Welcome Back!!!!!
The Usual Technology Housekeeping!!!

Yep. We've been back for a while now and that means things should be in full swing. The dust has been settling for everyone now and we'll be able to hit our stride. Shaking off the rust from the summer break…. Auggggh! I think that's about enough of the back to work clichés don't you?

The first semester is almost three weeks old and coming up quick will be the first set of progress reports for this year's student body. Gradekeeper will make this process an awful lot easier. For those folks who already have it, don't forget that we get (because we've got a district license) updates for as long as they make the program. Check for updates on your software!!! There are some really nifty changes and fixes in the last few updates.

For those of you who do not have the program, please click on the link below and download the program.

Gradekeeper

Installing the program is fairly simple. Just follow the instructions as they come up once you're done downloading. After you've successfully installed the program, you can start working on setting up your classes. You do not have to put in the registration code to get started. You will have to eventually of course and to get that done, you'll call the very nice folks over at the Help Desk (750-2175). You'll be speaking to either Laura or Tom (again, both very nice people).

The next thing I have to mention is the condition of email accounts. I understand that the technology for teachers here is not as good as we'd like it to be (but... it is certainly getting better) however, each and every one of us should be checking and responding to e-mails that are sent via our SPS accounts.

It may be that you have an enormous amount of email over the course of the last several years and you haven't quite figured out what to do with it all. If you haven't looked at the material in a long time and you're unlikely to do so in the near future, GET RID OF IT! If its just advertising or notes from someone who isn't at the school anymore (and hasn't been in a few years), GET RID OF IT! The beauty of it all is there's nothing to put in the blue receptacle and haul out to the corridor. Just make sure that when you delete the stuff from your "in-box" that you also delete from your "sent-box" as well as the "Deleted Files"

This brings me to my next point about the whole e-mail thing. We have to start being a more "green" school. There's the obvious ecological tie-in that, unless you've lived under a rock for the last 30 or so years, makes sense on so many

Who is this Mr. Musiak fella anyway?

That's a good question!!! He's me and I am he (O.K. so I'm paraphrasing T.H. White a bit). For those of you who haven't met me, I'm Ed Musiak, the Instructional Technology Specialist here at the good ol' High School of Commerce. What that means is, I'm the guy that you can go to when you have questions about technology. I can get you started using just about any of the latest techniques for teaching using technology resources available here in the SPS. This includes:

- Training using any of the programs in the Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Access, Publisher, and while it's still available, FrontPage).
- Mobile laptop cart training
- Downloading and using GradeKeeper.
- Modifying, adapting and otherwise making disparate concepts found in the curriculum frameworks from any content area work in the context of a 21st century classroom using technology as an integral component of the lessons.
- While I'm considered to be "the guy that shows you how to use stuff" for the most part, I can, on occasion, help you "fix stuff". Even though this is true for most things, please remember that it is always best to consider that this area of expertise is best left to the folks at the HELP DESK (750-2175).

That's about it for now. If you'd like to talk about what we have available come on down to B-010 or call ext. 4410.

The Usual Technology Housekeeping!!!

levels it shouldn't even have to be talked about now should it? But… if you need an example check this nifty little tidbit out:

🔲 "*Every year, Americans use more than 90 million short tons of paper and paperboard. That's an average of 700 pounds of paper products per person each year. Every year in America, more than 2 billion books, 350 million magazines, and 24 billion newspapers are published.*"

"All about paper." Paper University. 18/09/2009. TAPPI, Web. 18 Sep 2009. <http://www.tappi.org/paperu/all_about_paper/faq.htm>.

Kinda makes you think doesn't it? When you consider just how much paper we go through here at the good ol' HSofC just printing things like the daily attendance bulletin when we could be doing it all via electronic means is moderately staggering. Of course that's just talking about demand for paper and not the cost. The money spent on paper alone in the

> *"Do not worry about your difficulties in Mathematics. I can assure you mine are still greater."*
>
> **Albert Einstein**

SPS is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. Then take into account how much ink or toner costs. Again, we're talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars folks. We could save a good chunk of funds and the planet just by everyone getting on board with using email properly. Certainly not all, but we can sure make a dent in the bill if we all work together.

Which brings me to the next point I have to make. The best way to save money and time using devices you may not be familiar with is through training. The laptop carts need to be

handled with "kid gloves" as much as possible (to say the least). That requires us to all be on the same page as far as maintenance and usage is concerned.

We absolutely have to make sure that every teacher in this school is trained in the use of and maintenance procedures for our laptop carts. This means that every member of the staff should set up an appointment to take the training with me ASAP. BTW (**B**y **T**he **W**ay) folks, this is a directive from the District and considering the cost of these machines, I can understand why. It won't take long and it's even relatively painless.

Of course, another one of those pesky technology training things is also a directive from the District. Each and every staff member in the district is instructed to begin, or update their status on, the TSAT. The **T**eacher's **S**elf **A**ssessment **T**ool is used by the Tech Department to determine what the needs of our population in the Springfield Public Schools are. It's not the only source of information of course, but it certainly is the one that the State and Feds pay attention to. In any case, it's a tool that can help you understand the sorts of things that you might need to help you improve your skills for teaching in the 21st century classroom.

Ladies and gentlemen, that's about it for right now. I'm sure that there will be more to come as we move along through the year, but I think this should be enough for getting on with.

*Making it work for us-*The do's and don'ts of techie stuff here at Commerce Part 1

You know, every year I walk up and down the hallways of the good ol' HSofC and I find that many of the machines that were here when the building was renovated in 1998 are still alive. They run Windows 98 and have, for the most part anyway, Pentium class chips with so little RAM (Random Access Memory) that I'm surprised they haven't kicked their little circuit boards in the air and gone off to the great hard drive in the sky.

That being said , there are two things that can be said for their longevity. First, even though there are many reasons that I'm a bit wishy-washy about machines going back to their defaults when they're closed down so people (including teachers) can't change settings or download stuff, to have been working this long is a testament to the care they've been given over the last 12 years. Even in the business world machines are routinely rotated out every three years or so.

The second reason is a bit more esoteric. As the world has grown exponentially "techie", many of the people using them under-

stand what the limitations of these machines are and only use them in situational circumstances. This is, while annoyingly all too common, because of a necessity for "research" and word processed documents.

People everywhere have issues with what they have and what they'd like to have. What we're going to explore in this column is going to be the sorts of stuff that will make what we have work for us all that much more effectively. And...believe it or not, we really do have a good deal more going for us than circumstances

would make you believe.

Here's a good example of the sort of thing I'm talking about:

🔲 Just by deleting the cookies, cleaning up the temp files associated with Internet Explorer and clearing your history, performance on your machine can be improved in terms of your surfing the web.

🔲 Another nifty little trick is to keep as few items on your desktop as possible. "*Each time Windows starts, operating memory is used for all files on the Desktop. If those files are Shortcuts, the total amount of memory used will be small. If however, there are several or dozens of files on the Desktop, those will use lots of operating memory, essentially for no purpose or gain.*"

"Speed up Windows-How to clean your windows desktop." About.com. 21/09/2009. about.com/New York Times, Web. 21 Sep 2009. <http://windows.about.com/od/tipsandadvice/qt/cleandt.htm>.

In the next issue we'll get into the ral nuts and bolts of things we can do to make our technology experiences much more hassle-free.

Useful Stuff Out On The Web

For this issue let's stick with some of the resources that are directly related to, or created by, the folks here in the SPS

Tech Stuff

1) <u>Technology Resources</u>- This area of the SPS website doesn't get near enough use because so many people don't even know it's there!!! There are tutorials for just about everything offered on, or about the use and maintenance of an SPS computer **OR** any of the software currently loaded on, licensed by, or frequently used by people in the SPS

2) <u>Technology Department Homepage</u>- The fact that we've got such a comprehensive webpage for our Technology department is evidence that the SPS has a commitment to maintaining the level of Tech service and communication for not only **Infrastructure**, but for the **Informational** as well as the **Instructional** areas of technology usage throughout the district. Plus, you'll always be able to find the District's Technology Newsletter with all sorts of nifty links and tips.

3) <u>Help Desk Cards</u>- Now...here's an area of the SPS web site I'm quite certain doesn't get as many kudos as it should. To describe what they are:

> Each Help Desk Card is a full-color, two-sided document that will become one of your most helpful resources for the various applications. Included are:
>
> ▣ - Screen Shots to provide visual aids for novice users.
>
> ▣ - Desk Card Hints with tips on how to optimize and customize your experience.
>
> ▣ - The Help Desk offers more tips and tricks for advanced users.

▣ - Keyboard Shortcuts give several dozen common (and less common) shortcuts for increased efficiency.

School Sites

Here are some of the better school pages within the SPS site

1) **The High School of Commerce**-Of course I'm going to put us here. Our site's constantly evolving and growing, which is why I think it's a good one.

2) **Springfield Central High School**- Another really well designed site. The folks at Central do some really fine work.

3) **High School of Science and Technology**-This site's up and coming! Very cool stuff from the folks over at Sci-Tech. I really like the design and color scheme.

Teacher Sites

1) **Mr. Musiak's Pages**

2) **Mr. Ghosh's Pages**

3) **Mr. Benetti's Pages**

4) **Ms. Carrasquillo's Page**

And so gentle readers...

Yes, that's right folks, we're back and better than ever from what I can see!!! O.K., so the Patriots had a shaky Sunday afternoon with the Jets down in New York, they'll put it behind them and move on. Besides, the Jets have to come to Gillette Stadium at the end of November. It's the time of the year when the winds blow cold, but the Patriots get hot! So...I'm not all that worried. O.K., I will say this...I think that yesterday Commerce could have beaten New England. There, I said it!

Anyway, that's not what I'm going to talk about in this, the inaugural issue of the 4th year of the "Tech Tips"!!! I know that there have been times when I've gotten a little off the beaten track in this column. Sure, not every topic is, strictly speaking, about technology. However, just because this newsletter is called "The High School of Commerce Technology Tips" that doesn't mean that we can't go off on little technology-related tangents now and again. I mean...think of all the fun we'd miss.

For instance, yesterday as I was listening to the aforementioned Patriots get their collective backsides handed to them by a rookie QB, I was in what my lovely wife calls the "man cave" cooking what turned out to be some exceptionally good pork ribs.

They were dry rubbed with spices I'd have to swear you to secrecy with rituals that would make anything Dan Brown could come up with seem silly (actually it was just Paula Deen's Creole spice rub, but that other description sounded impressive didn't it?). They were cooked over a low heat on the grill (250 degrees) wrapped in aluminum foil for 3 1/2 hours and then sauced with Cattlemen's Smokehouse BBQ sauce for the last half hour with a high flame so that the brown sugar in the sauce could caramelize and give the fall-off-the-bone-ribs a nice char that just dares the people who make who make those absorbent paper towels to try and clean up your fingers with one sheet after these babies.

Before you say "he's just doing this to make us hungry so that we'll forget he's not talking about anything that's even remotely technological", consider this...The science behind just mixing the rub is low technology, in that we use hand tools such as a mortar and pestle to properly break down the spices and oils (at least when you

> *"The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause. "*
>
> *Mark Twain*

do it from scratch anyway...and I have). Understanding the methods by which the caramelization process occurs under the application of what type of flame/heat is critical as to whether or not the ribs can be considered "grilled" or "'cued". The technology used for such endeavors has been evolving to its present state since...well...since people realized that cooked food was really good

Granted, this was a heckova tangent, but remember, the first unit in Applications I has to do with the history of the computer… well...this was about the technology of barbecue/grilling.

Welcome Back Folks!!!
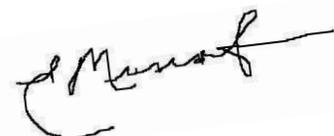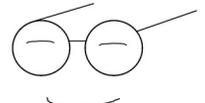
Life Lessons in Comics

Welcome back everyone!!! Those of you who've been following this section of the "Tech Tips" over the last several years are fully aware that I've been showing that images we see everyday in newspapers and all sorts of other media are snapshots of life and that the comics we see are certainly excellent examples of this. Every day there are teachable moments to be found throughout the articles in the newspaper, and yet, somehow we neglect to include the gentle humor of Charles Schultz's "Peanuts" or the sometimes not-so-gentle reminders of our "common humanity" from artists like Tom Batuik and Gary Trudeau. I'll be mixing it up this year by giving you as much as we can without violating the "fair use" tenets of copyright laws as they apply in educational situations. Enjoy and share!!!

Ed Musiak

The cartoon above was created by me using a nifty online tool Mr. Franks (Our ever tech saavy librarian here at the good ol' HSofC) turned me on to called "ToonDoo-The Cartoon Strip Creator" at toondoo.com. There are lots of ways that we can apply the use of this tool throughout content areas. Feel free to ask either Mr. Franks or myself if you'd like some suggestions or help.