

**Social Media for Teachers**  
**NWACC Grant (Final Draft- 2/23/07)**  
**Eligibility Code- G718-05**

**Introduction:** Scholars no longer have sole ownership of knowledge and information; the Internet and other forms of social media have permanently “shifted” this paradigm. Knowledge on every imaginable subject is now accessible to anyone with a computer, a modem and an ISP; as information multiplies at ever increasing speeds not even scholars can keep pace with all that is known. Many would argue, as Eric Jensen does in his book *Arts with the Brain in Mind* that “the brass ring in learning is not what you know, but knowing how to find information and how to use that information quickly, creatively and cooperatively.” (Jensen, 2001 pg. 7) Making it possible for teachers to share information quickly, creatively and cooperatively is the goal of our project.

**Project Description:** The two Graduate Schools of Education at Portland State University (PSU) and the University of Oregon (UO) will work together to re-program an existing web application and curriculum development archive/database to support the development of a “YouTube” like online community for teachers who wish to create, assess and share their original curriculum.

The web application we will be adapting was originally produced at PSU for a federally funded program entitled ARTSplash. ([www.artsplash.pdx.edu](http://www.artsplash.pdx.edu)) ARTSplash is an arts integration training program for generalist, in-service teachers. The training culminates in the creation of standards based curriculum of the teacher’s own design. This curriculum is contributed to the ARTSplash archive/website using a set of web tools that require no more technical knowledge than is needed to send an email and use a mouse and keyboard. The ARTSplash database already contains much of the functionality we need to create a moderated version of a “YouTube”-like online community. It would take a minimal amount of additional programming to expand its capacity to serve more teachers...from different school districts and geographical regions.

In its current form, the database’s authentication process limits its affective input/output to only one group of institutional users at a time. We would use the NWACC funding to re-design the web tools and database so it can differentiate between two or more groups drawing data from a shared database. We also want to make it possible for multiple users to “brand” their data so that a user could look at all the materials in the database as well as only those materials that are contributed by their institution. Additionally, we would like the institutional users to have some latitude about how their “tributary” of the site looks.

**Impact:** Unlike software which must be uploaded and updated regularly, web applications can be maintained centrally and made available to users on a per license basis. The ARTSplash application is such a tool and the asynchronous design of this web application is compatible with the mobile nature of today’s learning environments.

Artsplash coincides with several significant initiatives currently underway through the UO Center for Community Arts and Cultural Policy, School of Architecture and Allied Arts and the Arts and Administration (AAD) Program. AAD currently offers the only arts requirement at UO for pre-service teachers seeking credentialing in the state of Oregon through its Youth Arts Curriculum Methods (YACM) course. This course is offered online and in class, and currently reaches over 200 students each year. Use of the ARTSsplash web application will provide YACM students and instructors with a new professional development and networking tool, allowing instructors to model “best practices,” enabling teachers to post developing curriculum through a reviewed structure, and to assess other arts integrated curriculum development around the state.

Secondly, this project coincides with several arts integrated curriculum and professional development efforts that are underway in partnership with other academic institutions and local arts agencies. ARTSsplash has the potential to model an integrated platform for the emerging professional development of teachers in standards-based arts integrated curriculum and teaching. In turn, this project has the potential of reaching hundreds of teachers and teaching artists.

Thirdly, ArtsPlash could be shared through the UO’s new online portfolio and digital archiving initiative, which is available to all students in the AAD program. ARTSsplash is a searchable database that undergoes a standards-based review process, which is in line with the models currently being piloted through ePortfolios.

**Innovation:** One of the most frustrating professional development experiences a teacher can have is to spend many hours creating work that ends up on a shelf, collecting dust. The advent of social media websites such as YouTube and MySpace, has made it possible for online communities to form around shared interests. One of the deterrents to teachers using these forums affectively is that theirs is a fairly narrowly focused community which is easily lost in the immensity of the major social media sites. Our project would address this problem by building on the community building strength of a social media site while making it easy for non technical individuals to contribute to this community...a community uncluttered by ads and commercialism that is specifically tailored to their interests as teachers.

**Feasibility:** ARTSsplash has already proven the feasibility of this idea on a limited/regional basis; the proof is on the Web. We are now poised to take the steps needed to make it possible for virtually all teachers to participate in this project. The challenges to doing this are technical and will require additional programming talent, but no more than has been used to bring the application to its current state. For this project to be successful, we only need to add to and adapt an existing product that was designed from the beginning to serve the larger community we envision.

**Programming:** The ARTSsplash database has been programmed using the following:

- PHP- because it works well for integrating web pages with databases.
- Javascript- because it allows users to change page elements on the fly.
- AJAX- because it speeds data retrieval between server and client.

**Database Design:** ARTSplash is built on a MySQL database, because MySQL is intuitive, open source and ideal for the web application we envision.

**Web Application Functions:**

1. Allows users to upload original content using the FCK editor- an open source, user-friendly, interactive and intuitive curriculum upload interface.
2. Contains a fully automated “feedback” module that allows administrative review of a user’s work when it is in progress. This function is used to respond to the user’s content once they begin the curriculum upload process and it happens via an automated email loop.
3. Administered by a single individual and maintained and hosted by Portland State University, this database has a dedicated capacity of over one terabyte of server space.

**Features:**

- Ability to associate multiple file types (Video, Audio, Images, Documents) with curriculum content
- Training modules for content development
- Internal search function, by keyword or graphics
- Internal resource pool targeted to curriculum developers
- The ability to browse the entire database through the Gallery
- Data collection and output for grant reporting purposes
- Contact option which allows all users to communicate directly with teacher/authors, the assessor and the administrator
- Compatible with most common browsers
- Special administrative features- include simple dropdowns that allow the administrator to rapidly change the featured individual curriculum, contributor and individual work the user sees when they visit the site

**Technology Transfer and Outreach:** This project is a collaboration between Portland State University and the University of Oregon. As such, it will leverage the resources of both institutions to ensure the success of the project. PSU will provide web tools, programming talent, server space and technical support; the UO will provide teachers in training who will serve as a research, development and assessment cohort for this new application. Since the use of social media for teacher training is in its infancy, pre and post evaluation of the user experience, as well as ongoing evaluation of the user interface will guide the redesign of the web application and database. Our goal as developers is to make the product as intuitive and accessible as possible; ease of use is after all the key to any web applications sustainability. When the project is complete, the two institutions will endeavor to share their findings and improved web application with organizations that have a desire to join this community of educators and contribute their own work to the site.

**Personnel**

Mark Wubbold, MPA Co-Principal Investigator. Mr. Wubbold is project manager of ARTSplash; he also works in the Office of Finance and Administration as a special

assistant to the Vice President. His project management experience is extensive and you can view his electronic resume at: <http://web.pdx.edu/~wubbold/marksite/>

Lori Hager, Ph.D. Co-Principal Investigator is an Assistant Professor and Coordinator, of the Community Arts Minor in the Arts and Administration Program at the University of Oregon. Dr. Hager's research interests include historical and contemporary community youth arts theory and practice; education and outreach in performing and community organizations; arts education policy; teaching artist preparation; digital archiving; arts-based research and interactive arts pedagogy.

**Partnership Contact Information:**

Mark Wubbold  
Portland State University  
Office of Finance and Administration  
Portland State University  
503-725-2933 (office)  
**wubbold@pdx.edu**

Dr. Lori Hager  
Assistant Professor  
Coordinator, Community Arts Minor  
Arts and Administration Program (AAD)  
School of Architecture & Allied Arts (AAA)  
University of Oregon (UO)  
541-346-2469 (office)  
541-346-3626 (fax)  
**lhager@uoregon.edu**