

## Tech Tools

### Resources for Educators

by Marisa Aiello

Happy New School Year! One of my school year resolutions is to begin my year actually using the technology I have learned about. Let me begin by stating this: we would all like to try anything that helps our ELLs with academic language. We modify for each level, sometimes even for each individual student, with careful consideration to avoid losing either the objective or the meaning. Learning about resources, especially online resources, can be overwhelming. We are usually sitting in a conference, being inundated with new information. Like our students, we can only synthesize so much information at one time. Here are five resources to help with our new school year resolutions.

My first recommendation is [rewordify.com](http://rewordify.com). It is not the best-looking resource, but play around with this free resource and within minutes you will be saying “wow” out loud. This website simplifies the words, creates a click-on vocabulary list, and allows you to choose the academic level—all within seconds. You can utilize the hundreds of pieces of literature, already simplified, or paste in your own pieces of text; the quizzes are a good start if you create your own. Everyone can benefit from [rewordify.com](http://rewordify.com), so pass it on; if we all use this free resource, then maybe they can jazz up the site.

My next recommendation is an old resource, [brainpop.com](http://brainpop.com), but the technology continues to improve. I am aware that it is a well-known site, but unless you go on and spend some time exploring it, you cannot imagine how many resources have been added; the quizzes are perfect. If I were teaching the Grade 8 ELA curriculum, for example, I would watch the video on Vietnam, map out key words and images, and then print out a vocabulary sheet for homework; the resources for the Revolutionary War, for example, could make it fun for both fourth- and seventh-grade students. There is a fee for these services, but what an enhancement it will make for all lessons! Don’t be afraid to put some pressure on the administrator with the purchasing power. This software has all components of learning at your fingertips.

[discoveryeducation.com](http://discoveryeducation.com) is also continuously adding amazing educational resources, and it is an easy page to navigate. I didn’t mind exploring this site; if I were teaching first grade I might grab some resources from the Conquest of the Americas page. (I will applaud any website that allows you to grab resources that can aid in teaching about the Aztec or the Inca civilizations.) I went on some great virtual field trips and can’t wait to share them with my ELLs. Puzzlemaker is great for an extra study sheet, although that part of the site could be a little more pleasing to the eye. I will continue to learn from this site as I try out the math section, doing something like plotting the equation of a line. I only wish Discovery had been available for me when I was a student, but so pleased I can now rely on this as a resource for my ELLs. This resource is free with a sign-up.

In honor of this election year, I am happy to include [scholastic.com/kids/president](http://scholastic.com/kids/president). We have all been on Scholastic and this website, also free with a sign-up, has always supported all of the literature they put out, but in the last few years it has been an enjoyable learning resource as well—so much so, in fact, that students will not even realize that they are learning. If they do follow the “if you were president” prompts, use it with a translation program, and let the fun begin. Perhaps this lesson alone can bring enjoyment back to the presidential race!

This leads me to my final recommendation, one that is a translation program: [itranslate voice](http://itranslate.voice), available from iTunes. I started to use it to replace one that wasn’t fast enough to be a good resource, and is a great app for those moments that you would like to check for understanding without involving a fellow student. It is quick, and right now a little more accurate than free translators, especially when you can choose between three different versions of Spanish. It is not a free resource, but well worth the investment.

I am pleased to share through *Idiom* these five resources from great sites, resources that may be familiar but worth a fresh look with all the enhancements they offer to incorporate into our existing lessons. That's progress, and I can only hope for more!

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