

## **E-Communities for Teachers Case study :**

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Summary

SAEL Seminar 6 November 2009

Workshop : How can a website support a network of language teachers?'

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### **Summary of the contribution**

A virtual network of teachers, including e-communities binds teachers together, brings about better use of ICT and improves education in general.

This presentation shows De Digitale School (Digischool) of the Netherlands (1995, [www.digischool.nl](http://www.digischool.nl)) as an example. Focus is on the language section.

This educational website is managed by 70 teachers from all over the country and has 1.5 million visitors a month. Virtual classrooms offer freely available learning materials to pupils. In e-communities teachers support each-other and exchange information and learning materials. Digischool can help to build a similar network of classrooms and e-communities.

### **Keywords**

e-communities, virtual classrooms, ICT promotion, ICT support, co-operation, exchange of learning materials, Creative Commons, open source

URL of the project: [www.digischool.nl](http://www.digischool.nl)

### **Description of the workshop**

The website [www.digischool.nl](http://www.digischool.nl) is maintained by a group of about 70 teachers. More than 50,000 pupils and teachers a day visit the site to find useful educational materials. Digischool offers alternatives to the educational materials which are used in the schools to better meet the individual preferences of the pupils.

In 1995 two teachers, working in a secondary school in The Netherlands were investigating the possibilities of the internet in secondary education. The result was the start of a virtual school consisting of classrooms with information available on the internet. Soon other

teachers joined and became voluntary editors, each responsible for a subject classroom. For example: pupils and teachers from all over the country make use of the German Language classroom, but they also send suggestions to improve the classroom. The same goes for all subjects of primary and secondary education in The Netherlands.

In the year 2000 Digischool started so-called communities for teachers. While the classrooms contain educational materials which are directly useable by pupils, the communities offer information, suggestions, new developments and support for teachers. The classrooms are open to everybody; to make use of the community teachers are supposed to subscribe. Subscription is free: just name, email address and school data are enough to become a member of one or more communities. Members receive a monthly newsletter about their subject and are able to access the database with educational materials. At this moment the total number of subscribers for all communities for primary and secondary education is about 200,000.

E-Communities for primary education aim at teachers who teach a certain class: pre-school teachers, class 1-2, class 3-4, class 5-6 and group and class 7-8. For secondary education e-communities are organised around subjects

The database with educational materials is very successful. Via this database Digischool tries to persuade teachers who developed digital learning materials to share these with community members. Feedback on materials is stimulated. The database now contains about 15,000 items and has 120,000 downloads a month.

Community members also make suggestions for useful educational tools. These suggestions are discussed in the Digischool management team and some of them are developed. All educational tools are freely available to pupils and teachers.

### Examples:

- Wrds.eu, an online vocabulary testing program, also available on mobile phone Pupils type their wordlists and can test themselves in various ways. Exchange of wordlists between students and import of wordlists of educational publishers is possible.
- Klikbrief.nl (Clickletter), a first step for secondary pupils to learn to write private and business letters in foreign languages. Given sentences have to be composed and completed to a coherent letter.

### References

De Digitale School – [www.digischool.nl](http://www.digischool.nl) (Homepage)

Wrts – [www.wrts.nl](http://www.wrts.nl) (Dutch) and [www.wrds.eu](http://www.wrds.eu) (international)

Klikbrief – [www.klikbrief.nl](http://www.klikbrief.nl) (Clickletter) [See also the related good practice on the SAEL Project website.](#)