

First Grade Writers and Eighth Grade Techies

Publishing Children's Work on the Web

Susan Friedman

When first-graders at Jackson Street School in Northampton, Massachusetts, created stories, poems, observational writings, and original artwork, eighth-graders at John F. Kennedy Middle School in Northampton published them online. While computer teacher Katherine Fleming's goal was to give middle school students meaningful experiences designing Web pages for a real audience, the First Grade Writers and Eighth Grade Techies project proved inspirational to the primary grade writers and artists.



Reproduced from <http://www.nps.northampton.ma.us/wtproject/poems/month.htm>

Teachers integrate young children's writing into science, math, and social studies, not just language arts.

Writing across the curriculum

Teachers integrate young children's writing into science, math, and social studies, not just language arts. Thus, the Jackson Street School children's work for the Web site project was tied into different areas of the first grade curriculum. They wrote about and illustrated their walks in the Barrett Street Marsh, a local wetland, as part of the science unit. For social studies, they described their favorite places in Northampton, and they interviewed visitors who spoke to the class about their jobs in the community. The children created stories and poems on topics of their choice, and they wrote their biographies in response to questions sent by their middle school partners.



My favorite place in Northampton is the Smith College Paradise Pond, because me and my brother play at the park.

Reproduced from <http://www.nps.northampton.ma.us/wtproject/themes/noho/SCP3.htm>

Susan Friedman, MEd, is assistant editor of *Young Children* and coordinator of [Beyond the Journal](#).


The Barrett Street Marsh In Winter
By: Han



I saw a pine tree sapling.



I heard snow crunching.



The thing I noticed about the marsh in the winter is most trees in winter didn't have leaves.



Page created by Emily Hopkins


Reproduced from <http://www.nps.northampton.ma.us/writerstechies/bates/barrettstreet/marshilan/index.htm>

Publishing brings inspiration and benefits

First grade teacher Mary Bates says, "Whenever I tell the children, 'We are going to make this work into books to show to your families,' the children seem inspired to do their best work. They think a little more about how their writing and drawing will look to others. They want to do their best writing and create their best art. They are motivated to add more details and more color. They read over what they wrote to make sure they expressed what they wanted to say."

Publishing the children's work online offered even more benefits. Because the eighth-graders periodically updated the Writers/Techies Web site, the children saw their work being published over the course of several months.

My Favorite Place
In Northampton
By: Sopira



My favorite place is the candy store because there's lots of candy!!!

Reproduced from <http://www.nps.northampton.ma.us/writerstechies/bates/favoriteplace/sopira/sopirafavplace.htm>

They were continually motivated to write thoughtfully and create expressive art for the eighth-graders to post on the Web site.

The project introduced the children to new technologies. Some of the children who didn't have computers at home became acquainted with

The children were continually motivated to write thoughtfully and create expressive art for the eighth-graders to post on the Web site.

the Web for the first time. Bates noticed another benefit: when their creations were published online, the children enjoyed reading what their peers had written and looking at their drawings. They talked to each other, discussing their classmates' work, something they seldom did when the work was published in book form.

Learners expand their worlds

For most of the school year, the eighth-graders and the first-graders communicated on paper, without meeting one another. The Jackson Street teachers sent the children's writings and drawings to the middle school, and the eighth-graders scanned them into digital format to create the Web pages. At the end of the year, the middle school students and the first-graders celebrated their partnership with a party, and the eighth-graders took the younger students on a tour of their school's computer lab.

The joint Web site project offered eighth-graders and first-graders a chance to relate to children of a different age at a different school. Many of the topics for the writings and drawings were about the local community, and some were drawn from field trips in the greater Northampton area. Funded by a local foundation, the Northampton Educational Foundation, the three-year project was a true community experience.

Tools and Resources for Online Publishing

Many school systems and programs have rules regulating the creation and use of classroom Web sites, so be sure to check relevant policies and regulations before undertaking a Web project. Some programs and school systems offer teachers tools they can use to create classroom Web sites. The following Web sites can also serve as resources.

[Kids Space](#) provides commercial-free Web sites for learning and collaboration among students and teachers and offers tools for children to put art and stories on the Internet.
www.kids-space.org

[Scholastic's Class Home Page Builder](#) offers teachers free tools to build a Web site. Note that the Web site will have Scholastic branding as well as banner ads. Please check your school's regulations and read the fine print.
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/homepagebuilder>

Copyright © 2007 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. See Permissions and Reprints online at www.journal.naeyc.org/about/permissions.asp.

View the [First Grade Writers and Eighth Grade Techies](#) Web sites at www.nps.northampton.ma.us/wtproject and www.nps.northampton.ma.us/writerstechies