

Communicating with Families Using Classroom Websites

Class websites are a tool that teachers may use to communicate with families and house documents for families to access on their own.

The use of class websites may look different depending on the grade-level. For example, with lower grades, the teacher may use the website to primarily post developmental resources and photographs of students participating in classroom activities and their work, while in the middle to upper grades, teachers may use the website to primarily post weekly homework documents and study tools in addition to photographs of student work and classroom activities.

Shutterfly Share Sites have been very successfully used in classrooms and it's privacy matrix is appreciated by all families. In this document you will learn how to set up a Shutterfly site and get ideas about how to use it with your students and families. In addition to Shutterfly these sites also offer free classroom website options. Choose one that works best for you!

- Weebly (www.weebly.com): public site, parent permission required, App is available
- Word Press (www.wordpress.com): public site, parent permission required, App is available
- Kid Blog (www.kidblog.org): recommended for upper grades—kids and families can create and use this site

Classroom Website Use for Teachers

- Ask families their preferred method of contact and let them know you'll share academic updates this way
- Identify the purpose for your classroom website (what types of information do you want to share with your families and how frequently would you like to update your website)
- Obtain photo permission from your students' families
- Share with families your purpose and expectations for the use of the classroom website
- Personalize the classroom website with photographs of students, student work, and shout-outs to celebrate the work students and their families have done

School Leaders: how can you help?

- Support teachers by providing them with electronic versions (PDFs) of school information and updates that they can post on the classroom website
 - Communicate the importance of school and home communication in whole school communications
 - Encourage families to regularly view class websites as they provide tools for learning that families can implement at home
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Let's get started with a Shutterfly Share site!

- **First**, read all about how you can use it to enhance your family communication here: <https://www.shutterfly.com/sites/create/welcome.sfly?fid=600ea9928634df4a>
Now, follow these five easy steps to get your class onto the web!



- Step 1:** Register for a free account at www.shutterfly.com
- Step 2:** Login and click on "share" on the top right of the home page, then click "make a free site"
- Step 3:** Follow the prompts (choosing "classroom" for type and then filling in the rest)
- Step 4:** Choose the design for your site from the templates shown
- Step 5:** Click "create a site" and then select "Yes, please guide me through"

That's it! Your site has been created and you will receive an email from Shutterfly with additional details about how to make the most of your site!

Helpful Hints for Site Setup:

- Have your students names, parent names and emails ready when creating your site
- Create a permission slip for families regarding use of student photos, class work and videos. Even though the site is only open to those you invite you may still have families that do not wish for their child's image to be on the web.
- Launch your site the day after Back to School Night. This will allow you to inform parents about the site and secure any additional permission slips before it is open to all. You can work in it continuously as you are waiting to release it to your families.
- Parents should be made aware that the site is open to only those that have been invited by the owner
- Leading up to Back to School Night, add digital photos of your students during the first week of school. This will allow your students and families to get to know one another better. Parents can also add photos of themselves next to their contact info when they log on.
- Once your site is launched download the Shutterfly Sharesites app. This will allow you to send emails to all (or individual) members, add photos, events, and more right from your phone.

Helpful Hints for the Home Page Content

Classroom News & Update Tips

- Routine reports to families about what has been happening in the classroom and how they can support further explorations of topics at home.
- Informing families about what is coming up in the core subjects so that they can be prepared to work on these things at home
- Student generated updates, written by the class to inform parents about they have been learning over a week, two weeks, or a month.

Classroom Photo Tips

- Take photos of classroom work and encourage families to ask their child to talk with them about what they were learning based on the photos that are featured
- Student in action—photographs are very powerful and give families a real time view of what is happening in your classroom. This can help them be able to make classroom connections with their child as they view these images together.
- The ***Shutterfly Sharesites app*** allows you to take pictures on your phone and upload them instantly to your site. Then you can send an email to all members so that they know to log on and take a look!

Links to Useful Sites Tips

- This section should be updated to coincide with your classroom news and updates.
- Simply find links to articles, online games, youtube videos, etc. that relate to what your students have been learning, copy that link and then add it to the section by clicking “add bookmark”, choose the tab “other websites”, paste your link in the first box and then name it as you wish for it to appear on the home page.
- Families can use this section of your site to tailor computer time at home to match what their child is learning at school.

Links to Files Tips:

- This section can be used to upload files for homework or at home practice sheets for reading and math concepts.
- You can upload Powerpoints and other shareable content from parent meetings throughout the year. Making the information you are providing to parents accessible to all even if some were not able to attend a meeting.
- Files must be saved on your computer and can be uploaded by clicking “add file”
- You can hold your curser over the files as well to see how many times it has been downloaded. This will allow you to see how popular or not an upload is and help you to determine whether or not the information was received by the majority of your families.

Calendar & Upcoming Events Tips

- This is a great place to highlight classroom, school, and district-wide events.
 - Descriptions of the event, its location and whether volunteers are needed is all included in this section.
 - As you click on “add event” your will be prompted to complete the details of the event that will be displayed on the home page. At that time set a reminder for up to 7 days before an event. This selection will automatically generate an email to all members to remind them about your event.
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Created by Beth Prince & Kirby Shultz

- For event **VOLUNTEERS** click on the volunteer tab at the top of the home page and then click "add a sign-up sheet" and follow the prompts.

Volunteer Tip: For meeting sign ups choose "food Items" and then in the space for the food name put "attendee" then the number of spaces available at your meeting. Parents can then sign up to attend your meeting. All sign-up sheets are saved unless you delete them. This will allow you to keep a record of attendance at your parent meetings and other events throughout the year.

Classroom Poll Tips

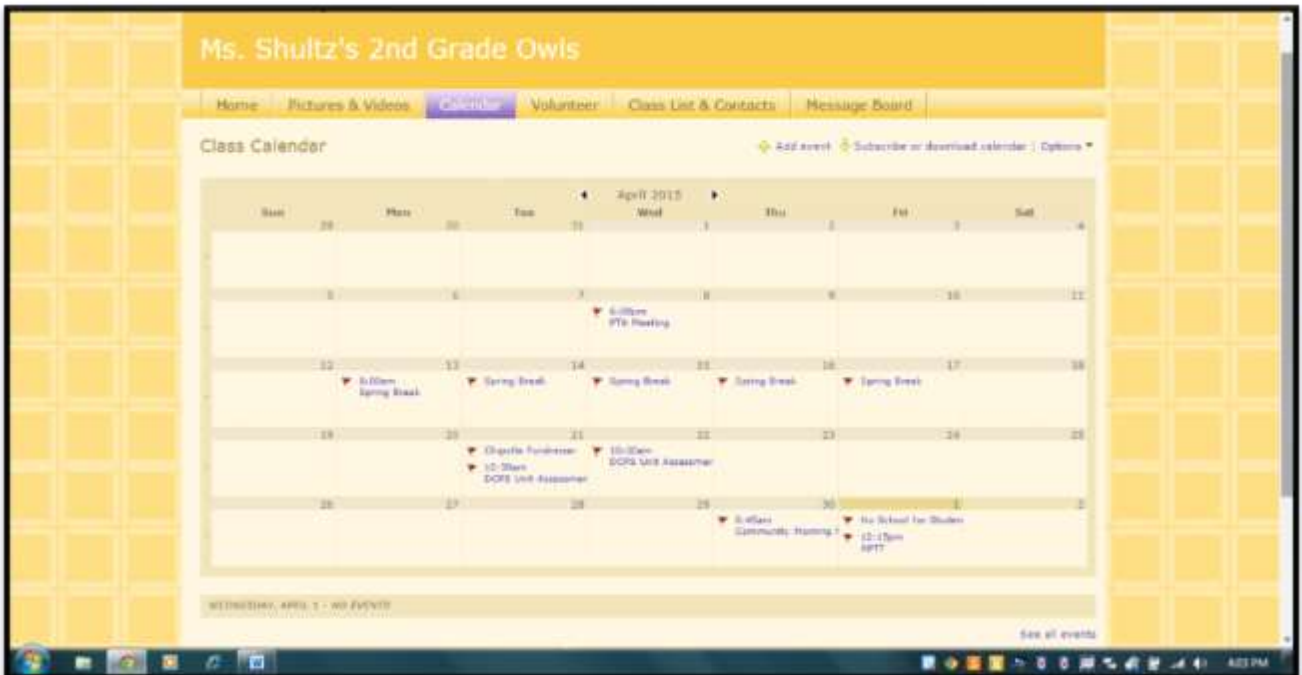
- Want to get a quick snapshot of what technology parents have available at home?— use a poll
 - Want to get feedback about Back to School Night? – use a poll
 - Want to find out how your parents would most like to volunteer in the classroom?— use a poll
 - Want to find out interest levels for field trips or a family time get together? – use a poll
 - Polls can be set up in various ways, from simple yes or no responses to detailed feedback about anything you choose.
 - Polls can be set for a specific time period or can be done on a monthly basis. The results are saved unless you delete the poll so you can use this information throughout the school year.
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Sample Pages

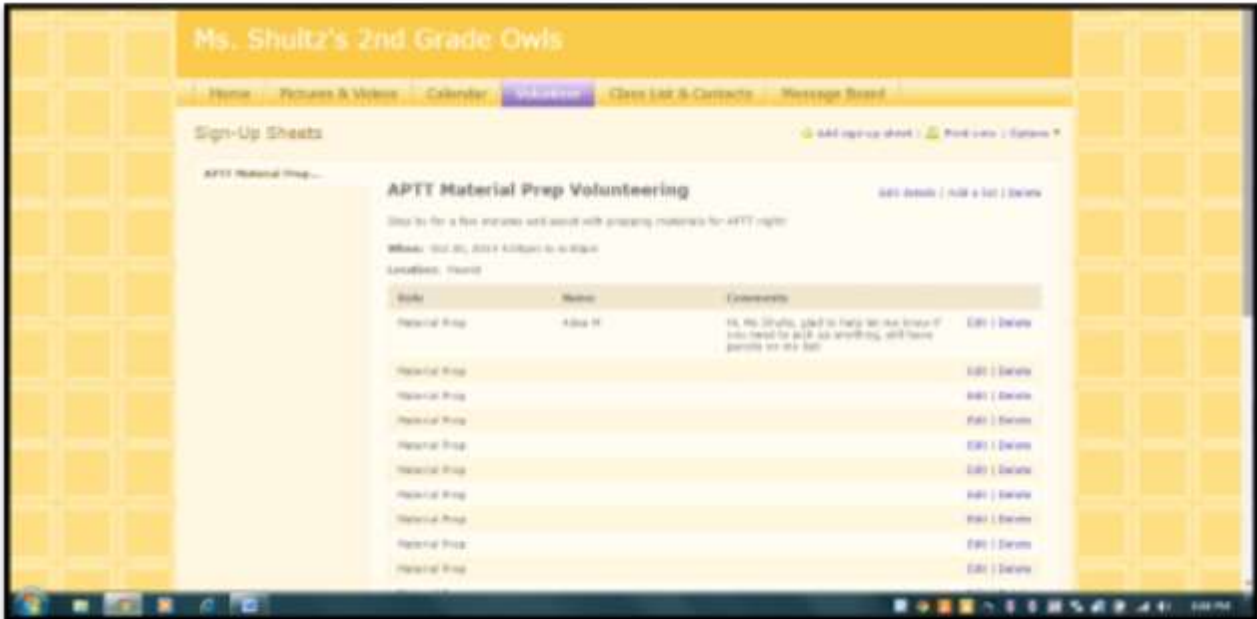
Home Tab Image: Class News and Updates, teacher contact information, and at-home practice links and resources may be posted here.



Sample Calendar Image



Sample Volunteer Sign-Up Image



Sample Use of the Message Board to Post Homework Documents

