

TechTrainer Logo Design:

The TechTrainer is looking for a cool new logo, or logos, to showcase in future issues. Think about Google and how the site redesigns its logos every now and then. Have any great ideas? Have any students with great ideas? I am a former art teacher so I know I can design one myself....I just think it would be cool to have one by staff or students. If anyone is willing you can email submissions to michael.berg@eastern.k12.in.us.



Digital Storytelling in the Classroom

Believe it or not, what you do in the classroom does develop how students see the world. Keeping that in mind, remember that the world also helps to develop how they see you and your teaching. I can still recall my education from elementary through high school. In my primary school we had one computer in our room. We had only one computer because it was expensive and at the time computers were very limited. We could basically type and play math games on that computer. By the time I entered high school computers had changed a lot. The high school I went to had one lab and students had internet access for research. At the time, it was very progressive and you had to have a waiver to be allowed on the internet. I remember most of my writing assignments from high school. They always started the same way. We were given an assignment with the following specs: typed, 500 words minimum, double spaced, and spell checked. Believe it or not, this sped things up immensely for students that had already learned how to type. Proof reading errors were caught more easily and composition time was cut in half. Years before I had entered into that high school, there was no lab and computers were a luxury. Those exact same types of assignments started out differently. Papers had to be handwritten in cursive, a minimum of two pages or so (if I recall correctly from my sister and my older friends), proofing marks before recopying and turning the initial draft in. The innovations of technology all those years ago allowed a great change in how students and teachers prepared work. Let's now jump forward to today. We have open internet (still filtered) access, Web 2.0 tools popping up all over the place, numerous outlets to publish and share documents, interactive whiteboards popping up in classrooms, and the majority of our communication is moving digital. Today, we have the opportunity to not only educate students about grammar, punctuation, and collaboration, but we have tools to allow true communication. Do we still need to confine assignments to typing and turning in papers? Can we move from turning papers in printed out and begin not only turning them in electronically, but publishing them to share with others via blogs and personal learning communities? Why does a book have to be ink and paper, why can't it be interactive, or a web resources or a combination of documents, audio and video? Can students present podcasts of their work to enhance the overall effect? Our students live in a world where all of this is easily possible and as educators they are expecting us to allow expression in these ways. Technology can be a substitute for older forms of technology or practices, but it will only be truly beneficial when it is transformative. The teachers of Eastern already have access to some great tools that can challenge the traditional idea of writing a story or paper. Here are a few examples:

1. A Teacher website can allow teachers to post assignments, but more importantly can be used to carry on discussions and allow students to post comments to a blog. Imagine asking students to post a creative writing work to your classroom blog. Do you think quality would go up or down if students know that the world can see the work they are producing?
2. Move to all digital book creation, making a children's book with provided professional artwork to share in front of class using "storybird" (www.storybird.com) in anonymous mode.
3. Students can even create a custom digital book using their own illustrations; consider signing up for a classroom account for "storyjumper" (www.storyjumper.com) which allows you to create users for your class who can then create a digital book and upload illustrations to include in their story.
4. Introduce students to tools like "BibMe!" (www.bibme.org) for easy citations of texts and resources used in their essays or reports. Have students create commentary review podcasts or write scripts for podcasts or commercials.
5. Record audio podcasts using "audacity" (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>) which is installed on many of the school's computer systems and then post to a class web page.

Students are immersed in a digital world; why shouldn't they be able to use tools they know and love to learn? As we see more and more innovation it is our job to innovate. If you need help along the way you have a very interested teacher willing to work with you to experiment. While every idea is not going to be a success, you will undoubtedly come upon new ways to engage your students and reach those that may have seemed unreachable.