Before You Know It….

Last time we were here together I mentioned that things were going to be ratcheted up in terms of the standards that are going to have to be met by today's students. Well, here it is. Were all of you aware of the fact that as of 2010 students will be required to take at least some part of their high school experience on-line? It's true. According to the SPS Technology Plan for 2007-2010, it is a requirement for students graduating in 2010.

We spoke about some of the things that can be done last issue. Having the capability to create online supplements for our classes right here in Springfield is certainly very convenient. Having it available in more than one format is also a very exceptional circumstance (unheard of elsewhere really). However, having so many people trained and willing to help you get things under way to not only meet, but exceed the stan-

dard is simply amazing. None of the surrounding districts in our area have put nearly as much emphasis into meeting the needs of students as we have here in Springfield. It's a fact.

Now let me clue you in on a few more little tidbits concerning the requirements for the use of technology in the content areas. Having taught English for a number of years in many different situations (from the best and the brightest to the most needy and lowest achievers), I can speak to the need for the use of technology as a tool to

enhance writing skills.

Yes, I know you've seen enough MCAS data to choke up even our spillways into Bondi's Island, but all I want you to do is realize what all that information is pointing to. It's really very simple.

First, students don't practice writing using Standard Written English nearly enough to make it seem as common to them as opening up their cell phones. They need to re-learn this by doing it every day in as many different places as possible, in as many different situations as we can dream up for them to communicate their ideas clearly on topics that require them to think critically. The use of online learning technology can help as either a stand-alone course option (an example might be Virtual High School) or as a supplement to regular classes.

As an example of one way to create a solution that

GradeKeeper- Features Pt. II

The thing that really gets me started with Grade-Keeper (once I've entered the students into classes and saved everything) is the "Gradebook" tab on the menu. Using this, I go to "Gradebook Options" and I set all the parameters for my classes. Let's get on with it then.

1. Set the school year up in the first tab. It's pretty straightforward, but moving on from there is hard if you don't do it.

2. Setting the categories

that you're going to grade. Again, this is pretty straightforward, so make sure you complete this section. It's here where you can weight the categories any way you see fit.

3. The "grading" tab doesn't have to be done right away, but you should have a good idea what you'd like to do about final exams.

4. I actually leave the "Letter Grades" tab alone. It's generally the

default value most people use anyway.

5. The next two tab have to do mainly with attendance. The defaults are O.K. but I generally add in PRESENT/Excused and ENTERED/Excused (in order to avoid confusion, I change Excused to XCUSED/excused) to the "Attendance" tab. I also add DONE/Full Credit to the "Scores" Tab

In the next installment we'll talk about the *Reports*. I promise.

Stuff To Know

ALL THE FOLLOWING ARE AVAILABLE IN B155

- *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.*

- *Schedule a time to get trained for the use of the laptop carts.*

No training = No laptop cart use.

- *The Springfield Public Schools has a district license for…*

GradeKeeper

Please stop by B155 for details

- *E-mail and MassOne accounts are a necessary part of what we do these days. If you don't have either one, please stop by B155 and sign up for them.*

- *If you're planning on the use of lap top carts, please reserve one as early as you can. Also, please be considerate of the needs of your colleagues when planning the length of time you'll need the cart you'll be using.*

Tech Tips-The Handbook… Part Two

The Foundation for Technology

The first thing that most folks ask about is how to turn the blessed thing on. Most of the time things like this first question, which is a good one by the way, can be answered by looking through the manual that's given to you with your new computer. Of course what does a person do when they didn't get one? Luckily for people here in the Springfield Public School District there are a number of fine tutorials on just about every one of the primary topics a staff member (or anyone else for that matter) would want to know about.

Technology Resources

If you click on the above link, it will take you to a page where tutorials

> ## "Work while you have the light. You are responsible for the talent that has been entrusted to you."
>
> ### Henri-Frédéric Amiel

ranging from "PC Introduction" to "Advanced PowerPoint" are available. Additionally, you can always count on more of these tutorials being developed for other software and applications throughout the year. Some of the materials being developed as we speak:

1. GradeKeeper
2. Timeliner
3. Inspiration
4. Intermediate MS Publisher
5. Advanced Web Design

There are many more in the works. If you have suggestions for technology tutorials you'd like to see posted on the SPS website, please let me know and I'll forward all the information to my colleagues.

Another of the essentials in the foundation that we're building right now is the absolute necessity of being able and willing to ask questions of someone.   For the High School of Commerce, and the purposes of instructional technology in the classroom, that person is me. Your Instructional Technology Specialist.

There have been many times when I'm asked if I can fix printers or network connections, rewire teacher stations across the room, if I have S-video cables to project PowerPoint presentations on TV monitors, and generally all sorts of things. While I certainly can help with all of that

and far more, my main function here at the good ol' HSofC is to *"help teachers integrate technology successfully into their teaching in as many ways as it is appropriate for deepening the understanding of the content being taught"*.

That sounds like a pretty tall order for any ITS person like myself. It is. However, my colleagues and I are certainly up to the task. Here at Commerce (at least until December… and that's coming up fast folks) we have an added bonus. Not only do the folks here have yours truly, but we all have access to one of my very talented colleagues, Nadine Payne. She's a "district level" ITS. What all this means for you… whenever you have ANY question concerning the use of technology and you need someone to help you out by: co-planning, co-teaching, brainstorming, modeling, meeting, mentoring, and a host of other methods for lending a hand in the classroom, please see one of us. We're here to help you work out solutions for all the issues that come because of unfamiliarity with technology or even the lack of it. In either case, we're here.

Before You Know It….

didn't require me (as the classroom teacher) to have seven reams of paper coming home every evening to be corrected, I'd use a program called StarQuiz (can be used in conjunction with Grade-Keeper to minimize correcting and administrative tasks) to post Open Response questions with sequentially elevated standards as activators to my Manhattan classroom's "Assignment" area. Doing this as a daily exercise would certainly promote the experience these students need with writing

The "activator" I'm talking about will help establish a routine for writing and will also help establish the fact that standards will be met and exceeded in the classroom. Using the technology is simply the most straightforward way of making it happen such that: the routine is initiated for the student, the

students and teachers have access to the writing, grades and comments in a

timely manner, and administrative tasks are minimized through the use of the technology while the focus remains on the needs of the students.

In addition, using this method

makes the archiving of student portfolios considerably less difficult when we consider the need for looking at a range of work from the student and observing the manner in which we take benchmarks and direct the production of higher degrees of understanding as well as function.

Throughout all of this, the means by which we raise the standard of participation and production of our students in the academic arena can certainly be supplemented in a successful manner using the tools at our disposal. When we think of ways we're going to have to make things work here at the HSofC (or anywhere else in the Springfield Public Schools for that matter), I'm asking you to please consider online courses as an option whose time has certainly come.

Planning for Classroom Management- Part III

In our last installment, we looked at what an instructional block looks like (on paper anyway) from the perspective of a technology classroom. To be honest, it's not really all that different from any of the others in the content areas but for a smattering of different terminology.

This time we're going to get into some of the things that should happen in your classroom each and every day. **Routines,** while not exclusive to any one content area, are an integral part of using technology in the classroom.

From the moment that students walk in the door, they should be well aware of what the procedure is for them to begin their class for that day. Since we've talked about what an instructional block should actually look like, we'll talk about how we can implement it using technology in the classroom.

The Activator

This little gem is something that is used as the initial warm-up for what turned out to be a boatload of writing I had my English 10 students do during Intensive Summer School. Over the past two years I used a program called Star-Quiz and my HSofC webpage to post work for the classes.

Every day students would come in and sign out "their" computer from the laptop cart   Yes, I assigned them machines that they were responsible for throughout the time we were together. If anything other than the normal wear and tear happened to "their" machine, they were to report it immediately.

It became a norm that was habitual in nature once they got used to the idea that they were going to be working a great deal of time with these machines. The prospect of writing a short answer of constantly escalating requirement was initially a struggle, however, within several days, most students were comfortable enough to begin working without a word being said.

Using the software we did, it was simple enough to log grades and get feedback to students almost immediately. The process of turning in an assignment, teacher reading, correcting, and commenting was greatly reduced. Additionally, it was noted that over the 25 day period, there was an observable increase in both the quantity and quality of the writing samples.

The most difficult part of the entire project was setting up the initial page and then making updates first thing each morning before students showed up for classes.

In order to modify such a program for use on a much larger scale where there isn't the sort of access to computers we had in the ISS, we'd have to really get down to the point where we planned for the use of the carts and researched the availability of outside resources to meet the needs of our students. Having done that, the assignments for a daily writing prompt in our classes could be made with a proviso that work is to be turned in by a certain time, on a certain day.

In our next installment, we'll look at specific examples of the questioning techniques and software that can be used successfully to integrate technology into the instructional block.

> *"There was a time when we expected nothing of our children but obedience, as opposed to the present, when we expect everything of them but obedience."*
>
> *Anatole Broyard*

And so gentle readers…

It is absolutely amazing to think that we're coming up on yet another national election where so many people are talking, but so little seems to be said. The language that I learned so painstakingly over the course of the first 22 years of my life as well as the time I spent in graduate studies is dying and it is all I can do to paraphrase Charles Dickens,

"*English is as dead as a door-nail. Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that English is as dead as a door-nail.*"

English is dying.   And…rather than helping it to recover with it's myriad of methods for communication, technology is helping to do the deed just as surely as the **Ben & Jerry's Phish Food** won't make it another night in our family freezer.

How do I know Technology is the culprit?   Let's go over a few things then…

1.   Have u seen a txt msg l8ly?

2.   Do you spell check your or you're? Their, there, they're? How about to or too?

3.   Grammar check is unreliable

4.   What ever happened to social networking in the same room? I'd even settle for the same country these days.

5.   The art of conversation has lost when all of the above have come into play.

Don't get me wrong here folks, I believe that English is a living language where change is inevitable. It's just that somehow I can't see myself changing with it all that well though.

Yo, I gotta bounce.

Peace out

cya

Ed Musiak

Life Lessons in Imagery

In every issue of the "Tech Tips" from the past several years we've had comics here on the last page to help us learn about our lives through humor. In keeping with our changes here at Commerce (and throughout the district), I thought it would be time for something a bit more topical we could actually use in our classrooms.

From this issue on, we will be using iconic images that reside in the public domain to demonstrate the extent to which we are all members of a global society that is linked by a commonality of shared experience. Using demonstration media, whether conventional overhead displays, LCD projectors, TV displays, or SMART Board technology, please feel free to use these images of our triumphs and tragedies to inform students of those qualities that really do make us one world.

Ed Musiak

October 16, 1968

The 1968 Olympics Black Power salute was a noted black civil rights protest and one of the most overtly political statements in the 110 year history of the modern Olympic Games. African American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos performed the Power to the People salute at the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City. Wikipedia article, October 14, 2008

Discussion: politics in sports, protest, civil rights, race relations, the year 1968 as a pivotal point in history

Robert Kennedy

Asked in an interview in May 1962, "What do you see as the big problem ahead for you, is it Crime or Internal Security?" Robert Kennedy replied, "Civil Rights." During the attack and burning of the First Baptist Church in Montgomery Alabama, at which Martin Luther King, Jr. was in attendance with protesters, Kennedy telephoned King to ask that they would not leave the building until the U.S. Marshals and National Guard had secured the area. King proceeded to berate Kennedy for "allowing the situation to continue". King later thanked Kennedy for his commanding of the force dispatched to break up an attack that might otherwise have ended King's life.

Wikipedia article, October 14, 2008 Discussion: politics in sports, protest, civil rights, race relations.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

(2 October 1869 – 30 January 1948) was a major political and spiritual leader of India and the Indian independence movement. He was the pioneer of Satyagraha—resistance to tyranny through mass civil disobedience, firmly founded upon ahimsa or total non-violence—which led India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. He is officially honored in India as the Father of the Nation; his birthday is commemorated there as Gandhi Jayanti, a national holiday, and world-wide as the International Day of Non-Violence. Wikipedia article, October 14, 2008 Discussion: Non-Violence as a political tool, Convictions, Faith, honor, dignity, Justice as reality

Exxon-Valdez

It gained widespread infamy after the March 24, 1989 oil spill in which the tanker, bound for Long Beach California, captained by Joseph Hazelwood, hit Prince William Sound's Bligh Reef and spilled an estimated 10.8 million US gallons (40.9 million liters) of crude oil. This has been recorded as one of the largest spills in U.S. history and one of the largest ecological disasters. Wikipedia article, October 14, 2008

Discuss: Ecological disasters, oil spills, estimated damage on ecosystems, acceptable risk to ecosystems