

MONDAY, APRIL 09, 2007

**USING MASSONE IN YOUR CLASSES-PART TWO
"THE FEATURES OF THE PLATFORM"****SPECIAL POINTS
OF INTEREST:**

- **Technology Tutorials** is where you can find all sorts of tutorials on many of the aspects of the MS Office Suite and many other tools we use in the SPS.
- **The Links Page** Loads of interesting and informative links to teacher sites and places you can use in your classes
- **The Keys Survey** Please finish the survey if you haven't already. There's only a couple more days for your voice to be heard.

Welcome to the wonderful world of MassOne folks!!! Now, as we talked about in the last issue, we all know that in the past, MassOne (or VES if you were here then) was bulky, cumbersome, and pretty much a dinosaur to use. I'm not going to say that all that is gone, but the platform has made some really innovative leaps to make it a very vital piece of our technology arsenal. Let's look at a few of them to get better acquainted with what they can do.

Virtual Hard Drive

Perhaps the most useful aspect of the personal area you have on the platform is the VHD. Here you have about 100 MB of storage space (roughly equal to about 70 or so floppy disks). Many of your Internet Service Providers (Comcast, AOL, EarthLink, and all the rest) only offer about 1/10th of that after you pay them their hefty fee for their service. What are some of the uses for this space?

If you're like me in any way, (don't worry, we won't admit it in public) then you probably take work home

with you and pop it into your computer. The VHD eliminates a couple of the steps involved by allowing you access to your files 24/7/365. It's housed in a secure environment where even if you have a catastrophic failure on your end, you'll still have whatever files you've backed up onto the system. Of course, if the MassOne servers go down... you still have everything because their files are backed up onto tape drives every evening. Kinda cool... eh?

Curriculum Tools

This area is comprised of several different tools that make the classroom teacher's life a good deal easier. The first of these are the Standards browse tools for both academic and vocational standards. Why do you think that this would be something useful?

Picture yourself as you're creating a lesson plan for your next class.. Now try to focus on the standards that you want to assess. If you're using the forms that were handed out at the In-house PD we've had for the

last few weeks., you'll notice they want you to add the standards that are going to be assessed right there along with essential questions and the rest of the fundamental information needed in planning.

This brings me to the next really useful tool on MassOne. The lesson planning tool. Obviously we wouldn't be creating the sorts of plans that are written so fully and completely for everyday use. It wouldn't be really all that practical in the long run. However, if we were to write one a week, using the lessons we found to be the most successful, then by the end of the year we'd have about 40 or so for each teacher. Now if we were to share all of our "best practices", in Springfield alone, we'd have somewhere in the area of 100,000 lessons we could draw on right here in Springfield. Pretty impressive don't you think?.

In our next issue we'll talk about the forums and surveys available on MassOne

TAKE IT FOR A TEST DRIVE!!!

You might think that there's something different about the way we would find out whether or not a software application is the right one for us. You'd think to yourself, "Why can't I just try out the program?" The fact is, you can in many cases.

Many of the larger software producers give anywhere between 7 and 30 days to try out their software to see if you like it and can become accustomed to it in a short amount of time. Granted, you'll get the watered down version of the program, a

"trial" version that, while it doesn't have full functionality, has everything you'll need to see if you really want to plunk down your hard earned money.

Let's take Adobe Acrobat Standard Version Whatever (it's Version 8 at the moment, but god knows what it'll be six weeks from now). In using the program, PDF documents are created for a variety of reasons, the most important of which is that the Adobe Reader is free and widely used. The actual application of this program means that folks who have it can cre-

ate PDF files (Portable Document Files) from a variety of formats so that they're easier to carry and read for folks. More universal I suppose.

The question is, will the program you try benefit you? For some, it will. For many, it will not. Anyway it goes, the person who can use the program on a trial basis gets practical experience using the software. And a fairly good idea of whether or not the program is "for them".

PLANNING FOR TECHNOLOGY IN YOUR CLASSROOM BEYOND POWERPOINT

Is it any wonder that kids get bored doing some of the stuff we ask them to do when they're used to the action and drama of the big budget action flick video game styled bang bang shoot 'em ups? I mean, think about it. You've got to study the Reconstruction Period right after the American Civil War or you can zone out to your tunes while you play a video game that involves you saving the world from a large gelatinous slug that makes Jabba the Hut look like an earthworm. No contest I'd say. Especially considering the fact that many of today's kids don't really care to read all that much.

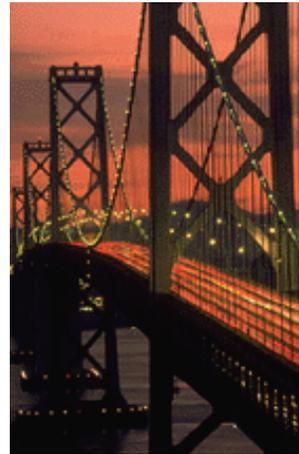
So, what do we do about trying to teach subjects that might not have that intrinsically "bang, bang" quality that pulls the kids in? How many times do we have to hear, "Mr., if I'm not interested in it, I can't learn it" I know that a knee jerk reaction to kids saying something along the lines of the above quote is something akin to assigning a 300 page book on Grover Cleveland with no pictures and asking an unanswerable essay question for 75% of the final

grade. While that might be emotionally satisfying for the teacher on some sadistic and primal level, it's certainly not fair to the student or even educationally sound. So, what do we have available to us then?

Actually, quite a bit. I suppose you could take the track that involves the history of freed slaves and the culture that evolved around their search for civil rights and the complexities of their newly acquired freedom. One way of doing this is mirrored in the progression of music and the media that surrounds it.

Creating a film (mpeg) of imagery (whether motion or still) could be compiled along with early recordings and chronicles of the origins of the songs, styles, and performers. It could be done with the sorts of materials we have right here at the good ol' HSofC.

We could even download trial programs for some of the laptops and familiarize students with industry standard programs like:Photoshop, Captivate, Flash, and a number of other programs as mentioned in the article on the front page of this issue of Tech Tips.



"A bridge to nowhere"

"Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not; it is the first lesson that ought to be learned; and however early a man's training begins, it is probably the last lesson that he learns thoroughly."

Thomas H. Huxley

English biologist (1825 - 1895)

PERSONALIZED LEARNING-TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

There's always new stuff coming around the corner of the technology neighborhood. The most important of which isn't really a new concept, but is certainly gaining momentum as we find the different modalities of learning challenging us in every classroom.

Using programs like PLATO and Read 180, we can see how personalizing instruction can be aided by the use of

technology in the classroom here at Commerce. Of course, these two aren't the only ways that we can differentiate instruction in the classroom.

The use of text-to-speech software, large screen monitors, and other assistive devices are certainly part of being able to "differentiate" on a physical level, however there is a need to acknowledge the needs of students who are less

likely to learn in environments where "traditional" teaching is going on.

Technology, used within a set of specific circumstances, can provide them great assistance too While it is certainly an aid, it is not a "be all, end all". It must be **planned** for very carefully with a good deal of attention being paid to assessment and follow up for it to truly be effective.

In any case, the choice to work with technology is for ... the individual. Folks can't force it on you, but it is going to become more and more an integral and important piece of the educational process. Social Studies, Science, as well as English and Math are being assailed by the new methods that are being offered in the schools.

The use of programs such as MS Excel for math and the sciences is becoming the norm rather the exception as the programs are being asked to do more and more with the sorts of equations and graphic representations of their results. When we see the our students analyzing the data from the procedures they used to determine the results of their calculations, we need to recognize the fact that they need (just as with ELA and other content areas) the graphical representations to add that element to their understanding.



AND SO GENTLE READERS...

You know, I've been thinking (Yes, I'm aware that it's dangerous and has been banned in the four counties here in Western Mass), what about this Spring Break thing? I have an answer for all the folks who are constantly giving teachers seven kinds of hell for getting "so much time off all year". This will be a mathematical lesson here kids so hang on....

We'll be taking the average person in the business world who works for a large corporation selling, oh let's say, insurance. This individual earns about 50k per year and works 45-50 hours a week. He (The person's a he because it's my story. Although I suppose the person could just as easily have been female. Anyway...) deals with an average of 35-75 customers a day for about 3

minutes each. His bosses say he's a real "go getter" and a "highly motivated employee" who does well by his clients. Subsequently, he gets raises, bonuses, and an occasional crack at the executive lunch room.

On the other hand, we have the average teacher here at the ol' HSofC who earns about 45k (this is an average here folks) and generally works about 50-55 hours a week. He (once again, it's my story) has 130 students he sees about 40 minutes a day (without block schedules). His department chair says he's a fine teacher with an excellent command of his content area. Subsequently, he occasionally gets extra french fries from the lady at the Burger King down the block because he's always polite. Additionally, the other folks in the building say he's a

fine teacher and an excellent member of staff to have at parties because he knows how to make the best Long Island Ice Tea.

And now for the math... (SEE SIDE TABLES)

Of course I may be wrong here, but I think the guy at the insurance company makes a whole lot more for the amount of time and work he actually does. All this and only 60 actual hours of time separate them, not to mention the vast difference between the worth of their salaries. Hummmm... it kinda makes you wonder, doesn't it?

Ed Musiak

P.s. Now you know why I'm not a math teacher

TABLE ONE-(a x b= c)

CLIENTS	MINUTES	WORK UNITS
35	3	105
130	40	5200

The higher the total, the more work

TABLE TWO-(c + d= e)

WORK UNITS	SALARY	SALARY UNITS
105	50k	2.1
5200	45k	115

The lower the SU # the better the salary is compared to the amount of work units

TABLE THREE

Hours per week	Weeks per Year	Hours per year
45	48	2160
50	42	2100

TABLE FOUR

WORK UNITS	SALARY UNITS	HOURS PER YEAR
105	2.1	2160
5200	115	2100

USING TECHNOLOGY WITHOUT LOSING YOUR MIND

THE HARDWARE

In our last newsletter we talked about the things that are possible using what we have in a very general sort of way. What we get to do this time is more specific and practical. We get to see exactly what kind of hardware we actually have in the building and get a brief glimpse of what that hardware can do.

The Desk Top Computers

For the most part, the machines in the classrooms are loaded with Windows 98SE and the Office Version '97. They're Dell machines with Pentium II processors and (though I'm not entirely sure) I believe they have 128 MB of RAM with far smaller hard drives than we see in today's models. While there are actually USB ports on these machines, they're not compatible with many of the devices (flash drives being the most convenient) we use now. They do

have 3.5 floppy drives and CD players (no burning capability).

What does this mean for folks in the classes? Exactly what I said last issue about fairly cursory or very ordinary tasks that don't involve very much (by today's standards) multimedia. There are things that can be done, but those tasks can only involve one program, two at most, at a time. If you have any questions other than that, please feel free to come on down and we can talk out some plans.

The Lap Top Computers

These machines are substantially better than the machines you have in your rooms (as if you didn't know that already) and generally have Windows XP with Office 2000. The processors are Pentium M class (mobile technology) with between 256 MB and 512 MB of RAM installed. Additionally, they come with an interchangeable DVD player, 3.5

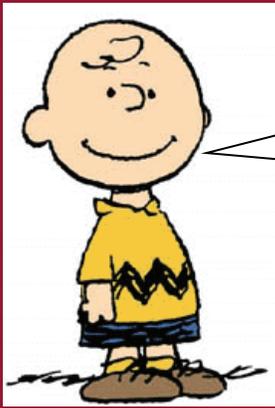
floppy, and a larger hard drive than the . They also have working USB ports which accept Flash drives making it convenient for saving student material. Additionally, while we're here, please make sure that your students do not save anything on any of the laptops!!! The way they are set up, defaults are restored when they are shut down. This means any work students might have saved on a specific machine gets deleted as soon as it's shut down.

What does all this mean for the average classroom? Well, the best thing I can say is, it enables students to work with more multimedia presentations from both the perspective of the viewer and the creator. Using multimedia presentations requires better processor performance and also more memory (RAM) from a computer.

We'll talk about more hardware available to us next issue along with some of these "multimedia" things.

"You can't teach an old dogma new tricks"

Dorothy Parker (1893-1967)



Hey Linus!

Life Lessons in Comics!



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