

SKEWL SITES



**April
2000**

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email:
skewl@uniserve.com
website:
www.skewlsites.com

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The HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY AT FORT VICTORIA web site makes learning Canadian history fun. As I browsed through this tour of life in Fort Victoria, I couldn't help but wonder why they couldn't have learning resources like this when I was young! As students are immersed in life at this Hudson's Bay trading fort, they have a chance to 'rub shoulders' with the crowd as they mix and mingle with the residents of the fort.

"Welcome to Fort Victoria! It's the year 1863. You've just spent a lovely summer day on the S.S. Beaver, moving your possessions to Fort Victoria to set up shop as a merchant. You've heard you can make a lot of money selling supplies to the gold miners coming through the fort - perhaps you can even exchange a few stories along the way. In this Schoolnet Web Site, you'll learn about life around the fort; the people who built the fort and made it a success; some of the games the children played there; a kind doctor who brought British Columbia into Canada's confederation; you'll even see how the fort has changed in the *Then & Now* section."

May we suggest a walking tour to begin your exploration of the fort. Just click on *Fort Life* to stroll through each of the buildings of the fort. Through a series of

photos, original drawings, and narration students will get a feel for life in Fort Victoria.

An important section of the site is called *People*. Here you'll find out about key figures, such as James Douglas, who helped shape the history of British Columbia. The information is presented through photographs, anecdotes recorded by people in the fort, and written notes. The role of Fort Victoria during the Gold Rush is also explained in this section.

If you're wondering who produced this web site, click on *Team* to read the biographies of ten hard working experts who collaborated to create this Schoolnet learning resource. Learning history has never been so fun!

<http://www.tbc.gov.bc.ca/culture/schoolnet/fortvic/>

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www.skewlsites.com

ANIMALS AROUND THE WORLD

Kids love animals. Kids anywhere from Kindergarten to grade 4 will love this mystery game. *Animals Around the World* is actually part of web site called KidsCom. If you are doing a thematic unit on animals or animal classification, this game will reinforce concepts while it builds reading skills. To play the game kids choose a category, such as Mammals, Fish, Birds, Reptiles and Amphibians, or Insects and Aracnids. As players enter each category, they'll find a list of characteristics of that animal grouping. So you could even use the site to have students research animal classifications. Each category has nine or ten different animals to identify. You can ask for one clue at a time. While you read a sentence clue, a portion of a photo of the animal appears, so students can use both picture and word clues to identify the mystery animal. Whenever they are ready, they can type in the name of the animal. They get more points if they can identify the animal with fewer clues. If you're thinking that this sounds fun, educational, and engaging, you're right! I must admit I played the game for quite a while! Here's one tip: when kids are navigating the pages of the game, they should use the *Back* button on the browser. If they click on *Home* they will go to the home page of *KidsCom*, and then would have to go to *Just for Fun*, and then *Games* to return to the animals game.

<http://www.kidscom.com/orakc/Games/Animalgame/>



FOLLOW THE MAY, 2000 EXPEDITION That will search for the magnetic poles's cur-

If you're launching a unit on space exploration, living in space, the universe, or the night sky, you'll want to make *CosmicQuest* your web site of choice. Brought to you by the creative folks at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, *CosmicQuest* is an interactive, highly informative web adventure for late primaries, intermediates, and even secondary school students.

There are five components to the web site, each focusing on a different aspect of space exploration. Your class time would be well spent exploring the entire website. If you need to narrow your focus to a particular area of study, here's a brief introduction to each of the components.

A great place to start is *Living in Space*, where you will "match wits with NASA engineers and design a human habitat as good as the new International Space Station." You know you're in for an exciting adventure as you lift off and see the earth from the space craft as it lifts off into space. You will try to choose the best means to meet the basic needs of astronauts living in space, such as oxygen, food, water, and fuel. Information is provided in an interesting way to help you make the best decisions. Even when you make the wrong choice you're learning! Most students could work

through this section in a 30 - 40 minute computer lab session.

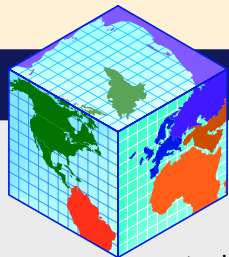
The *Field Guide to the Universe* lets you learn "about the planets, great astronomers of history and today, and the robot spacecraft that have discovered so much about the universe in this online field guide."

If you're looking into the night sky and wondering, "What's that bright star up there? Is there a meteor shower this month?" check out a section called *In the Sky Tonight*. This lively section provides a calendar of events that are happening in space. "Find out what's up each month here." This kind of up to date information is just not available in books!

You'll want to "stay tuned to the *Space Watch Webcasts* for information on upcoming live webcasts of your favorite astronauts, NASA folks and anything having to do with space."

Finally, you can track an "expedition to the North Magnetic Pole. Follow a May 2000 expedition that will search for the magnetic pole's current location. As the time for the expedition approaches, check this web site for mission updates, profiles, and activities."

<http://www.childrensmuseum.org/cosmicquest/>



MAPQUEST - Get a custom map of your destination!

Mapquest demonstrates amazing use of Internet technology. This mapping tool allows users to type in an address, or name of a city and get a custom map of their destination. Wow! I tried it and it worked. I entered the *Online Maps* section. In the *Maps Search* section, I typed in my home address. Within a few seconds the location of my home was pin-

pointed on a detailed map of my neighbourhood!

This tool could have countless uses in the classroom! In a primary classroom the teacher could type in the school address and print out the map of the school and surrounding neighbourhood. Students could then trace the route they walk to school. Older students could type in the address of a field trip destination, and decide on the best route to get to the field trip.

There are a number of "kewl" features at this web site. Students can choose a *Quick Map*. Major cities in the U.S. and around the world are listed in the *Quick Map* section. Once the map of the city is displayed, you can zoom in for a more detailed map. You can navigate by moving in any direction on the map. Be sure to bookmark this amazing navigation tool.

<http://mapquest.com/>

CHECK OUT THIS TOP NOTCH WEB SITE FROM 'DOWN UNDER'

Rochedale School

Here's a school web page from 'down under'. *Rochedale State School* is located in Brisbane, Australia, and their school web site is top notch. The site features the usual school information page and useful links. Beyond that the site is anything but usual.

Let's take a look at the *Student Work Pages*. Each grade (or year) is featured from Year 1 to Year 7. Various student projects are presented. The Year 1 children share their Australian Animal Stories. The Year 2 students wrote 'Who Am I?' clues about Australian animals. As you move on up the grades you'll find projects on the rainforest, spiders, pirates, the solar system, Medieval times, and much more.

Another way to access the student projects is to go the *School Pages*. The student work is grouped by subject, such as *Australia, Just for Fun, Special Days, and Famous People*. This may make it easier to find a particular project. Many of the individual class projects are award winning sites in themselves. (We reviewed the Pirates homepage, created by the students in Year 5 in last

month's issue.) Some of the projects are interactive. For example, the Year 3 students participated in a Travel Buddy project and developed an online travel game for kids to enjoy while they learn about Australia.

Speaking of games, the students have created a *Games Page* with seven fun, educational games for kids and people of all ages. "Each game features educational problems that will hopefully provide a fun way to learn and practice all sorts of things from Mapping to Maths and much in between."

The site has won numerous awards, and receives comments such as, "Top marks - Designers could learn a thing or two from the Rochedale State School website." Students can use the site to research a topic, find out about Australia, or gather ideas for their own school web site. Well worth a visit!

[http://
www.powerup.com.au/
~glen/schools.htm](http://www.powerup.com.au/~glen/schools.htm)



Last month we featured 'Pirates', one of the many interesting projects created by the students at this creative school!

INTEGRATE THE RAINFOREST INTO YOUR CLASSROOM

Animals of the Rainforest

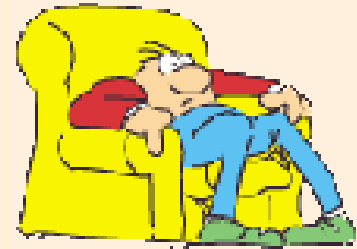
A study of the rainforest is a fascinating topic for an integrated theme in the classroom. *Animals of the Rainforest* is a super site for students looking for photos and information about animals who inhabit the rainforest. Choose from a pull down menu of amphibians, birds, fish, mammals, insects and reptiles. Each menu has an extensive listing of species. For each animal there are several colourful photos. Many of the photos can link you to the original site from which the photo was taken. This means you could use the link for further information.

The site lends itself to student research projects. The information on each animal is presented concisely under headings such as *Habitat, Diet*, etc. Facts are written in simple language, which teachers of primary children will appreciate! Students can take notes right from the screen, or the teacher could print out the information as needed. An annotated list of links will provide further resources for a more in-depth look at the rainforest.

[http://
www.animalsoftherain
forest.org/](http://www.animalsoftherainforest.org/)

BRIEFLY

Body Tune Up



Body Tune Up! is not an online aerobics program! It's a well designed web quest to help intermediate students learn how a healthy lifestyle produces a healthy body. It's an ideal classroom project that will fit into both your Personal Planning and Health curriculum. The task is threefold:

- 1 Take on the role of either *FannyFood, Eddie Exercise, Hannah Hygiene, or Sammy Safety*.
- 2 Use built in web resources to search for and gather information on your topic.
- 3 Showcase your findings by producing and performing a radio drama.

The web quest is so easy to implement in the classroom. You need enough computers for students to work in pairs. Students can choose a role or you could assign them. There are a series of questions for each group to work through. The radio drama is a creative, fun way to present their learning. All it takes is a tape recorder! Students find out tips for doing a radio drama by linking to a page of the CBC FOR KIDS web site. They can even listen to a sample radio drama online to get ideas for sound effects, etc.

Like all web quests the task, roles, process, resources and evaluation criteria are clear and to the point. This site has 'worth-while project' written all over it!

[http://
www.plainfield.k12.in.us/
hschool/webq/webq49/
bodytune.htm](http://www.plainfield.k12.in.us/hschool/webq/webq49/bodytune.htm)

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Learning About Leonardo

Fascinated with the world of Leonardo DaVinci? This site, developed as a ThinkQuest project by inner city students in Bronx, New York has spurred interest around the globe. ■ BY STEVE FELD

Inner city John F. Kennedy Bronx High School students under the able coaching of Steve Feld developed the Mona Lisa website as a ThinkQuest High School project, which has evolved in its ongoing two and a half year history into a virtual enchantment mine of K-12 engaging educational opportunities and experiences. Interestingly, while some of these K-12 and particularly, K-6 Mona educational opportunities are developed by the John F. Kennedy High School team, it is interesting to note that many of them were suggested by the primary, elementary, middle school student visitors themselves and their parents. The suggestions came via guestbook entries, personal E-mails to team members and Mr. Feld, and digital postcards.

The Mona Lisa web site offers a myriad of educational activities. Here are a few of the many easily infusible ones separated according to grade levels:

K-3

Kindergarten to grade three students can create a Mona Lisa pop up picture book either sharing the story of Mona Lisa being painted by Leonardo as Lillian Schwartz sees it or as Rina Di Firenze sees it (with the help of a teacher or parent who will share these researchers' story ideas). These creations can be digitally photographed and shared in the guestbook or on a special page on the site. They can also become part of a classroom Mona/Leonardo pop up story section with other pop up books focused on Leonardo's music, the story of his horse, and his notebooks.

Young children can learn spacial directions and also how to follow spoken directions by clicking the Vitruvian Man imagemap. They might then quiz one another and see if they can click on the correct arm of the Vitruvian man.

Children can create their own musical and digital postcards in 23 different languages to invite their friends and family to visit the website or ask a question on Mona and wait for a postcard reply. Or they may want to rival the Nat King Cole Mona Lisa song by creating

their own song to share the mystery of 'Why is the Mona Lisa Smiling?'

Children may also wish to create Mona Lisa website toys and souvenirs to be exhibited in a classroom Mona Lisa Website museum. i.e. Mona Lisa doll, Leonardo easel, Leonardo paint brush, Leonardo notebooks, Leonardo horse models, Mona Lisa toothpaste, a souvenir tee shirt, student designed Mona Lisa postcards, "Mona Lisa Not Just for Adults Only" poster etc.

Grades 4-6

Students in grades 4 to 6 may want to examine the Mona Lisa portrait itself and/or the fictional story explanation of Rina De Firenze which suggests that the Mona Lisa portrait was one of Leonardo's mother. They may want to create a monologue for Mona where she tells her story and reveals why she is smiling.

Students may want to read either on their



"The Mona web site, paralleling Leonardo's legendary portrait itself continues to fascinate and provoke teacher and learner..."

own or with a parent and/or teacher, Lillian Schwartz's explanation of Mona Lisa's identity. They should be encouraged to generate at least six questions raised by this explanation (i.e. questions about a prequel, a sequel, omitted characters or personalities in the story, omitted events, other story angles etc.) This list of questions could be kept in the class as a list of Mona Lisa Gaps. (semiotic theory)

Students could be challenged to select from these Gaps that they themselves have generated and author their own answers based on available evidence and their own creativity. Both the Gaps and the Answered Gaps could be sent to the website team for inclusion on the website.

Students can use the website components i.e. site map, guestbook, postcards, interactive quiz, research perspectives from the field, artist/inventor drawings/writings, dispatches, upcoming museum exhibit notices etc., as models for creating their own web sites on key inventors or talented leaders in American history. A wonderful choice for grades 4-6 would be websites focused on the many achievements and talents of either Ben Franklin or Thomas Jefferson.

Students might also want to use the website to identify parallel classes on parallel grades in other countries who have signed the guestbook and respond to those national and international peers' comments on the website.

They could examine the website to see what pages of it could serve as resources for either a television /feature film on Leonardo and Mona, a potential animation series, or an interactive CD Rom or Game. They could create their own proposals for adapting the website or transform it to these other media formats. The proposals could be sent to the website team and perhaps to even to Dreamworks.

Students could also use the website to author a biography or autobiography of Leonardo. They would select different website pages and notebook entries and explain how they would use these pages for parts of the biography or autobiography.

Grades 7-12

Students in grades 7 to 12 could create a Powerpoint presentation expressing their personal perspective on the most successful and most plausible theory presented on the website about Mona Lisa's identity. Peers in the class could evaluate their presentation for effectiveness and for degree of forceful argument on behalf of a given position.

Students can research the links in specific content areas and either identify new ones for a content or subject area or evaluate the amount of useful, pertinent information and its presentation on any given link.

Students can advertise and design banners in various languages to invite visitors from around the world to the Leonardo site. They

Continued on page 5

also should create an advertising campaign including computer graphics, hand drawn posters, digital photography with specific approaches for various age, special needs, and business and recreational populations

Students could examine the guestbook for entries from students of other cultures and create a dictionary of other languages and varying cultural positive expressions made about Leonardo and other slang cultural expressions of admiration.

Students and parents, unrelated adults, or older siblings, can visit the site as a team and design a family tour of the site. This information would be welcomed by the site team for potential use on the website.

Students may wish to create a pre K-3 storybook guide or special guide of the site just for younger children. Challenge them to send in suggestions and models for these pages to the team.

The Mona Lisa website, paralleling Leonardo's legendary portrait itself continues to fascinate and provoke teacher and learner commentary, participation, and creativity. The Mona Lisa website student team and its advisor, Steve Feld, invite teachers, students and families to contribute to the ongoing multiple literacy Mona uses of educational enchantment. Mona moves on . . .

<http://library.advanced.org/13681>

Steve Feld is the Data Coordinator and Computer Graphics Instructor at John F. Kennedy High School. He has authored curricula, developed technology training courses and has created International Arts and Internet projects.



NEWS FLASH!

We've Moved!

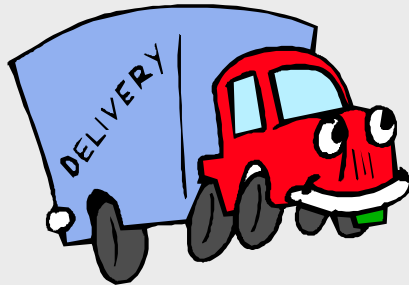
....well, not far,
but we have moved.

Our new URL is:

<http://www.skewlsites.com>

Skewl Sites has packed up and moved to a new location on the Internet. We have officially registered and become www.skewlsites.com. Make sure you change your bookmarks to our new address.

Now that we have a place of our own, why not drop by and let us know what you think of our new home by 'signing' our feedback page. We've got room for all of you!



NO MORE COPYRIGHT ISSUES!

Pics4Learning

Anyone interested in creating a web based project such as a Think Quest project will need some tools and resources. Once you've chosen your topic, one of the first things you'll look for are graphics and visual images to enhance your project. Copyright laws can make this a tricky undertaking! The Skewl Sites team has searched the Internet for places where you can download graphics for free. We think you'll like *Pics4Learning*.

"*Pics4Learning* is designed as a place for teachers and students to find resources as well as share their own resources with others. The *Pics4Learning* collection consists of thousands of images that have been donated by students, teachers, and amateur photographers. Unlike many Internet sites, permission has been granted for teachers and students to use all of the images donated to the *Pics4Learning* collection. Images in the *Pics4Learning* collection may be used by teachers and students in print, multimedia, and video productions. These could include, but are not limited to, school projects, contests, and web pages."

Finding the image you're looking for is child's play! You can enter a key word into a search, or browse by topic. The topics, such as *Native Americans, History, Animals, Countries*, etc., are all curriculum related. Many of the images are photographs. When you click on the image you want, you'll find directions below the picture telling you how to save the image. Can't find the image you need? Just fill out the request form to identify the image you're looking for. We hope you find this tool helpful!

<http://pics.tech4learning.com/>

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V4W 1G6

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skewl@uniserve.com

earlychildhood.com

It's nice to come across a site specifically designed to meet your teaching needs. If you teach pre-school, Kindergarten or grade one look no further than *earlychildhood.com*. Teachers and parents will appreciate the wide collection of arts, crafts, and articles pertaining to early childhood educational issues. Each section of the site is well developed and organized.

When you enter the Arts and Crafts section you'll find this message: "Tired of repeating the same old project year after year? Need a different Arts and Crafts idea for your classroom? Well, there's something new just a click away! Just browse through our wide selection of Arts and Crafts ideas, each conveniently grouped by subject. *Earlychildhood.com* always has a special project that will challenge and delight the children, and will make your classroom experience fresh and exciting." As I paged through the crafts, I was impressed by the clear directions, photos, easily obtainable materials, recipes, and variety. Recently added crafts are tagged 'new', which makes it easy for you to return often and check out the new ideas. The categories really help you to find the right project quickly.



A well used area of the site is the *Sharing Board*, where you can ask questions or post ideas in several categories, including behavior, activities, education and parenting. "*Earlychildhood.com's Sharing Boards* are designed to provide a forum for the sharing of your knowledge. Every day is different. One day you may have the answer, and the next day you might have the question."

The *Articles* are provided to "help you stay on the forefront of new developments and current information with carefully selected articles from some of the brightest minds in early childhood education." You can choose from 26 categories, such as *Health and Safety* or *Early Literacy*. Another option is to use to keyword search tool.

This site is sponsored by Discount School Supply. You may be interested in the online shopping for educational supplies offered at the site. I found that the commercial aspect of the site was unobtrusive, and that the site offers a great deal for free to its visitors!

<http://www.earlychildhood.com/index.cfm>

ENDNOTE...

How Far Is It?

HOW FAR IS IT is a handy geography reference tool to have bookmarked on your classroom computer. This amazing web site allows you to select any two locations in the world and it will tell you the distance between the two locations. It will also pinpoint the locations on a map so you can see where they are located and their proximity to each other. The distance is calculated 'as the crow flies' in both kilometres and miles.

This site could be used in many ways. The teacher (or students!) could make up a worksheet that lists pairs of cities. Students could be asked to use the web site to record the distance between the two cities. If you want students to look up just one city, you can do this as well. The site will give you the city's latitude and longitude, and show you the city on a map. It also provides the city's current population and altitude.

I recently found this site helpful in my classroom when my students received a letter from a child in Australia. Through this web site we quickly found out the distance between the Australian city and our home town, and saw the two cities pinpointed on a world map on the computer screen. It helped the students to picture where the letter came from. The whole process took just a couple of minutes!

<http://www.indo.com/distance/>

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

skewl@uniserve.com