

Stop Re-inventing the Wheel!

Using professional resources to support your practice

This handout is designed to help you navigate the endless teacher resources available on the web. It includes some rules of thumb, suggestions, and resources. While it is not exhaustive, and never can be, it can help you find things that are good and useful and likely to work well in your classroom.

Brilliant teachers abound.

Many have been kind enough to write down their brilliance for the rest of us to use. Finding it, figuring out if it really is brilliant, and adapting it is essential to the practice of being a teacher. Though as a novice teacher, it can be hard to figure out “what’s good.” One of the most basic ways is to rely on editors and organizations to review the work.

Research matters.

Various state and national educational policies, and a general cultural shift, now require teaching practices to be “research-based.” While there are detailed and long running arguments about what counts as research, it can be difficult for a practicing teacher to navigate those arguments to know “what counts.”

There’s a lot of junk on the internet.

Google searching only gets you so far, Pinterest doesn’t count as research, endless worksheets don’t make for high-quality practice, and most education apps are really bad. Using some of the following to guide your use of professional literature and resources will save you a lot of time, even if it seems faster to just Google it.

Professional Organizations

There is nothing more powerful for your practice as a professional than joining your professional teaching organization. This organization will have nearly unlimited resources for supporting your practice and development as a professional. As a student, they are also incredibly cheap. Join. Seriously. You can sign up for publications, newsletters, discussion groups, Facebook pages... You get the idea.

High-Quality, Curated Web Resources

Professional organizations are one example of a high-quality, curated web resource. Basically, really smart people are paid money to find other really smart people doing good work. They then showcase that good work. While an exhaustive list of these resources isn’t possible, a few things will clue you in to the genre. These pointers aren’t exhaustive, and some sites may not adhere entirely to them, but it will help guide you.

- Short website (seriously)
- High-quality, current, design
- Extensive resources
- An “About Us” section that points to more than a single or few individuals, perhaps a non-profit or school district
- Articles that include authors and/or editors

Credentialed, Experienced Individuals

Some folks are just that good. They can be amazing teachers from 8-5 and then turn around and blog about it. They’ll do things in their classroom you wish you could. But how to know that these people really are that good?

- Long-running blog with frequent entries
- A community of commenters
- An “About Me” section that references years of experience teaching and credentials
- When in doubt, ask an expert (your professor) to give their opinion on the quality of the resources

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Using professional literature and resources to support your practice

Professional literature

There is often confusion about the types of professional literature—meaning journals, magazines, newsletters, and the like—available to teachers. This confusion stems from the language around this literature, and the plethora of resources available. The following chart is designed to help you figure out what you’re looking at and what that means.

Peer-Reviewed Journal	Professional Journal
These are often, though not exclusively, published by professional organizations. Articles published in these journals are often written by researchers and professors. Article types include original, empirical research; theoretical essays; and reviews of research. All articles have been read by “peers” who have judged the article high-quality and adding to our understanding of the topic.	These are almost always published by professional teaching organizations. Articles published in these journals are written by teachers, teacher educators, authors, researchers, and journalists. Article types include overviews of practices, discussions of education policy, results of surveys, conference previews/reflections, book reviews, research reviews, opinion pieces. All articles go through a journalistic process of vetting through an editor.
Articles in these journals are often lengthy and written in very academic language. While they often look at teachers and students in classrooms, they are examining those practices to make some generalizations about teaching and learning, not so that other teachers can replicate the practice.	Articles in these journals are directed at teachers. They are written in inviting language and designed to be helpful for classroom practice. They often include additional resources online.
Articles from these journals count as “research” when the question is raised about whether a particular practice is “research-based.”	Articles from these journals do not count as “research,” but they are a valuable resource for teachers. Often articles will cite peer-reviewed journal articles.

Where to start?

The following is a list of professional organizations, and their journals, to begin your resource search.

- National Association for the Education of Young Children <http://www.naeyc.org>
Teaching Young Children
- Educational Theater Association: *Teaching Theatre* <http://schooltheatre.org/Home/>
- International Literacy Association: *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* <http://www.reading.org>
- Music Teachers National Association: *American Music Teacher* <http://www.mtna.org/>
- SHAPE America: *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance* <http://www.shapeamerica.org/>
- National Council of Teacher of English:
English Journal, Voices from the Middle <http://www.ncte.org/>
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics:
Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School, Mathematics Teacher <http://www.nctm.org/>
- National Council of The Social Studies:
Middle Level Learning, Social Education <http://www.socialstudies.org/>
- National Art Education Association: *Art Education Journal* <http://www.arteducators.org/>
- National Science Teachers Association: *Science Scope, The Science Teacher* <http://www.nsta.org/>