

Technology Tips

Moving into the Last Quarter!!!

Things to do beside showing a movie...

You know folks, there are a million and one things I could tell you about the end of the school year and how it's going to affect all of us in one way or another from an academic standpoint. But, as you've seen from nearly two years of "Tech Tips" newsletters for you folks here at the good ol' HSofC, I'm not about that. Instead, I want to talk about how, instead of winding down the year, we ramp it up. The fact is, we should be pushing our kids even harder toward academic mastery.

I know, you're saying to yourself right now, "What in the bloody blue blazes is he talking about? Has he gone completely 'round the twist?" No, I haven't. During this time of year, people tend to think of the things that we haven't done, or could never accomplish before the year is over. I've seen, in my wanderings around the building, promoting the use of technology wherever I can, that people

are saying that they haven't gotten through the materials on their content area pacing guides and they aren't likely to catch up anytime soon.

You can you know. With a judicious bit of planning and a great deal of; pushing, pulling, cajoling, as well as wheeling and dealing (among other things) you



too can keep the learning going until we leave in June. Considering the fact that many of our seniors (along with many underclassmen and women) need as much of the training in the content areas as we can give, we are morally (as well as contractually) obligated to maintaining "academic rigor".

No, I'm not speaking of

that dreamy lassitude that envelops some of our less academically inclined students as they drift off to the land of Nod when we begin to speak about our various content areas. I'm speaking about actually taking the subjects we hold near and dear to our hearts and make them come to life and inspire the students who might otherwise be

planning for the days on the beach, hanging out with friends, or generally anything other than quadratic equations or Keats. As an example, I know that there are folks that use things like blogs (short for web logs) to keep class notes and integrate both technology and writing skills into what is ordinarily not a class where writing skills take such a prominent role in instruction. It's this sort of thing I'm talking about.

Using what are becoming more commonly known as Web 2.0 tools, the advent of electronic/digital media in the classrooms of today is undeniably ener-

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"In a false quarrel there is no true valour."

Over the last two years it's become very apparent to me and anyone that has anything even remotely resembling vision, that the High School of Commerce is facing a significant issue that is, IMHO (in my humble opinion), an impending disaster of a proportion (at least from the perspective of an urban high school) to rival that of global warming.

I'm speaking about the age and usefulness of our

technology in this building. I will not stoop to the "blame game" because that's counter-productive and certainly doesn't do anyone any good whatsoever. The fact that there is a verifiable need for the machines in this building to be replaced ASAP is really not a surprise to anyone.



What will be a bit of a shocker will be the necessity for training in the many practical and real uses of technology (specifically computers and associated peripherals) in the classroom.

Some of these will include: the use of weblogs and wiki's, the higher functions of spreadsheets, databases,

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STUFF YOU NEED TO KNOW

ALL THE FOLLOWING ARE AVAILABLE IN B155 WITH MR. MUSIAK:

- ***I am available to co-plan, co-teach, and work out just about any other method for the integration of technology in your classroom. I am a good resource for ideas and inspiration when you find yourself in a bind trying to find an activity that will make the most appropriate connection with a lesson.***
- ***Educational Proficiency Plans... the how's why's and what fors. Please visit the [HSC Notice Page](#) for the particulars.***
- ***Plan for the use of a laptop cart or LCD projector!***
- ***Learn more about maintaining your SPS e-mail account***
- ***Information on developing and emerging technologies for the classroom.***
- ***Start your web page on the SPS's High School of Commerce web site and give your students 24/7 access to lessons, make up work, and exceeding expectations!!!***
- ***Plans for communicating over the summer using e-mail and web resources***

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gizing both teaching and learning in our schools. I understand that we are certainly limited in the scope of what we're able to do in terms of how many students (or staff for that matter) can have access to a computer that's actually working. I

also understand that if we plan well and schedule the use of laptops and other media resources (like the library and labs), we can make sure that everyone can utilize tools that might help excite, inspire, or even keep our students out of the hands of Hypnos (the Greek god of sleep). Let's look at some

strategies for doing just that.

One of the more impressive tools to come along in a great while is, as I've said, the blog. I know that we've



talked a bit about them before, but I want to make the point perfectly clear that this is one Web 2.0 tool that can be (and should be for that matter) used in every classroom in the building. Of course, there are going to be folks who say that writing essays and journal entries isn't what their subject is all about, but I respectfully say that's a load of bilge. Let's look at a few examples:

1. [Music](#)
2. [History](#)
3. [Science](#)

4. [Law](#)
5. [Special Education](#)
6. [Foreign Language](#)
7. [Math](#)
8. [English-Shakespeare](#)

Applying some of the same sorts of techniques that we've seen in these examples, we can start off a myriad of different subjects for our students to comment on in our content areas. The writing is an extension of the students exploring and developing a deeper understanding of the subject matter. When you ask them to make sure that their facts on whatever they've been commenting on (or are about to comment on) are stated in their posts in hyperlink form, exploration occurs. When you ask that the hyperlink is given, but also the MLA style reference (which can be built by using [Son of Citation Machine](#) among other tools) you also teach citation and referencing. Both of which are sorely lacking in our attempts to get our students to score better on MCAS open response and long form essay writing in [ALL](#) content areas.

The things that you need in order to effectively utilize a blog in your classroom are: an account on a blogging site (I use Blogger because it's linked to

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“Our life is frittered away by detail. Simplify, simplify.”

Henry David Thoreau

“In a false quarrel there is no true valour.”

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multimedia design, presentation software, and word processing. We need to be aware that the powers that be will want any equipment we are given to be used for purposes that are specific to the classroom in addition to the increased accountability we are seeing today.

There are those who will be blissfully unaware of what's going on around them. However, when the rubber hits the road, those folks had better be ready to roll. The use of technology in our classrooms is already a requirement in [all](#) of the content areas. It seems as if there are a few die-hards willing to say that things are just fine without having to use computers, LCD projectors, SmartBoards, and a whole host of other technological advances. Of course the use of

these tools has added to an incredibly persuasive repertoire of teaching techniques that are revolutionizing not only the way we do things in the classroom, but also why we do them.

By the time students get to us here at the good ol' HSofC, we can be working on more advanced competencies and levels of mastery that will allow us to, not only compete, but to lead as well. Thus the need for being prepared to meet the challenges we're going to see is more important than ever.

That's the argument for using technology and having our staff be able to utilize it in the classroom in a nutshell. Now there are some who will always need to have remediation and we'll meet those challenges with all the resources we have at our disposal. However, the need for

meeting those challenges only reinforces the necessity for being prepared to utilize as many aspects of educational technology in the classroom as possible.

Knowing all of this, is it reasonable to assume that our need for training and collaboration among ourselves is high? Is it necessary that we move out of our comfort zones and work toward using as much of the material we have with the highest degree of success possible? The answer is yes. I can help you with this. The technology is not perfect (and Lord knows, neither am I) and we have some of the oldest and most worn out machines and peripherals in the district. But, until we can replace what we have, I can help you meet and exceed the content area standards in your subject with what we have. Contact me in B155.

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Google), a well thought out open response question based on the learning activity happening in your class at any given time during a lesson/unit, a means of communicating your expectations for any responses that may be given (this can be a rubric, but can also be a checklist as well in certain circumstances), a well planned lesson for the introduction and explanation of the tools and their proper uses, and the use of a laptop cart to get the ball rolling while you're actually there to make sure all of the above are functioning as expected.

When, as will naturally occur if

we've planned, explained and demonstrated well, we find ourselves looking at the writing of our students and commenting on it (as well as offering constructive feedback to the writer ASAP) we can also use these ongoing efforts as what will eventually work out to be an electronic portfolio of a student's work. Subsequently, this point of data can be used in determining not only the strengths and weaknesses of the student, but also the course of future lesson planning as well.

Now, there are many of you that are saying that the last quarter of the year isn't the time to be starting something new and somewhat untried. Let me make my intent clear, I am here to help you work through planning and executing the sorts of things I've just described. I know they work. I've done it. And... not just with the "best and the brightest" or the greatest equipment either. I've made these things work with students who have, for whatever reason, not been as suc-

cessful as some of the folks who might be in AP classes or consistently on the Honor Roll. These same kids have been in ELA classes I've taught in Intensive Summer School, Night School, and regular Day School @ the former Springfield High School. Has it worked for everyone? No. But they do work with enough of the students in the classes to make them a valuable tool for remediation, information retention, and further exploration.

If we put our minds to it, we should be able to ramp up the intensity and rigor of the work we're doing with our students while making it seem less like the complete drag they think it is and also make it easier on us to

"Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes."

Mahatma Gandhi



And so gentle readers. . . .

Yes, I'm aware that it's been a long time since the last real rant that I've had in these pages. And of course, be the kind of guy that I am, I just want to let folks know that I'm not going to let them down in the least. Just give me a minute and I'll get started.

Everyone knows about Spring Break and the fact that it's coming up next week. There have been folks trying to get on Expedia.com and Travelocity to book flights for weeks and months now. One of my colleagues had the gall to tell me that she had made her travel plans for this vacation over a year ago. I've always been a big proponent of planning and making sure that everything is where it should be when I get ready to go on vacation, but that's getting just a bit excited.

Oh, I know there are those people who say that they love going to all these exotic locations around the globe and have Mai Tai's served to them while

they baked the coconut oil off of themselves in the tropical sun. I'm also quite aware of the fact that with my skin I'd be burnt to a quick fried, crackly crunch within the time it took whatever waiter to walk up to a man of my stature (those of you who know me...well...let's just say I'm not the kind of guy that should be hanging around a beach unless I really want some guy with a peg leg, harpoon, and a bad attitude about a white whale coming after me yelling, "Arrrgh") and return with the nice, frosty tall glass filled with enough spirits to make Keith Richards go cross eyed.

I know I don't want to go climbing to the tops of the ruin of some ancient civilizations pyramids down in Mexico. Hell, I don't really even want to climb into my attic to get the AC units ready for summer (but I have a motivation for that though). Of course, none of this is what I want to talk to you about.

The thing that I really wanted to

mention is that today is April 15th. Tax Day. I know that there are many folks who wait until the last minute and then, in a flurry of paper, calculator tape, pencils, and unadulterated panic, drive down to the local US Post Office and mail your returns at the last minute. I can tell you that there is a faster way. For those of you who haven't filed yet, consider filing online. It's easy and you can get your returns (if you're getting one) back quicker! It's something to consider rather than driving off to the Post Office at 11:59 p.m..

Ah well... off to climb those stairs.

Have a good vacation folks!!!!

Ed Musiak



Life Lessons in Comics

