

Technology Tips

Volume 1, Issue 19

Wednesday, May 23, 2007

THE HIGH SCHOOL OF COMMERCE

Special points of interest:

- A byte, in computer terms, means 8 bits. A nibble is half that: 4 bits. (Two nibbles make a byte!)
- The first hard drive available for the Apple had a capacity of 5 megabytes.
- Back in the mid to late 80's, an IBM compatible computer wasn't considered a hundred percent compatible unless it could run Microsoft's Flight Simulator.
- The "save" icon on Microsoft Word shows a floppy disk, with the shutter on backwards.
- Ethernet is a registered trademark of Xerox
- There are 6,000 new computer virus's released every month.

Trivia found at:

Comedy Zone- Computer Trivia



End of the year coming 'round!!!!

That's right! It's coming around again. But... because it's coming around, does that mean things start getting easier? Absolutely not! As any seasoned vet teacher will tell you, the kids start shutting down and keeping their attention focused on what's happening in the classroom is just that much more difficult. Don't fret! There are things we can do to keep our kids attention, work on the stuff that they need to brush up on and still not drive ourselves crazy with the sorts of things that dog us during the rest of the year (correcting and that sort of thing). How you ask? Good question.

By now many of us are finished with the "requirements" of our various content areas. That's not to say that all of us are, but for the most part... you get the gist. Anyway, what we can do is work on some of the areas where our kids need improvement (you know where these areas are from all those pesky assessments you've been doing all year) without letting them know that's actually what we're doing. By using project based learning techniques, we can take some of the less enthusiastic students we have and give them something they might find

interesting and ultimately educational.

Some of the ideas I've used in the past might be modified for use in your classrooms. An example of this would be a lesson I used in my English 10 class called "The Bean Counters". Now before you start wondering what counting beans has to do with English Language Arts, a bean counter is according to the folks



Harry Potter always generates some interesting projects

over at dictionary.com, "A person, such as an accountant or financial officer, who is concerned with quantification, especially to the exclusion of other matters". Anyway, the bean counters in my class were trying to determine why it was a good idea for studios to put certain kinds of movies out at specific times of the year.

They had to prepare their presentations using at least two different types of media and at least 10 different sources for information (half of which had to be information about financial loss or gain). In my class the main focus was on the critical thinking aspect of the results of their findings. In other words, I wanted to

know **why** they would recommend **what**, **when** and **how** they would release certain films based on the data they collected.

In many cases, the presentations were made using PowerPoint and either a paper (word processed) or an Excel spreadsheet with charts and graphs. I even got an MP3 of a song some students had done in their home recording studio along with the whole method they planned on using to market the CD the song came from. The possibilities were endless. And this was just an

English class. If you were to use it in a Math class, the emphasis would obviously change with regard to your focus for the end result. Mine was critical thinking based on data, where in a math class the end result could be focused specifically on a decision based on data.

Any way you slice it, you can come up with some really interesting sorts of assignments and in using things like the multimedia capabilities of technology resources we have available to us. Contact me in Room B155 for help with this sort of thing.

Some interesting things to do over the summer

Well obviously there are some great movies to see and beaches to visit but, being an English teacher at heart, there are a million and one books to read that are out already or will be out in the coming weeks. Perhaps the biggest book to keep an eye out for is obviously "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows".

I don't need to tell a group of educators what Harry Potter has meant to getting kids back into reading and the pursuits of the imagination. While Harry might not be your cup of tea with regard to the sorts of things you might read, no one can deny the impact of the story of an orphaned wizard growing up with all the issues of both the "wizarding" world and the "real" world.

There's James Patterson, Stephen King, Dan Brown, J. D. Robb, Twain, Thoreau, Hemingway, Tolkien, Lewis, Baudelaire, Dumas, Joyce, and thousands of others. It doesn't matter if it's fiction or non-fiction, fantasy or romance. There are wonderful things to read right here and waiting for us.

Of course, if you want to multitask, try the electronic audio versions of these books and walk along the shore of your favorite beach. Better yet, discover why Forest Park is such a really cool place by walking along the paths listening to the words of your favorite author and taking in the natural beauty that really does exist in Springfield.

There's music all throughout the summer in towns all around Western Massachusetts. Symphony, jazz, blues, folk, and so many other styles to choose from.

Then there's the food. It's all over the area. There's the Garlic Festival, The New England Barbecue Championship, The Taste of wherever you happen to be on any given weekend. The restaurants, roadside stands, the fairs, are all out there waiting.

What does this have to do with technology? Well, I suppose I could say something about the varied formats you find all this stuff in or how you can find out all about it on the Net, but very simply this is all about re-charging the most important technology of all, our minds.



Theodore Geisel's
"Cat in the Hat"

So many folks...

You know it's graduation time and I always start thinking about some of the folks I've taught in my X amount of years as a teacher. I start thinking about all the really famous and brilliant folks that have come from right here in the hinterlands of Western Massachusetts, specifically Springfield.

Obviously folks know **Theodore Geisel**, or **Dr. Suess**. But, there are so many other people who have come from this area and called this wonderful area of Massachusetts (and the world) home. There is one of the truly great players of blues music who called Springfield home for the better part of his young life. **Taj Mahal** is recognized as a great artist and, at least from what I hear anyway, a very cool guy to hang out with.

While many of you might not be into the sort of music they do, the

group **Staind** has quite a few ties to Springfield. Of course one of their member's mom is none other than Mary Mushok, an administrator who was the head of the Summer School program when they held it right here at Commerce.

Of course if we go a bit further back in history we end up with possibly the most influential woman's poet of the last couple hundred years. **Emily Dickinson** was born and raised in Amherst. While she was indeed from in the northern part of the "Happy Valley", she had ties with Springfield because of a deep friendship (speculation says it may have been more) with the Springfield Republican's editor, **Samuel Bowles**.

Timothy Leary was born and raised here in Springfield. Once again, you may not have agreed with his politics or opinions, but he was certainly an exceptionally influential person in the

1960's.

Now how many people know that the board game kingpin, **Milton Bradley** lived and worked most of his life right here in Springfield? Or how about **The Duryea Brothers** and their motorized carriages? Of course there's also **James Naismith** the creator of basketball. And who could ever forget **Nina Blackwood**? You don't remember one of the original MTV VJ's? How about **Paige Turco**? She did the live action Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles movies. **Nick Buonoconti** and **Tim Mayotte** are just two of the very talented athletes to come from Springfield.

As we watch them go across the stage, which of them will be the next to go down in history? The potential is staggering.

A positive attitude may not solve all your problems, but it will annoy enough people to make it worth the effort.

Herm Albright

Virtual Tours-The Library of Congress

I think that this falls into the category of, "God, I wish they had this back when I was going through school" or maybe, "How cool is this?"

Virtual tours are simply a way for us to "go" to the places and "look" around without ever having to leave the barcalounger or having to change out of the bunny slippers your Aunt Tessie gave you last Christmas with that highly indigestible fruitcake that's sitting the front room under the couch doubling as a personal security device.

One of the better places that

we get to go to for all sorts of things is the Library of Congress. Of course, anyone can access all the really wonderful programs from what I would say (along with lots of other people) is one of the true national treasures we have available to us as citizens.

There are virtual tours of the various buildings, schedules of events, access to reference files in traditional and multimedia formats, all while having helpful staff available to guide you through your explorations of millions of books, photographs, recordings (both audio and video),

maps and manuscripts. In addition to being the largest library in the world, it is also one of history's largest repositories for the sum of human knowledge at this point. How can we pass that kind of teaser line up? Give it a try. Even if you don't use it just for grins and giggles over the summer, it's a wonderful resource that everyone should be using year 'round.

[The Library of Congress](#)

Devices in science fiction at Commerce???

If you've read [Fahrenheit 451](#), you're well aware of the wall sized televisions, the mechanical hound (sounds an awful lot like much of the surveillance technology I mentioned last issue), and the gadgets that Montag has at his disposal.

Then there's Star Trek and the intrepid crew of the starship Enterprise. Voice activated computers, communicators, hypo-sprays to inject medications without needles, massive storage facilities no larger than a breadbox (and getting smaller). Need I go on?

The fact of the matter is, much of what was once science fiction is now standard operating procedure. We have voice activated devices from phones to computers, GPS locator devices in our cars, DVD players that double as babysitters on the family drives to wherever when we go on vacation, and so on.

Even right here at Commerce, we have things that would have seemed to be just this side of witchcraft as little as a hundred years ago. Think about it. Just one of the laptop carts we use could outperform

the entire NASA system that sent men to the moon by about 10 thousand times more processing speed. Scary huh?

Down in the music room with Mr. Garvin, the recording devices on the outdated Macs are still far more powerful tools than the group of 4 track recorders that a young sound engineer named Geoff Emerick used to record "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" 40 years ago (it was released 40 years ago this Friday). Imagine what we can do if we put our heads together.



Live long and prosper
Even Spock needs time off.

Stuff to check out this summer

(Click on the links)

<u>The Louvre</u>	<u>Mount Rushmore</u>	<u>Buckingham Palace</u>	<u>The Smithsonian</u>
<u>The Library of Congress</u>	<u>The Victoria & Albert Museum</u>	<u>New York City</u>	<u>The San Diego Zoo</u>
<u>Cape Cod</u>	<u>Philadelphia, PA</u>	<u>Nashville, TN</u>	<u>The Metropolitan Museum</u>
<u>The Boston Science Museum</u>	<u>Mystic Seaport</u>	<u>Newport, RI</u>	<u>Maine Barbecue Championship</u>
<u>The Great Wall of China</u>	<u>The Parthenon</u>	<u>Rome, Italy</u>	<u>The Great Pyramid at Giza</u>
<u>Stonehenge</u>	<u>Easter Island</u>	<u>Machu Pichu</u>	<u>Great Barrier Reef</u>



And so gentle readers...

You'd think that after a year of this sort of ranting and raving, I'd have myself all worked out and the feelings I have toward certain situations all settled. That just ain't (yes, there are some scholarly folks who'll say the use of "ain't" isn't justifiable in any academic situation. I say they should take their collective heads out of their who-haa's and lighten up) the case.

Let's take "For Instance #1". The school I came from no longer exists and the position I held there is gone as well. I don't like change, but decided that it was time to read the writing on the wall about my old school and see if there was something else I liked doing even half as much with people who were at least half as decent to be working with. I still haven't figured out how I ended up so dastardly lucky in finding both. Don't some of you get big heads now thinking I'm giving you the rare bit of BS generally spouted by folks who make about 50 grand more than I do here at the end of the year. The fact is, it's true and you can count on that simply because I'm not the sort of person to go around blowing smoke up people's skirts just because it's the thing to do right

about now. It's not my style. I still think that I've fallen into the proverbial "pot 'o gold" and I'm working with a group of folks who are, for the most part, very easy to work with (the rest of you are just relatively easy to work with).

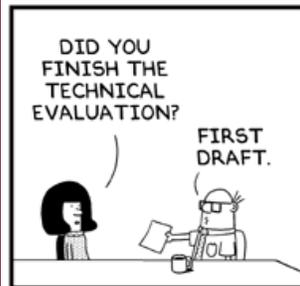
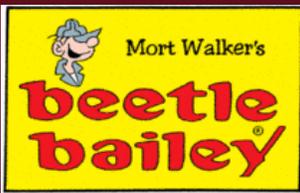
"For Instance # 2" starts with the fact that I still believe that pizza should not have things like pineapple used as a topping. I'm a bit blue collar too because I think that adding some of these artificially "gourmet" toppings are just as much of a pretentious endeavor by people who've way too little in the sense of what actual "taste" is. The simplicity of dough, sauce, cheese, meat, and maybe a green veggie, onion, or mushroom is lost on folks who have their heads stuck so far up some primadonna chef from the Sorbonne's behind, it defies logic as to why they see the light of day.

"For Instance # 3", I still haven't found out who to pin the blame for what essentially amounts to several months of frightening the wildlife in the East Forest Park section of town when I go outside to take a dip in our backyard pool. Should I hold the pizza guy who makes up those really good specialty pizzas for me over at Peppa's accountable? What about my friend Christine over at the Allen Street Big Y bakery department? They

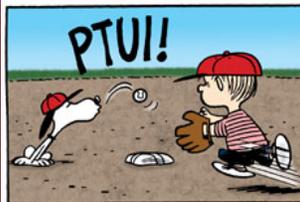
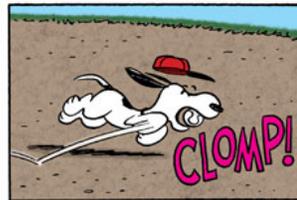
make a really delightful lemon crème pie that always seems to call me when the veggies at Randall's Farm just don't seem to cut the mustard. Or what about that really nice lady over at Atkin's Farms in South Amherst? Granted, I don't eat the Napoleons I get for Terry, but I gain about 5 pounds just walking in the joint just breathing.

Any way you slice it or dice it, I have a lot of thinking to do. I suppose that between now and the next (and last) issue of the "Tech Tips" for the year, I'll have to figure all of it out so I can use my summer vacation for being a totally useless wastrel (or something very much like it).

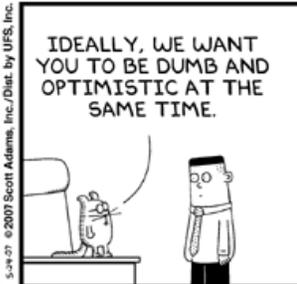
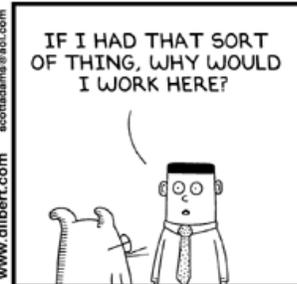
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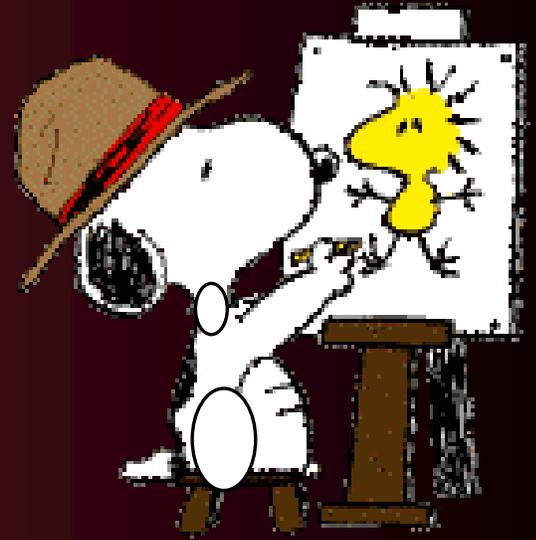
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Life Lessons in Comics