

Reflection: Using Picassa in an educational setting

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Picassa is a free Web 2.0 tool that fills a need in the school environment. Students, used to having a suite of photo editing tools at their fingertips on their home computers, iPods, cell phones, and even right on their cameras... have had to suffer for too long at school where the only photo editing tool we could offer them was the "Microsoft Paint" program that comes built in to Windows.

In this age of multimedia presentations and student publishing, there is a need for a tool like Picassa that can organize pictures, do touch-ups and editing, and then publish photos online within a single interface. The setup was simple and the option to have Picassa automatically "find" all of the pictures on your computer is a boon for disorganized users who keep their photos scattered and unsorted. The "face recognition" feature was also especially impressive, allowing the program to find pictures of "people" and sort them into a separate folder. The automatic organization of photos into folders by date taken was intuitive and useful as well.

Pictures are the way students learn in this day and age. Teachers teach with an interactive whiteboard that projects pictures and videos for any and every topic imaginable. Students use social networking sites to share and browse pictures among their peers. Today's student shuts down without access to visual media.

Students could use Picassa's albums to create something akin to a "visual blog", telling the story of their learning through pictures and captions. This would be an especially attractive alternative assessment for students who are strong visual learners. As always, the option to publish to a "global audience" would appeal greatly to students and add a "real world" application to an assignment that only Web 2.0 tools can offer.