Students can also create their own mobiles for others to solve.

SolveMe MysteryGrid

[MysteryGrid](#) is another great math logic tool. To solve a mystery grid puzzle, place all the tiles on the grid so that every row and every column contains exactly one type of tile, and so that the tiles fit the clues.

Autograph 5

[Autograph 5](#) is free, downloadable software for high school math teachers (and their students). It allows you to visualize math problems in 2D and 3D designs with the click of a button.

SEL AND COLLABORATION

Some learning is subject-specific. But no matter the level or topic, building positive relationships is a requirement of learning. These resources are perfect for building healthy learning relationships.

Collabrify Suite of Educational Productivity Apps

The University of Michigan and the University of North Texas offer this completely **free suite of apps** for student collaboration and learning specifically designed for those in grades 1-6. The apps include:

Collabrify PDF Pal   **Collabrify Chart**   **Collabrify KWL**

Collabrify Writer   **Collabrify Flip Book**   **Collabrify Map**

The tools are all device agnostic and will work on any device. They also offer, again for free, tools for the 1:1 classroom for the same ages of students that includes Collabrify Lesson Builder, Collabrify Lesson Launcher, Collabrify Dashboard, and eHallway (safe chat rooms for conversations).

Puzzle Party

Another great tool from Google Arts and Culture, **Puzzle Party** has you work together digitally to create great artistic pieces as a virtual puzzle. There are three different levels of puzzle play; the more pieces there are, the harder the puzzle is. Share the link to the puzzle via Google Classroom or email. (Please note that some of the artwork may include nudity. The teacher can select the piece to be the puzzle, however, and ensure that it is safe.)

A Collaborative Whiteboard

Whiteboard.Chat is a free online drawing tool. The teacher can see the drawings or work of multiple students at the same time, making it perfect for the classroom. You can connect up to 100 people to a board, which is fantastic. And the teacher can share one copy of a PDF document and it will automatically generate individual, multi-page workbooks for each student to use.
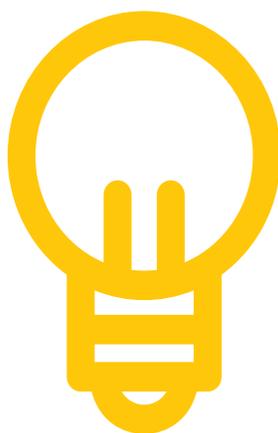
Another Great Puzzle Tool

Jigsaw Explorer is a great website for online jigsaw puzzles. They have a large selection of premium online jigsaw puzzles that are free — and they add two more each day. You can use a multiplayer mode to play with family and friends. You can also create and share puzzles using your own photos. All of the photos used for the puzzles are safe for students.

Circle-Based Visuals with Circly

Circly is a free web-based tool that allows you to create simpler ways of looking at complex topics. The teacher or students can drag-and-drop circles anywhere on the screen to create connections between ideas or topics. The tool is extremely colorful and fun to use.