

Summertime Training

Summer is fast approaching and with it come training opportunities. I know many of you hold your summers dear to your heart, so if you can't come to summer training sessions I will understand, but I would love to see as many people over the summer as possible. Very soon you will be receiving an email from Mr. Bagley with a link to a few surveys (he will provide more clarity on why we wanted to put out a survey along with instructions). One of those surveys comes from me. As we plan summer training activities I would like to make sure that we are providing options at times convenient to the largest amount of staff. Summer training will be optional on your part and there are no plans currently to fund participation. We will have many things going on, possibly including the following: Introduction to SMART boards, Introduction to Interwrite Boards, Getting Started with Windows 7 (this is what will be loaded on all of the new teacher/staff machines), Moodle course building (possibly a "camp" that takes place over a number of days allowing you to create and set up everything you need for the new year), My Big Campus Introductions (similar to Moodle, but with a younger focus), Skyward trainings, and other opportunities. If you have anything you think would be of interest to you and your fellow staff members please email me your ideas. We would like to present opportunities for those that want to learn more about the technology in their rooms. Be on the lookout for the survey coming your way in an email soon.

Tech Tuesday Upcoming Session

May 3rd—Multimedia Presentation Tools Prezi (www.prezi.com) and Ahead (<http://ahead.com>) are awesome ways to add animated transitions and zooming into presentations you may want to create for class or professionally. Come join me as we look at Prezi and Ahead, their functionalities, and their limitations.

New Tools for a New Year

The year may be winding down but ideas for next year are just beginning to show themselves. Check out these tools and see if any of them fit with your teaching style or curriculum:

1. LetterPop (<http://letterpop.com>) Newsletter and print templates used online to create and inspire.
2. ToonDoo (<http://toondoo.com>) Create online comics and characters to story tell in the classroom.
3. Kidblog (<http://kidblog.org>) A unique site where you can set up safe classroom blogging and give your students their own moderated blog.

Video Games and Content in the Classroom

Video games? In a classroom? Well, yes. Video games not only develop reflexes and help children learn, but in some cases even provide robust content for teaching with guidance. Gaming graphics are getting better all the time and as such, give great visual stimulation for writing prompts, or even allow for exploration of areas that are unreachable by your class. I can name a couple of good examples without even thinking about it. There is a game for the Wii called "Oceans" where you explore the ocean as a scuba diver; while it is not real, you encounter virtual schools of fish and other animals. Another great example is the "Kinectimals" for Xbox (with Kinect of course) that showcases animal movement and interaction. Even classics like Myst (computer playable) can offer intriguing scenery and help student's imagination blossom when developing creative writing. Does this mean you actually play the game in class? Not necessarily, but I'm sure you could get a volunteer or two. As with any lesson, rules and expectations should be shared at the outset with your class. If you have a system you are willing to bring in for a few days you can also get away with renting the game from a store for a few dollars instead of buying it. Intrigued, interested, appalled? What are your thoughts? Can video games enrich a curriculum or do they have no place near a classroom? Let me know, I'm interested to hear what everyone thinks. You know my email (and if you don't, it is listed in the logo below).



Do you have Windows 7...with IE 9?

If you have windows 7 with Internet Explorer 9 you can do something, which until now, wasn't as easily done. You can "pin" websites to your taskbar (the big bar at the bottom of your screen where you find application windows). To pin a website, mouse over the icon that loads next to the address in the address bar and drag it to the taskbar when the instructions pop-up. This lets you launch your most used websites with one click on your taskbar, just like a pinned application.