

The High School of Commerce

TECHNOLOGY

TIPS

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Public Schools

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February Already!!!

Interesting Points

- The first recorded association of Valentine's Day with romantic love is in Parliament of Foules (1382) by Geoffrey Chaucer [1]:
*"For this was on seynt Volantynys day
Whan euery bryd comyth
there to chese [chose] his
make [mate]"*
- Valentine's Day was probably imported into North America in the 19th century by British settlers.
- In the United States, the first mass-produced valentines of embossed paper lace were produced and sold shortly after 1847 by Esther Howland (1828-1904) of Worcester, Massachusetts.
- Valentine's Day is mentioned by the character Ophelia in Hamlet:
"Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's Day."

- * Valentine's Day. (2006). In Wikipedia [Web]. Retrieved 1/30/2007, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentine's_Day

Here we are, ready for another fun filled ride with the Tech Tips Newsletter for The High School of Commerce! How did we get this far so quickly! Ah well...

There are a number of things you're going to find in this issue of the Tech Tips. One of them is a reminder that there are a number of very interesting offerings I'm making over in B155 for the rest of the year. There are many people who might have questions concerning some piece of what I'm doing, so I'll try to answer a few of them here before we get any further into the semester.

1. Yes. There is a record of your participation in any of the workshops I'm offering. The folks downtown will apply the hours you spend with me to

your PDP's for Technology.

2. For each 2 week period, I offer 1 topic, twice during the first block of the day (So folks can use their prep to come in and get the training).
3. You only have to come to B155 **ONCE** during any 2 week period to get the credit for that week's topic.
4. What generally happens during these trainings is a short period where I demonstrate the topic we're covering, we discuss any questions, and then we have a hands on activity to reinforce what we've talked about.
5. We can cover a lot of ground in the time that I've set aside for doing this and if there's some-

thing specific you'd like to discuss, or find out about, we'll have plenty of time to get to your questions and concerns.

Now I know that there are about a gazillion things you have to do in your classrooms and offices, but I want to point out that some of the information I can give you will certainly knock time off doing the more mundane tasks we have as educators and give you more time to get to the real challenges of doing our job.



Differentiated Instruction... and then some!

There are many theories, statistics, methods, taxonomies, and all manner of information that we're (as educators) supposed to be fluent in or familiar with. The latest of these, differentiated instruction, would, on the surface anyway, seem to be at odds with the most prevalent movement in education in the last... well, a really long time, standards based policy/planning. Initially we'd ask ourselves, "What's the

point of having standards if we're going to have to make accommodations when a student gets the sniffler?" The point is simply, accommodations are for acquiring or presenting knowledge. They say nothing about the actual standard of information or level of competency a student has to reach.

I know you're saying, "Huh?", but really, if you think about

it, differentiating instruction should be the sort of thing we're really good at.

Let's take the example I offered in the last "Tech Tips". A colleague offered an example where mathematics teachers years ago wouldn't even think about letting a student use a calculator in class, let alone on a test. I responded with the fact that students back then weren't

Differentiated Instruction... and then some!

required to know, and be proficient with, nearly as much as students are today. In addition, we can't very well expect that learning would remain the same with the advent of the home computer and the Internet.

Think about the changes in the world around us in the last 25 years. It's staggering, the transformation of the way we live our lives is amazing. You can think of quite a few of them if you were around at the time. Some of the staff here can only remember 1984 as a book by George Orwell, or the oldies station playing a cut off the Van Halen album (Oh My GAWD, vinyl "albums") called "Jump".

With all that in mind, it's only reasonable to expect that students would change (thank god there are no more bands like "A Flock of Seagulls"). That being said, some of the things that we do in teaching them would have to change as well. The problem is, while we talk of change, we still cling to the dusty old "tried and true" means by which we were taught. We still think that doing a 5 paragraph essay shouldn't take

much more than 10 or 15 minutes. Reading the first chapter of that Western Civilization textbook is 15 minutes at best. Getting through only the odd questions on pages 103-108 in Algebra 2 should be a piece of cake. The fact is, 25 years ago, you might have gotten away with that. Today, not even in AP classes.

So what can we do? Use common sense I would suppose. Some of the things that we do every day are:

- Give extended time on tests
- Encourage peer tutoring
- Allow oral testing
- Provide manipulatives
- Use alternate assessments
- Vary teaching strategies
- Identify student's learning style
- Assign mentors
- Provide visual clues
- Include transition cues
- Provide effective study guides
- Create flashcards
- Break down tasks
- Shorten assignments
- Arrange small group instruction
- Provide individual help within the classroom
- Reduce workload
- Make contracts with students
- Include tactile activities
- Utilize homework logs
- Provide wait time
- Provide reference tools

- Insist upon graphic organizers
- Teach test-taking strategies and provide practice
- Incorporate reading strategies
- Include study skill strategies

Of course all these things might seem like common sense to us now, considering the fact that there isn't one of us that hasn't been asked for more time, taught graphic organizers, or set students up with peer tutors. We do these things now because of the necessity. It's not because our kids are less talented than students of 25 years ago, it's because the way our children learn has changed with the world and our understanding has to change with them.

We shouldn't think of this as a decrease of ability and standards. It's just a change in the way we prepare students for the enormous amount of information they're going to have to be acquainted with just to get by in today's world. Make no mistake about it here folks, what these kids are being asked to do is every bit as rigorous, academically, as anything we were asked to do when we were the same age. Maybe even more so, I know I haven't got a clue about calculus. Maybe I should start boning up on my math?



Microsoft Vista!!! Another Generation!!!

The latest in operating systems from the Microsoft Corporation is due out tomorrow. While this doesn't mean a whole heck of a lot for us here at the good ol' High School of Commerce, it does actually mean quite a bit for the users of computers (That means just about everybody under the age of 35 or thereabouts).

“According to Microsoft, ^[1] Windows Vista contains [hundreds of new features](#); some of the most significant include an

updated [graphical user interface](#) and [visual style](#) dubbed [Windows Aero](#), improved [searching](#) features, new multimedia creation tools such as [Windows DVD Maker](#), and completely redesigned networking, audio, print, and display sub-systems. Vista also aims to increase the level of communication between machines on a home network using [peer-to-peer](#) technology, making it easier to share files and digital media be-

tween computers and devices. For developers, Vista introduces version 3.0 of the [.NET Framework](#), which aims to make it significantly easier for developers to write high-quality applications than with the traditional Windows.”

["Microsoft Vista." Wikipedia. 2006. 29 Jan 2007 “.](#)

HIGH SCHOOL

“Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one.”

Malcolm Forbes,
Forbes Magazine

OF COMMERCE



Springfield
Public Schools



RED RAIDERS



Hey Folks!!! The High School of Commerce website is alive and doing well, but I need your help!!! I need people to start sending in links to help with our resources pages. Especially in the areas of Science, Foreign Languages, and the Arts.

Send me any of the web based resources you use in your teaching throughout the day and I'll make sure that they get up on the HSC web pages. We want to build up an area where we can get to materials,



outside of those provided here so that we can supplement our lessons with resources that might be viable alternatives to some of the ones we have in classes today.

Considering it's one of those pesky Curriculum Frameworks things in every content area (integrating technology that is) I figure if we share as much as possible, starting with our resources that don't vanish after a certain amount of use or when grant funding dries up, we can have the largest archive of web materials broken down into content areas in the city. We already have a pretty impressive amount, but we need to update and expand with more.

And so gentle reader...

We're halfway through the school year! Goodness, gracious me! It's been quite a ride too! But now we've got the business end of the year right in front of us.

We've got MCAS, SAT, DFA, and god only knows how many other silly acronyms coming at us. Many folks have their second observation of the year rolling around soon. Some folks have retired and moved on their way, while others are looking at the end of the year as their own retirement. Of course, there are those folks who have just become members of the HSC community. Things are changing and moving on as they always do. The real beauty of it is, and I just realized this BTW, that we're actually following through on what Mr. Fernandes said in our very first meeting in the auditorium last August, "If we all pull together, we can make this a great place to come for students and make it a place where you want to come to work".

I was speaking with Mr. Pionidis about putting together a brochure for the IB program the other day and we got to talking about why someone would actually

want to come to Commerce. Well, there's the coursework that we have here with AP classes and the IB program. There's all the really outstanding work that's being done by the folks in the Arts Department. The students who're working on web pages for Mrs. Boylan are creating some very impressive work (You'll be seeing it posted soon I expect). And sports are, as always, exceeding the expectations (of opponents!!!) of nay-sayers.

I know what you're saying out there! "He's sucking up", "He's sold out to the evil powers of darkness and ready to throw us into the eternal pit of teacher detention and perpetual pit of personal professional development"!!!!

Not so gentle readers. I can only call 'em like I see 'em. And the way I'm seeing this school and community, I'm thinking "Wow, look at what we did". But immediately I begin thinking, "What haven't we done?" "What do we have left to do?"

I can only speak for myself, as I have about 10,000 or

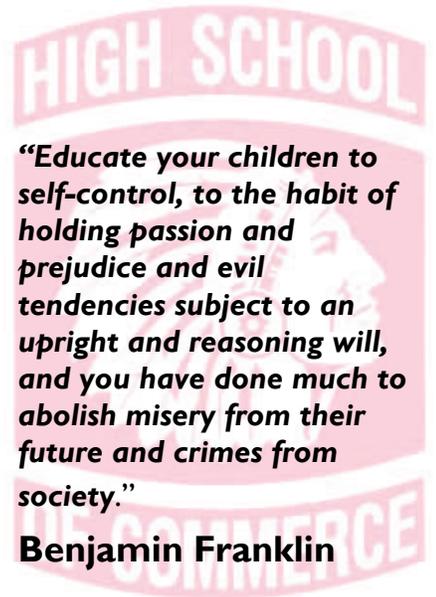
so things on my plate and another 10,000 waiting in the wings when I get done with them. I understand that we never finish "doing our work". I don't even have to consider saying, "But Mister, I finished my work" like the kids might say.

The upshot of all this is simply, we have accomplished some pretty remarkable things (even without looking back at past years and pointing fingers), we're doing some impressive things (just look at your classrooms with clear eyes), and we will do even more in the future. How can I say all this?

Look past the initial layers of disdain, teenaged angst, and rebelliousness, and, believe it or not, you'll find these kids we have here are ready for something more than just somebody saying, "I'm gonna get my respect". They want somebody to show them that there's more to the high school experience than being herded like sheep into a pen and watched over from 7:45 to 2:30 everyday. Hell, I can see that, and I'm blind as a bat.

Of course, that's just me.

Ed Musiak



SCIENCE FICTION HOUSELIFES



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