Technology Tips

Multimedia and Classroom Management

E-mail, student records and the expectation of privacy

I know that what I'm about to say isn't really speaking to using technology in the classroom, but I figure that it does have to do with what we use technology for in the school as a whole. Since the edict came down from the top of the technology food chain here in the SPS, I'll give you the direct quote from the mouth of the big fella (Dr. Burke) himself.

"Recently, many questions have arisen from staff members with regard to the use of email for transferring or exchanging data. The intent of this memorandum is to provide some clarity to this issue. Should you have any further questions, please contact the Help Desk at help-desk@sps.springfield.ma.us or x2175.

Springfield Public Schools owns and operates its own Microsoft Exchange Server and provides a free email account to all educational and clerical staff. This is the only email service supported by S.P.S and **all** S.P.S. business should be conducted through this email service only. **However, it is very important to remember that email is NOT PRIVATE and should never be considered confidential.** Email can be intercepted and/or copied at any point along its distribution path and therefore should never be used to transmit confidential or sensitive information.

This being said, the use of email, both within and external to the SPFLDPUBSCH domain, for the purpose of transferring sensitive data (e.g., student data, both personal and family related, DYS/DSS data, personnel data, financial data, etc.) is strictly prohibited and any violation could subject Springfield Public Schools to legal liability.

Email can not be used to exchange student data at any time. This includes email between two teachers or between two schools. Spreadsheets or databases containing student information should not be sent by email from the Springfield Public Schools to other educational facilities or their staff, consultants, or contracted vendors (e.g., agents selling student photos).

No one should ever divulge confidential personal information such as credit card numbers, social security numbers, etc. by email. All data transfers by Springfield Public Schools personnel must be accomplished utilizing a secure protocol. A number of mechanisms are available to accomplish this task and the Technology Department is available to assist with any SPS data transfers. Please call the Help Desk @ 2175 to request such assistance. "

That's it in a nutshell folks.

Things that are available to us...part three…*To blog or not to blog*

You know , as I sit here and type away at my keyboard, I recall how difficult it was for me to get my first poems and other writings published. I remember what it used to feel like when people would send back some canned letter that was, more often than not, written for the express purpose of not having to deal with real live people. How I longed for the days when I'd be able to publish without having to worry about all that.

What would I have given to speak with folks who might actually want to get into a discourse about my work, or even the work of others as it compared to mine. If I only knew then what I know now.

Creating a BLOG (short for web-log), is just this sort of situation. Part of what's now being touted as a transition from the initial stages of the World Wide Web's application to Web 2.0, blogging is a sort of self-publishing that offers the possibilities of reaching a global audience instantly.

In the next article, I'll actually be answering the question that I can see forming in your mind as you read this, "What would I use something like that in my class for"? There's a good deal that we can do and work toward. Keep your eyes peeled.

Visit the Technology Blog at

The HSC Technology Blog

Springfield Public Schools

Technology opportunities…

As we become more and more accustomed to using technology in our classrooms, more and more opportunities will open themselves up to us as the capabilities of the software and hardware we have are utilized more fully. For many of us this means quite a range of possible outcomes.

Consider the fact that there are indeed users of varying degrees of skill (with regard to the technology we have available here at the HSofC) within the school. You're saying "That's probably the most obvious statement that you could make, isn't it Ed? Actually… there is one that's even more so. To one degree or another, every teacher in the building (for those of you who are, like me, mathematically challenged, that means 100%) uses technology resources. The fact is, THAT is the most common thing we can say about technology usage here at the good ol' HSofC.

> *"Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so. "*
>
> **Douglas Adams, "Last Chance to See"**

I know you're saying, "Ed, we have enough to do with trying to get these kids ready for things like MCAS, not to mention just getting them to class. Get to the point". Well, all righty then.

The opportunities I was alluding to in the title of this article come

from mainly one place; those we make ourselves. If we have to kick and scream to get the resources we need in order to meet the expectations of the feds, state and district, then I say we kick and scream. We've done a good job with materials that are certainly functionally obsolete (to say the nicest thing about them) and we will continue to do so. Examples of the work we've done are: increased usage of e-mail, wider distribution of laptop carts on a daily basis, much wider use of the 2 school wide LCD projectors as multimedia de-

vices, a completely redesigned and interactive web-site, as well as a more extensive use of programs like GradeKeeper, the MS Office suite, and district initiative programs including Carnegie Math , PLATO, and READ 180.

That being said, all of us have to be in on this as well. We have to demonstrate the need in terms that will leave no doubt as to the solution to the problem being an upgrade of equipment for our school. I know it's a bit of a long shot, but we have to give it a go. Here are some of the things I'd like to do:

1. Have 100% of our staff take (or update) their TSAT (**T**echnology **S**elf **A**ssessment **T**ool) score on MassOne (*ask me for an account if you need one*).

2. Have a complete inventory of any and all technology in your room (There have been so many folks changing rooms and transferring their computers, we need one bad).

3. Increase the number of teachers who have active web pages or blogs associated with the High School of Commerce web site.

4. Increase the participation of all departments in sharing common links on the HSC web site

To be continued next issue...

Laptop Cart Tips! *Part 3-Get into it!!!*

Things are starting to heat up with folks starting to use the lap top carts!!! Since things are on a first come first served basis, it's always a good idea to plan ahead.

One of the advantages of having me here (or any of the Instructional Technology people for that matter), is the opportunities for co-planning, co-teaching, and generally setting up the learning environment for the integration of technology into your content area lessons. Please remember, while I am a technology kind of guy, I'm still very much an experienced (15+ years) content area teacher.

I can show you ways where you can use the carts in classes of up to 30 or

so students. One of these ways is called project based learning. Now I'm fully aware that the techniques involved with PBL aren't exactly new ones for many of you. However…, the techniques when used with computer technologies for research and presentation might very well be. Add the fact that there may be more students than you have laptops and you would have the perfect circumstances for frustration. I can help.

1. One of the things to always be aware of is the fact that the laptops in the carts are set up such that they go back to default settings immediately

on shutdown. Any changes (or files stored) will be erased when the machine is booted back up and there are no exceptions to the rule.

Continued next issue...

And so gentle readers. . . .

When I think of the simple pleasures in life, I think of my easy chair, a diet coke, the remote control, Patriot football on a Sunday afternoon, that sort of thing. But more and more, I'm getting involved with complicated circumstances and I'm being frustrated in my search for something that is eluding me no matter how much really cool technology I have or how loud I can yell.

What I'm speaking of, in the main, is the fact I can barely think sitting in my office because of the noise in the hallways here at school. Since when did a person who is standing less than two feet away have to shout at the top of his/her lungs in order to be heard by someone who really doesn't want to hear what they have to say in the least anyway. I mean, I could almost understand it if some of the folks actually had something to get across, but for the most part, the only thing I keep hearing about is female dogs, some "n" word that ends in "a" instead of "er", and British Naval discipline in foreign harbors. When I mention these are not the sorts of things we should be saying in the hallways of a school, the more polite of the individuals generally say something along the lines of, "Oh. My bad mister."

Since when did "bad" become a noun? I always thought it was an adjective. The whole of civilization is crumbling apart at the seams and when we try to confront it on a kinder, gentler level, we become burdened with the knowledge that the problems are far worse than any of us can even begin to imagine. Adjectives becoming nouns!!! Heaven forbid! But… That's not what I want to talk about.

What I really wanted to get on about is the fact that with all the technology today that has to do with helping humankind find it's wonderful way to a specific destination or even find someone who's lost and can't find any destination they'd actually like to be, why is

> ""He felt that his whole life was some kind of dream and he sometimes wondered whose it was and whether they were enjoying it."
>
> **Douglas Adams**, "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy"

it that people can't study geography a bit more diligently?

The study of geography should be one of the more important things we do here in the schools. It is, as my friends who've been teaching Social Studies for a number of years tell me repeatedly, the keystone of the educational archway under which our students pass on their way to a bright and promising future. I mean think about it, students who are well versed in geography would have the foundation of knowledge that would help them understand the essential nature of the effects of global warming (Al Gore just got a Nobel prize for his understanding!) on the region because they would have studied it and possibly come up with solutions that could, one day in the future I imagine for all the children of the world, restore our ailing ecosystem to its pristine state.

Even more importantly if some people in New England were to have studied geography (and history) they would understand the reality that New York Jets fans are somewhat out of place here in New England. Oh, I suppose that some of the older folks who might be football fans will recall that, at one time, the New York (football) Giants were the only game in town around here. That's partially excusable on both the loyalty level of fans and the whole generational "My dad's a Democrat and I am too" thing. However, there is absolutely no reason for people to extend their loyalties to the Jets.

I'm sorry to those apologists who might recall the glory year of "Broadway Joe" and his amazing prediction in the 1969 AFL-NFL Championship Game (now the Super Bowl). Granted, that was pretty cool, but anything since then has been fairly anticlimactic. You might even say the Jets are just a shade of New England as their current team is made up of many former NE Patriots players and coaches. In this case I don't want the generic version to save a few bucks on my prescription of football fever from August-February. Give me the full blown-dyed-in-the-wool-real-deal New England Patriots. You should always root for the home team. It's a geological rule (not to mention moral axiom)

Oh yeah, I got an "A" in Mr. Moriarty's Social Studies classes thank you very much.

Ed Musiak

Life Lessons in Comics