

Writing Tool Exploration

Tool name: Penzu Classroom

URL: <http://penzu.com/classroom>

Functions and Features:

Create classroom journals, grade papers, manage students' entries easily, comment on papers, assign new projects, share good work with everyone, and organize papers by subject or type of project by "tagging".

Educational level (e.g., grade level):

Most beneficial for late elementary through higher education, but younger students could benefit as well.

Subject area(s):

Any subject that involves writing.

Curriculum/discipline(s) addressed:

Language arts, technology

Recommended educational use(s):

This tool is used solely for educational uses. It is a great way for teachers to manage their classroom writing projects in an organized, easily accessible way. Teachers can invite students into the class journal and assign projects with all of the details necessary for successful project completion (directions, rubrics, due date/time, etc.). Students can turn their projects in and receive feedback from the teacher with comments and grades written directly on their writing. Teachers can use tags for each assignment to organize them for a later date (examples of useful tags: long essay, short response, historical narrative, etc.).

URL(s) of sample educational uses (if any):

Introduction and screenshots - <http://penzu.com/content/products/classroom>

Tool Help and/or Tutorial:

Introduction to Penzu Classroom - <http://penzu.com/content/products/classroom>

Penzu Classroom Help - <http://help.penzu.com/category/classroom/>

FAQs:

Introduction - <http://penzu.com/content/products/classroom>

Frequently asked questions - <http://help.penzu.com/category/classroom/>

Comments/reflections upon possible educational use of this _____ tool:

Pros:

- Easy to use
- Organized

- Easily accessible through an internet connected computer or the app on a smart phone
- Not too expensive
- Teacher cannot lose or forget the assignment turned in by the students since they are in the “cloud”
- Private and safe for students

Cons:

- \$49/year – in other words: not free
- No package deal available for a whole school system
- All students must have access to electronic devices to participate in the class journal
- Students with more than one type of electronic device would have a greater advantage over those with none

Reflection (be sure to address TPACK and UDL):

This tool is a great way to incorporate technology into a classroom. It is easy to access as long as all students have access to a computer with an internet connection. It is a great way to post an introduction, directions, rubrics, and due date for assignments that are unable to be lost. Students will benefit from the teacher’s ability to give quick feedback on assignments. It could be helpful to have the writing projects in class so students could work on them, which could be a problem if the students did not have access to computers while in class. The teacher does not have to use Penzu Classroom for all of the assignments, though. Following the UDL guidelines for providing multiple means of action and expression, the teacher should vary the ways the students interact with the class. One day they can use the journal on Penzu and the next they can handwrite their assignment. The tool can either be used as part of a classroom’s structure, or it can be used as the structure. It can be used sparingly, or it can be used every single day.

Discussion Questions:

- How would you use Penzu Classroom? Sparingly or frequently?
 - Would your class be able to use it successfully? How young is too young for this tool?
 - Would this tool make the academic life of a teacher easier? Harder? The same?
- What are some of the benefits you can think of? Some of the negatives?
(Germs cannot be passed electronically – flu season would be a lot easier if the germs weren’t attached to the papers you bring home to grade!)