

Subject #8: Problem Solving

Project #78: What's a Word Cloud and How's that Solve Problems? (using the Internet) Create a word cloud to pictorially display ideas, to identify important points in a lesson, or as a pre- or post- unit review

Higher-order thinking skills	Technology-specific	Subject Area/ Learning-specific	Standard: NETS-S
<i>Seeing patterns, organizing, creating</i>	<i>Graphic organizers, internet, multimedia</i>	<i>Graphic organizers, language, communication</i>	2.b, 4.c

Grade level: 2-8
 Prior knowledge: Project 99: *Internet Basx*
 Time required: 10 minutes student time; 30 minutes teacher time to create Wordle
 Software required: internet browser
 Vocabulary: word cloud, graphic organizer, blog, tag

Lesson Description

- Sometimes called 'data visualization', word clouds (as shown in the insets) show graphically what's important



based on word size, color, placement.

- A free cloud creator from

Wordle.net produces word pictures from user-generated input. The more frequently a word appears in the source text, the larger it is in the cloud. (Color in a Wordle is just for aesthetics.)

The result is a graphic design communicating the important concepts of an idea. The inset analyzes Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream* speech. What do you think his speech emphasized?



- Another popular use of word clouds is to find synonyms and related ideas for writing. Check out Visual Thesaurus at www.visualthesaurus.com, a subscription online service that visually displays word connections.

Word maps let you search for just the right word and then explore related concepts, revealing the way words and meanings relate to each other.

- If you have a blog, you probably have a cloud to rank your entries. This one is from Wordpress.org.
- On the next pages, you see a variety of word displays. What do they all have in common? They



turn black and white numbers into fascinating information, the type that inspires students to explore real-world challenges and facilitate the learning process by replacing intimidation

with positive engagement.

Computer Activity

- Take an anonymous survey of which computer program students like best. Or, if you have a blog, have students enter their answers there. Add each result to [Wordle.net's](http://Wordle.net) 'Paste in a bunch of text'



Never Heard of Tagxedo? Read on

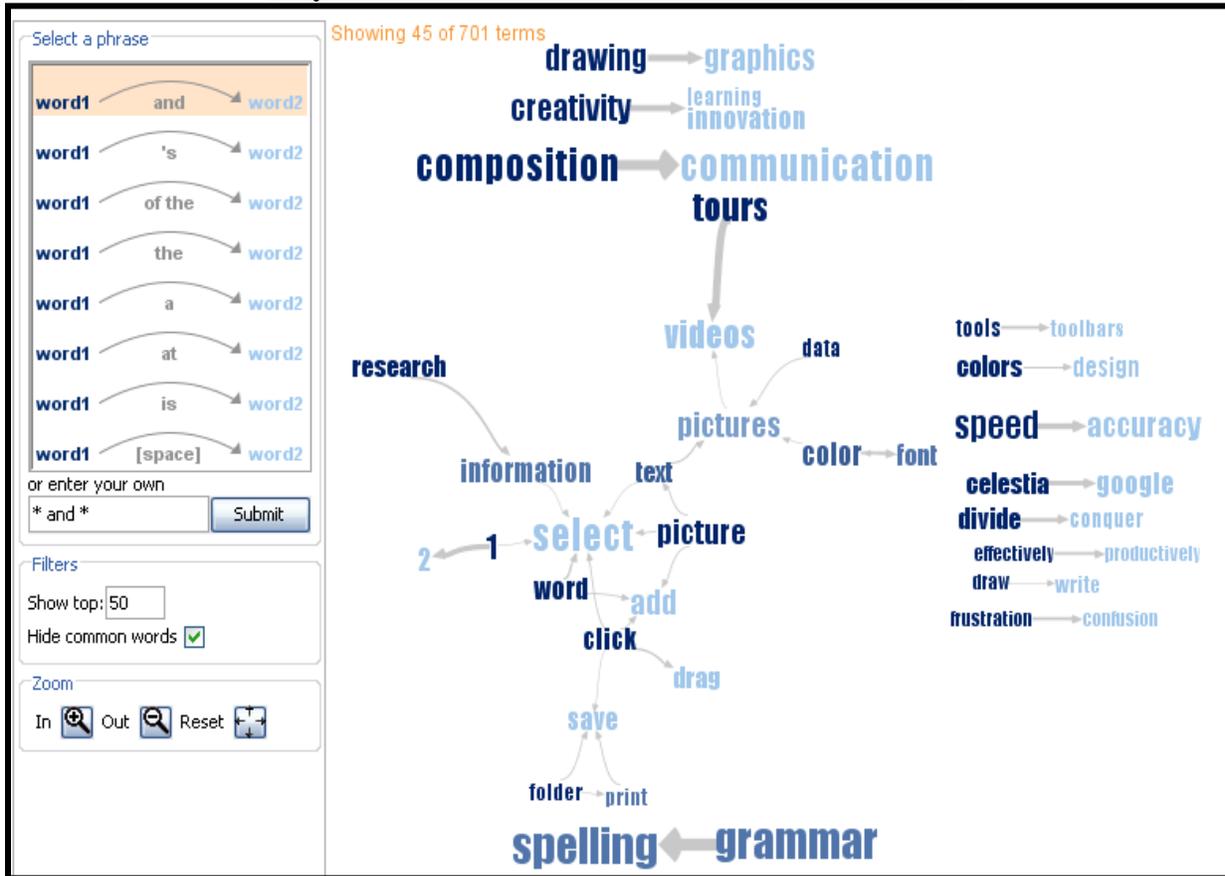
If you haven't discovered [Tagxedo \(http://tagxedo.com\)](http://tagxedo.com), you have a treat in store. As its tagline suggests, it is a tag cloud with style. Think [Wordle \(http://wordle.net\)](http://wordle.net) on steroids. Tagxedo takes words and turns them into pictures, with all the options you couldn't find on Wordle. Start with words (or a website, your Delicious links, an RSS feed, a news event or search results for a term). Select colors, fonts, shape. Here's a list of [101 Ways to Use Tagxedo](#). I've culled my favorites out for you:

- as a discussion of back to school stuff
- what students want to learn about a subject (I'm having my 8th grade Photoshop class create one advising me what they want to learn about photo editing)
- input an essay/book report they've written to see what words pop out as most important. They can then shape it and color it to match the ideas.
- input words from a website they enjoy
- input words from an historic document to see what is the important theme
- any written project normally difficult for visual learners will take on new life with this program
- each student contributes 10 words to describe ****. Write them down on your Smartboard and enter into Tagxedo
- make a Class Tagxedo with the teacher's name larger and students all around him/her
- at the beginning of the school year, ask each student to make a Tagxedo about himself/herself
- make a cover page—turns words about the report topic into a picture
- *paste a student essay into Tagxedo. See if other students can work out (a) topic and (b) title of essay. If they fail to do so, this suggests that the essay lacks sufficient focus on the question and student should make some edit, try it again! (thanks [russelltarr](#))*
- contrast candidates in a Political debate
- summarize a field trip report
- appreciate other languages. Make Tagxedo with non-Latin languages
- teach students about cultures of the world. Add words about a specific culture and shape the Tagxedo like the country. This can also be done for states.
- make a Guess-the-Quote game. Enter all words from a quote and see if the students can figure out the quote.
- brainstorm a topic. Enter all the words about a topic the student comes up with.
- create a synonym word Wall. Look up synonyms of overused words at thesaurus.com. Enter into Tagxedo.
- Track a poll over time. Make a Tagxedo of knowledge on a subject at beginning/middle/end/whatever to show how ideas are evolving.

For more ideas, visit the [Daily Tagxedo](#).

How do you use it?

A phrase net of correlated words:



A Twitter-stream graph from neoformix.com:

