Technology Tips

Multimedia and Classroom Management

There's never "safe enough"...

Last time we left off with some of the things that should be the foundation for our classroom management techniques concerning not only technology, but much of our practices throughout our time in whatever building we happen to be in. The fact is folks, there are a few hard and fast rules that we all have to observe whether we like them, find them constrictive, or whatever. The main reason is very simple. It's not something that's incomprehensible either. It's all about safety.

The safety I'm talking about is more of a freedom for the most part. It's not a freedom to have or be able to do something, it's more of a freedom from something. In any case, the most important issue that we have to deal with is basic in our classrooms.

This indulgence (and I'm being very liberal with this term) extends to things like the freedom from interruption by students who have no right to disrupt lessons by entering classes to "talk to my cousin" (or any other relative for that matter). These episodes can be nothing more than exchanges of information or merchandise that is totally unrelated to anything academically inclined or that of an urgent nature. In any case, the fact remains that the interruption is unnecessary and can be potentially dangerous.

The ways that we can curb the proliferation of students attempting to gain unauthorized entry into our classes (whether we're there or not) are:

1. Do not let students out of class without a pass that clearly states where the student is going, the student's name, time and the date.

2. Restrict the reasons you allow students to leave the class for (I find that visible blood loss on a massive scale, acts of God and other natural or manmade disasters are generally the ones that are most easily understood).

3. Restrict (when you do allow them to leave the class) the amount of time they have to carry out whatever business they find it necessary to leave your class for.

4. At the end of each class, make sure you step outside your door and kindly aid the students finding their next class. It is very difficult for some of the kids to relate to the concept of time and subsequently your assistance will be of great help to them..

All kidding aside, the main thing we have to do as a staff in order to create an environment where learning is the main priority is to make certain that students are in their classes and skipping the socializing instead of the other way around. Nothing fancy or theoretical about that and how it affects the use of technology is there? And, here's the cool part folks, there's nothing fancy or theoretical about how to get it done either. The difficulty is in getting everyone to adhere to the same general guidelines across the board

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

Should you set up a blog for your classroom? Sure, why not? The most important thing you have to remember is whether or not there are links to other blogs on your page.

I know you're saying "Huh" right now and frankly, if you weren't, I'd be wondering about your understanding of using free resources. My point is, there are certain caveats to opening an account with

a unit like "Blogger" or "Edublog" or any one of a hundred free ways of getting space for a blog out there in cyberville. One of them is the fact that on most blog sites that are free, there's also the fact that there are links to other blogs that the site offers which may, or may not, be acceptable for your students.. It's generally written into the code of the page and can't be deleted. While that can seem like a fairly significant stum-

bling block, there are also ways of making the use of the blogs fairly non-descript and very safe for the most part.

One of the most simple things to do in terms of keeping everyone on the same page is an understanding and experience with the Acceptable Use Policy or AUP. That's the part of the district policy that sets down what the rules are for usage of computers (or any technology for that matter) within the aus-
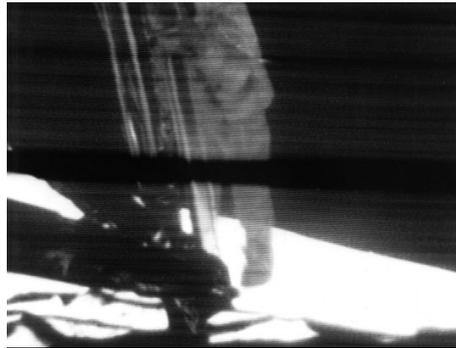
Technology opportunities…

Over the last several weeks I've pointed out the uses for video in the classroom in constructive ways and manners. The last time we were together, we spoke about the uses for video in an ELA classroom. This week, we're all about using video in constructive ways in the Social Studies classroom.

revolves around reading, writing, and discussion for the most part. That's at least the perception anyway. Many of the brilliant lessons that I've seen some of folks come up with have relied on some fairly new technologies as well. Much of these have had to do with clips teachers have found on the Internet and are surprisingly really quite comprehensive in their scope and sequence.

For the most part, this is in much the same category as is ELA. Much of what's done in a, let's say, history class generally

While some of the resources that are perhaps more well known are actually blocked on the SPS network (YouTube, TeacherTube, Google and other providers of useful streaming video are generally thought of as user friendly providers), there are many others that will

fit the bill really quite nicely. Amoung these providers is **AchievExpress**.

These folks really do put out a very nice product. There are thousands of videos that you can use in the classroom (with prior approval of course) that are right up the alley of social studies teachers. Some of the include videos on the first lunar landing (pictured at left) and the Big Three during WWII.

If you'd like to use this resource, please stop by and I'll show you the way to log in and save materials, not to mention some of the ways to use it in your classroom.

> *"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."*
>
> Franklin D. Roosevelt
>
> 32nd president of US (1882 - 1945)

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

pices of the Springfield Public Schools. There's a link to the AUP on the SPS website (it's a little tough to find, so I also put a copy of the link on the HSC web page too) and it should be the first thing you go over with a class as soon as you decide to use any of the technology resources the SPS makes available to you and the students. There's so much that has been made of knowing what the expectations for any assignment or activity are, it's almost a breath of fresh air that it's all spelled out in this case.

From the point of view of using a blog, once you actually set up an account with Google and then with Blogger, you'll want to set the permissions for viewing and editing to members of the

class and perhaps the administrator of their grade. That way, only people you indicate will be able to post even view the material you'll be putting out there. Granted, there are still ways around these minimal precautions, but if you let the students know exactly what the rules are based on your own classroom and the those of the AUP, you should be fine. The main reasons you would want to even attempt to do something like this as a supplement to your classroom have to do with expanding

the opportunities for our students in a more proactive way. Given that many of our students use cellular phones, iPods, and a variety of other nifty gadgets that can download rss feeds (Really Simple Syndication), why shouldn't we use these tools as well? Particularly in light of the fact that most of our students would rather listen to a text reader program with one of those Stephen Hawking kinds of voices than actually read the broadcasted text feed from the blog even as it updated.

Next time- The specifics of setting up a blog!!!!

And so gentle readers. . . .

Hello everyone! I'm quite sure that most of you have figured out by now the fact that this area of the newsletter is something that doesn't necessarily always have to do with technology. It's true. I admit it. In reality, this is a forum for me to rant and rave about whatever comes to mind when I happen to be writing the current edition of the Tech Tips. This edition is going to be only a little different.

We're moving into the big meaty portion of the holiday season and for most folks, we begin to reflect on the past year and what we've accomplished and look forward to the things we have yet to do. This has nothing to do with what holidays you celebrate, or whatever you don't celebrate. It's all about looking at ourselves with as clear a vision as possible and making decisions about how we can really improve what we do from something that's practiced to something that's mastered.

People keep talking about the need for proficiency in our student's skills, when what we **should** be talking about is the need for **mastery** in their skill levels. We have expectations that are far too low for them and ourselves. I'm not saying we should be unreasonable in what we want our kids to do or be. I'm saying that we can't expect simple proficiency because that proficiency is

nothing more than the least common denominator. We need to make sure that our children are prepared for the world that awaits them. Not only in the areas of "street sense" and "survival instinct", but in the intangible areas of being able to recognize and appreciate the beauty that is in the world as well.

> *"Education begins a gentleman, conversation completes him."*
>
> **Dr. Thomas Fuller,**
> **Gnomologia, 1732**
> **British physician (1654 - 1734)**

Our children are losing the ability to communicate what it is about beauty and grace that makes them so valuable and desirable. How will they begin to teach their children about what it is that makes food delicious or clothing attractive?

How will they even be able to understand what it means to have the better things in life and appreciate what it took to get them there or how to value the experiences that makes them better people than the generation that came before them. How will they understand what making themselves better even is when they see that while their parents

worked hard and sacrificed much to make their lives better; their friends, music, television, and "the streets" are more influential?

What can we do to stop the tide of rising apathy in our young men and women who believe that using words that would have, at the very least, gotten them a mouth full of soap and gotten them killed at the worst, little more than a generation ago? They actually believe that a term's meaning is changed when it ends in "a" instead of "er". They believe that it's a term of endearment.

The answer is very simple folks. It may be very difficult to *do*, but the answer is easy. We _teach_. We model behavior. We show, as much as it is in us as professionals to do, the ways that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is about more than:

• Misguided uses of words that end in "a" or "er",
• Women are not, and should never be referred to (or as), female dogs,
• 18th and 19th century British Naval disciplinary acronyms are not proper forms of exclamation or greeting.
• Speaking to someone who is less than a yard away does not require a "parade ground voice".
• Attempting to reason that respect and fear are the same thing and equally as valuable

Ed Musiak

Life Lessons in Comics