



# Chalk Talk

AN EXCLUSIVE POLICYHOLDER SERVICE OF TEACHERS' INSURANCE PLAN

SPRING/SUMMER 2003

## EVERYBODY OFF THE BUS: *Take a virtual field trip.*

**W**ant to fire up student enthusiasm? How about a field trip to a volcano? Wish your kids could experience Venice without getting their feet wet? How about taking a tour of the brain -- without taking a head count every few minutes? Hey, let's go on a virtual field trip (VFT)!

Like an actual get-on-the-bus field trip, a virtual trip via the internet or CD-ROM can be an exciting learning experience, because you're free to go anywhere, even travel through time. Distance, expense, weather, impossible environments -- not to mention lost permission slips -- don't mean a thing. Try to integrate a VFT into your curriculum in order to provide your kids with information from experts, to engage them with visual and other materials that may be unavailable where you are, to expand their cultural awareness, or to apply newly learned skills and theories.

So, where do you start? A quick Google search for "virtual field trips" turns up more than 170,000 references, many of which are for sites of narrow interest, rather primitive or just outdated. We suggest you explore some of these resource lists of education-oriented VFTs:



### TRAMLINE®

is a software company specializing in creating virtual tours. Their own site (<http://www.field-guides.com/vft/index.htm>) includes several fascinating tours complete with teachers' resources. For a list of Tramline VFTs, grouped by grade level as well as content, visit Teachers' web site.

**SURFAQUARIUM.COM** lists dozens of VFTs, from an interactive tour of ancient Rome to an animated frog dissection (our favorite).

<http://surfaquarium.com/virtual.htm>  
And be sure to check out Surfaquarium's guidelines for effective virtual touring: <http://surfaquarium.com/vftguide.htm>

**IBIBLIO**, the online library and archive service, has a section devoted to VFTs. Our favorite: a tour of the pre-historic cave at Chauvet Pont d'Arc, France with beautiful photos of the artwork.

<http://www.ibiblio.org/cisco/trips.html>

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## Unplugged. Teaching Without Computers

Imagine a classroom where the only mouse is the class pet snoozing in a corner of its cage. Where the clickety-click of student activity isn't coming from keyboards, but from knitting needles. Imagine? It seems unthinkable that a school would choose to go computerless these days, but it's happening as some educators and parents are questioning the importance and benefits of computers in the classroom. Even if you are committed to using computers, their experience is worth consideration and discussion.

One computer-free institution is the private Swallowtail School located right in the middle of Oregon's high

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# Unplugged. Teaching Without Computers

tech "Silicon Forest" area. No, the administrators and parents aren't Luddites, nor inflexible fanatics. In fact, about 25 percent of the parents have computer-related jobs. Swallowtail follows the principles of Waldorf Education, which include the idea that young children should explore their abilities and the world without interposing technology. There will be time enough for computers later.

Instead of working on computers, students learn through other means. They watch videos or CD-ROMs, write poems, stories and plays. They learn to knit, sew and create sculpture. In the classroom, pedagogic emphasis is on the relationship between the teacher and each student. In a letter to a parent at another Waldorf School, Eugene Schwartz, a Waldorf School educator, laid out this view in the context of using electronic media and computers:

"...The teacher's living and warm presence, and the unfolding of content in the immediacy of the moment are what convey knowledge - and wisdom - most powerfully to the child. Anything that 'mediates' between the child and teacher will,



in some sense, dampen down this living quality. (A copy of this letter is available at [http://www.bobnancy.com/waldorf/es\\_media.doc](http://www.bobnancy.com/waldorf/es_media.doc))

*But...*  
In a world where computer technology is a major component in almost every aspect of work, higher education, science, even the arts, aren't "unplugged" students at a disadvantage? Will they lack essential skills to succeed in "the real world?"

This unavoidable question arose during a National Public Radio interview with Swallowtail School's administrator, Lauren Sheehan. "I would say no," she answered, noting "that a reasonably intelligent child can learn to operate a computer very quickly. A summer course, maybe a year and they can get caught up..."

To say that computer literacy in the early grades is a need is perhaps just an assumption because we can see that the children who don't get it are catching up, and they're doing fine. For us, the question is are we helping humans develop to shape the world in the future, or are we responding to somebody's economic need now who tells us, 'Well, this is how you need to shape the humans for the economic future?'

Another provocative question faces us: after looking at both sides of this issue, can we afford to follow either course, and possibly be wrong? ■

## EVERYBODY OFF THE BUS: *Take a virtual field trip.*

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**LITERACY & TECHNOLOGY WEB SITE** was created by Dr. Joyce Hinkson, a California educator. In addition to other excellent resources, she lists a number of VFTs and other sites from The White House to deep space through the Hubble Telescope (our favorite.)

<http://campus.fortunecity.com/newton/40/home.html>

**EDUCATION WORLD** has a page with links several virtual field trips and related resources. Go to <http://www.educationworld.com> and enter "Virtual Field Trip" in the search box. ■

### Sources and Resources:

Would you like to create your own virtual field trip? Try it with the personal version of Tramline's TourMaker software. You can download a trial copy at <http://www.field-guides.com/tm/>

### SHORT AND SWEET

The Smart car is the offspring of an improbable marriage of Swatch, the Swiss fashion design company and Mercedes Benz. Measuring only 98 inches long (about half the length of a Ford Taurus), the smile-catching two-passenger runabout is often seen zipping around Europe plastered with advertising or outrageous paint jobs. This one, spotted in Lucerne, Switzerland, is relatively conservative.



### FEATURED WEB SITE:

#### ARTIST INDEXES ([HTTP://CGFA.SUNSITE.DK/FINEART.HTM](http://CGFA.SUNSITE.DK/FINEART.HTM))

Imagine strolling through a friendly museum with hundreds of works of art that you can sort into galleries by artist (naturally), period or nationality. What's more, you can copy (print) the artworks and even take them home (download.) It's a great place to find representative works for the historical period your class is studying, including brief biographies of the artists. The reproductions are excellent, and navigating the site is easy, although there are a few innocuous ads.

## **DON'T JUMP..!** UNTIL YOU READ THIS. THE SAFE WAY TO JUMP START A CAR



***It's easy to forget about your car's battery. It just sits there quietly under the hood doing its job year after year. But eventually it will get run down – and let you down – with not enough power to start your engine. That's when you might call a friend for a jump-start.***

Stop right there. It looks easy, but doing it improperly causes thousands of serious eye injuries each year, according to Prevent Blindness America, the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization. Here's how -- and why -- to do it right.

First, why. Car batteries produce hydrogen and oxygen, two highly flammable and explosive gases. If any of those gases have leaked from your battery, a single spark may cause an explosion, spewing flames and acid. Take your time; don't take shortcuts.

- **NEVER** smoke or cause a spark when working on a battery.
- **NEVER** try to jump start a car if the battery appears frozen.
- Wear eye protection, such as safety goggles. Keep them with your jumper cables.
- Make sure the cars are not touching.
- The two vehicles' electrical systems should be the same voltage. (Check the owners' manuals if you are not sure.)
- Battery vent caps should be tight and level. Cover them with a damp cloth, if possible.
- Turn the **IGNITION OFF** in both cars until the jumper cables are attached properly.

*Okay, now you're ready to attach the jumper cables. Follow this order exactly:*

- 1.** Clamp one end of the RED cable to the POSITIVE (+) terminal of the DEAD BATTERY. Do not allow cable clamps to touch any metal on either vehicle.
- 2.** Connect the OTHER END OF RED cable to the POSITIVE (+) terminal of GOOD BATTERY.
- 3.** Connect BLACK clamp to NEGATIVE (-) terminal of GOOD BATTERY.

**4.** Finally, connect other BLACK CABLE CLAMP to a METALLIC GROUND of the DEAD CAR (use any exposed metal away from the battery, carburetor, fuel line, tubing or moving parts of the vehicle). DO NOT CONNECT THE BLACK CABLE CLAMP TO THE NEGATIVE (-) TERMINAL OF THE DEAD BATTERY.

**5.** Stand back from both vehicles.

**6.** Start the car with the good battery, then start the disabled car.

**7.** REMOVE THE CABLES IN THE REVERSE THEY WERE ATTACHED. Begin by removing the black cable from the metallic ground.

It's a good idea to let your car run for a while before you and your jump-start partner go your separate ways. Have your battery and electrical system checked by a qualified technician as soon as possible.

***You can request a free self-adhesive sticker to attach under the hood of your car courtesy of Prevent Blindness America. Just call (800) 331-2020.*** ■

### Film Re-view

"I'm getting tired of continually cleaning that yucky film off the inside of my windshield. Where does it come from?" Don't worry; it's harmless. In fact, it's related to one of the little pleasures of owning a car – that "new car" smell. Both are caused by the normal evaporation of plasticizers from the materials in a car's interior. Plasticizers keep the materials flexible, so parts like knobs and the steering wheel feel good, and the dashboard and door panels won't crack from weathering. Next time you're staring at a filmy windshield, relax. Take a deep breath and get out the Windex.

**Quotes:** *“Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten.”*

*“You can learn many things from children. How much patience you have, for instance.”*

– B.F. Skinner  
– Franklin P. Adams, humorist

# END OF THE ROAD.

*Recently, some of the best-known names in American automobile history have become...well, history. Oddly enough, most of them seem to have just faded away, like old soldiers. We think they're worth a salute.*

**OLDSMOBILE.** Sales of one of the oldest U.S. makes will be discontinued by General Motors after the 2004 model year. Created by Ransom E. Olds (the REO was named for him, too), it was the first car built on an assembly line, not the Ford Model T, as many believe.

**LINCOLN CONTINENTAL.** First rolled out as a dramatically styled coupe in 1940 and later a convertible, the name was also applied to brilliant designs during 1950s and 1960s.

**CHEVROLET CAMARO.** Originally a challenger to Ford's Mustang, Camaro lost its appeal to young drivers

without attracting any others in sufficient numbers to keep it alive.

**PONTIAC FIREBIRD.** The Camaro's brother under the skin, and afflicted with the same loss of popularity. Only 200 Firebirds were sold in its last run.

**CADILLAC ELDORADO.** Debuting 1953 as a glamorous show car you could actually buy, the Eldorado was a showcase of Cadillac's success and excesses.

**PLYMOUTH.** Launched in 1928 as a "value" brand, Plymouth is perhaps best remembered for its over-powered "muscle" cars, like the Barracuda of the late 1960s and '70s.

**MERCURY COUGAR.** Once a dressier alternative to the Mustang and later big Thunderbirds, the Cougar ended its days as a small sports coupe.

**Answer to the Pop Quiz:** For all the attention online learning has received in the popular and professional press, only a small number of students are actually enrolled in internet-based courses. The figure is between 40,000 and 50,000 in K-12, according to WestED, the nonprofit educational research, development and service agency. (See American School Board Journal, September 2002.)

*Quote:* "There is nothing worse than a BRILLIANT image of a fuzzy concept."

- photographer Ansel Adams



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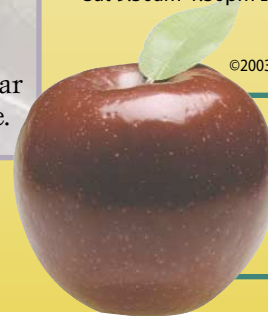
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