

Curriculum-Based Internet Management Model vs. Filtering

GCB Learning Zones Architecture Enhances Curriculum-Based Internet Management

Because the Internet was not specifically designed for classroom use, educators experience difficulty managing this resource in a way that truly supports their daily lesson plans and broader curriculum needs. Also, many of the products sold to educational institutions as ‘solutions’ don’t really focus on what schools have most frequently asked for: real educational enhancement.

Anyone who has ever surfed the Web knows that Internet information needs to be managed and organized before it can have true educational value. Many of the products available on the market today take an inverted approach to this problem. Instead of providing a resource defining valuable, educational, Internet content, they attempt to ‘filter’ the entire Internet—blocking sites that are defined as ‘inappropriate’ by the software manufacturer. The most glaring drawback to this approach is that it removes choice from the educator. In addition, it offers no educational value.

Filtering Approach.

Filtering software keeps a defined list of sites away from a user’s view. Content is blocked based upon the presence of ‘inappropriate’ material that may appear in Web site text or images. But what is added with this approach? It has no curriculum-based goals, it does not provide an alternate solution, and it adds no educational value. The filtering response approaches the Internet for classroom use as a ‘formidable force’ that can be managed only through reducing a teacher’s choice.

Curriculum-Based Internet Management.

An alternative approach to filtering is curriculum-based Internet management—a solution that truly benefits the K-12 community. Schools receive access to educational Web sites—just like a textbook collection—while also gaining the ability to choose what they need from the Internet.

Schools have managed access that is defined using an “Allowed Lists” of Web sites. These lists lead students down a path that fits the school’s objectives while allowing teachers to focus the Internet on their daily lesson plans. This philosophy echoes the way in which teachers have traditionally selected books and other printed materials for classroom discussion. A distinct benefit here is that each educational community defines its own criteria for Web access, rather than accepting the criteria defined by a filtering company.

Teachers have always selected a certain number of pertinent materials to support their lesson plans, choosing from a trusted source of educational resources. Curriculum-based Internet management applies this method to the Web, allowing teachers to focus classroom access on their choice of lesson-related Internet content, while also providing them with a comprehensive and regularly updated selection of educational Web sites.

A common problem for educators? There is so much information that choosing Web sites to support a curriculum is a time-consuming task. The Internet is disorganized and teachers have trouble managing it for classroom use. Unlike textbooks, the information on the Web is not listed according to subject or by grade level. Educators are left with a giant system that provides information, but in a disorganized and confusing fashion. It can be compared to a library where all of the books have been placed randomly in stacks.

A more flexible paradigm is a system that focuses all of the educational benefits the Internet can offer into one, easy-to-use solution developed just for K-12 schools. Educators need a system that works in tandem with school curriculum to help students focus on the true educational value of the Internet. An education-specific Web library offers a collection of classroom-ready Web sites—organized by the K-12 curriculum topics teachers use every day. What this means is that teachers don’t have to wade through outdated or unrelated information to find Web sites for their lesson plans: like a textbook collection, educators review content selected for its educational value. All selected Web sites adapt the vast resources of the Internet to meet the everyday needs of educators.

How does this solution ensure that Internet resources are always educational in nature? By making sure that all of the information entering your school either a) has been chosen by educators in your school, or b) is part of the dynamic resource collection defined in the education-specific Web library. You don’t have to use the content that is provided; it serves as an effective starting point and a classroom-ready resource to transition your school into a Web-supported education. You can either use the suggested selections, limit the selections, or add to them. And new sites are constantly provided as a way to keep your school up-to-date on the latest educational offerings.

Educators have always set the standard by which information is tested before it is included into a curriculum. For this reason, curriculum-based Internet management is an effective way to apply this principle to the Web. It channels this vast resource of information in a way that meets the needs of students, teachers, and the K-12 educational community as a whole.

Filtering vs. Curriculum-based Internet Management.

Educators are familiar with using traditional textbooks inside and outside of the classroom environment. A main objective for an educator is to find interesting and dynamic ways for students to become engaged in learning by providing a stimulating way of presenting information. The Web has proven to be a tremendous tool for conveying information that can be used to attain knowledge and facilitate classroom discussions. Internet use in the classroom is effective because of its interactivity; however, teachers may find it hard to harness and utilize it because of the vast amount of disorganized content. Nevertheless, the Internet learning environment *can* be tailored to the needs of educators.

Educators need a way that is not limiting and provides a choice to offer flexibility at different levels. Using a Web portal with categorized, all-inclusive sites, offers more of a choice than filtering. Filtering reduces the choice for educators and proves restrictive for both students and teachers. Content is blocked based on the idea of what may be construed as “inappropriate,” when that may not be the case.

Curriculum-based management is a way to focus students on the academic properties of the Web. Sites pertaining to specific curricula are categorized, rated and graded. Educators design their own lesson plans for each class and choose textbooks to coincide with their plans—the Internet should not be any different. Web sites are merely another way to add to the interactivity of the classroom. The Internet can be designed and tailored to the needs of schools where the choice is put back into the hands of teachers and administrators! Through curriculum-based Internet management, educators decide and create unique Internet-enriched lesson plans.

The Solution.

The Global Chalkboard enables educators to take an instructional approach towards the management of Internet resources.

Educators can choose from resources reviewed by fellow educators and add their own content. They can select interactive Web resources and create an accompanying electronic instruction sheet that focuses students only on the resources needed for that task. In this manner, Internet resources are aligned to professional standards and local curriculum. With the Global Chalkboard, students use the Internet much as they would a workbook; only, it is customized for their unique needs. This easy-to-use tool allows educators to use the Internet as a true instructional resource—one that eliminates the distractions while enabling educators with varying levels of technical proficiency to assemble dynamic, focused lessons using the best learning resources the Web has to offer.

The GCB Learning Zones.

GCB Learning Zones technology is a next-generation Internet management tool that gives educators an easy and flexible means of tailoring Web access to meet specific curricular objectives. Educators have the ability to focus classroom learning, limiting students to sites handpicked for that day’s lesson, or opening access across the breadth of the Internet.



BASCOM Today

BASCOM’s focused development efforts resulted in the Global Chalkboard—the core technology behind a family of Internet products and services. This technology family allows schools to decide which specific Web sites and Internet services best suit their curriculum—letting teachers create safe, focused classroom environments for Internet use.

The Global Chalkboard also provides a foundation for the instructional use of technology. Many public and private K-12 schools credit BASCOM with making the Internet available to their students. Through continuing relationships with these schools, BASCOM gathers essential feedback about education’s changing needs, and this knowledge guides development of new Internet resources. K-12 schools choose BASCOM for its understanding of these needs—and its success in providing competitive, comprehensive solutions for safe, productive Internet use.

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