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New iPad Community, Video Contest, Wandering Attention Span: TIPS for December, 2010

...maintained by Jeffrey L. Jones, Site Admin, last updated 12/2/2010

TIPS - The Technology Feed Vol 10, #4 (December, 2010)

TIPS is a feed of technology integration ideas for Fayette County teachers, delivered through blogs maintained by Technology Resource Teachers. To see all editions (including pre-blog ones), visit our [old archives](#).

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TIPS - The Editor's Desk

Brief musings on the implementation of technology integration in Fayette County Schools...from the Office of Instructional Technology



...from the desk of Jeffrey L. Jones, Site Admin

Wednesday, December 01, 2010 12:44 PM: Autumn Leaves, Rhubarb, and Student Attention Span

On most topics, Rose, a former next door neighbor of mine, was sweet and wonderful, a feisty, diminutive old lady who would leave a grocery bag full of rhubarb hanging from our back fence every week or so throughout June and much of July. (Rose and her husband had a massive bed of the stuff – they didn't even like it much, so we got it all, and bunches of tomatoes and squash to boot.)

But every fall, leaves brought out a very different side of Rose. Our massive oak and maple trees would provide a multi-colored blanket neatly covering several back yards. Ours were not the only large trees in the neighborhood, but Rose's property was different, she had only one small ornamental tree within reach of her back porch. More than once we woke up to the sound of Rose raking up those big yellow Maple leaves, and throwing big piles of them over our fence. She was quite happy to tell us exactly what she thought of those leaf-spewing behemoths, and tried hard to convince us that we should cut them down. My wife and I, of course, were quite proud of those trees, and couldn't imagine anything crazier than killing off two living things, much older than we were, which contributed shade, nesting sites, not to mention carbon-dioxide scrubbing and water retention. It was the height of silliness. Also, being the "young moderns" we considered ourselves to be, we knew the law: leaves are the responsibility of the person who owns the property on which they fall, regardless of how, and from whence, they came. We did occasionally help her rake, but we were certainly not swayed.

My wife and I have moved, and aged, and Rose and her dear husband are no longer "with us." After spending the last three weekends cleaning up yard trash and dealing with other people's leaves, I'm just a little more sympathetic with her problem. But I'm trying to hold onto my previous slant, even as I hang up the rakes and break out the ibuprofen.

A cover article on this Sunday's New York Times ([Growing Up Digital, Wired for Distraction](#), Sunday, Nov. 21, 2010) is yet another story on tech-savvy young people whose lives are seemingly one text and hyperlink away from academic inattention and failure. "Several recent studies show that young people tend to use home computers for entertainment, not learning, and that this can hurt school performance, particularly in low-income families. . .Research also shows that students often juggle homework and entertainment...using the Internet, watching TV, or using some other form of media either 'most' (31%) or 'some' (25%)



of the time that they are doing homework..." (p. 20, print version). I guess it isn't terribly surprising that many teachers are just a bit reluctant to open the floodgates – to provide flexible use of student computers in the classroom, or worse, allow students to use their cell phones and other personal gadgets. It would be a little like giving every student their own TV on which they could watch anything, right there in the classroom. Only, of course, this is worse, since current tools also provide them with a means to engage with anyone, anywhere, on anything. And they do...



The article is also about a school embracing the idea that engaging students means leveraging the same technologies they use. But the end of the article describes an English teacher there who has finally resorted to having students read aloud in class. This upside-down approach (read in class, engage outside of class) is this teacher's attempt to counter her inability to induce students to read at all. Although I'm not quite Rose in this instance (I actually use the same tools the students in the story use), there are times when I find myself shaking my fist at the "stand of tall trees next door," just like the English teacher in the story does at these tools. Pursuits which require extended time and attention, and products which reflect the results of same, seem to be disappearing, and there are lots of folks who point to the tools themselves – "slates," smart phones, social networking sites, even just plain old hyperlinked Web delivery – as the culprits. Are we, like Rose, just old geezers whining about change and inconvenience? There are a few things missing from this discussion, and I'll mention two here.

Chickens vs. Eggs

There is a good explanation for why young people have sorted these technologies out as entertainment platforms, even as much of the rest of the world plunges into their use for productivity, commerce, and learning. Most kids, of course, in the absence of other forces, will naturally look for the entertainment value in anything. After all, if they didn't, they'd be adults. Teachers, for a variety of reasons (some good, some perhaps less so), have not exactly rushed headlong towards embracing these tools for their own personal use. As a result, they can't model effective use of these tools for their students, and, more importantly, have little interest in requiring such use out of their students. It's not surprising then that, if given access, students use the technology in school for what they always use it for elsewhere.

Although there are implications for us here, this, of course, does not directly address what we should do to change things, or why...

Who's Distracted, Really?



Interestingly, in the same edition of the Times, in her Magazine weekly column, "[The Medium](#)," Virginia Heffernan makes the case that, in fact, the whole issue of short attention span and distraction is a myth. She contends that we, as humans, attend to that which we view as important. The ability to stay focused on something doesn't exist in a cultural (or, by extension, a technological) context. It's much more deeply embedded than that. Hence, if people (or students) are distracted, it's for good reasons, or reasons of boredom.

For the short term, engagement can be enhanced by a gadget or sexy delivery method, but such engagement will have a very short shelf life, and will not produce the same results that true engagement in the underlying content or goals would. That is, we should not expect a technology tool itself to tip the balance towards engaged learning. But that works both ways – we also cannot indict our technology tools for distracting students from the interest and engagement of an assignment either. Yes, their capabilities can be distracting, but following a distraction implies more than an avenue of escape – it also implies the need to escape in the first place.

And that is the key to how to dig ourselves out of this conundrum. Technology tools have the ability to support our students in doing things they can't do without them – connect, create, share, and construct in completely new ways. That is the reason why these tools are so powerful in the workplace, and, not incidentally, why kids find them so entertaining. But we cannot simply decide to credit, or blame, these tools for providing engagement or distraction. The topic, activity, and our personal involvement in it as educators and advocates must provide that. The real proof of engagement comes from making an assignment one that a student is interested in doing.

So, yes, these "trees" will produce an obligation on our part to clean up after their excesses. They will not take care of themselves, nor will they induce our students into doing so. But we will not be served by simply "cutting them down," either. If we do so, we may have produced a leaf-less fall, but the rest of the seasons will be blanching and dry.

Here's to you, Rose. You're still wrong, but I do miss those rhubarb pies

...for more, visit this blog at <https://edtech.fcps.net/blog/blogs.aspx?blogid=10067>

Announcements Monday, November 29, 2010 11:04 AM: Mobile Computing Devices - iSchool Course to Share Information

Technology News



...from the desk of Julie Gaskin, District TRT



Mobile Computing Devices

Please join us as we learn more about mobile computing devices - iPads, iPods, Smart Phones, etc. Help us provide app reviews, technical advice and success stories. Let us know what works, what isn't worth the money, which is most beneficial, etc. We hope to pump this course full of helpful advice for those who are getting mobile devices to use in the classrooms. The more resources we have available, the faster the devices can be implemented into the classroom successfully.

The iSchool course can be found by visiting iSchool (ischool.fcps.net) and clicking on Connected Spaces, Mobile Computing Devices. The course may be viewed by the public but requires a Fayette login to contribute. Thanks for your help in making this a rich resource.

...for more, visit this blog at <https://edtech.fcps.net/blog/blogs.aspx?blogid=18376>

Internet Safety Tuesday, November 30, 2010 10:02 AM: Internet Safety Video Contest

Information regarding digital citizenship in our schools.



...from the desk of Leanna Prater

Don't forget about the Internet Safety Video Contest for students. It isn't too late to grab that video camera and create a great video on an internet safety topic. Winners will be announced at the 2010-2011 STEM Fair on February 12th!

Each school can submit two instructional videos they have created in which teachers can then use as part of their Internet safety instruction. The instructional video can be any length (we recommend 5 to 10 minutes) and must focus on one aspect of digital citizenship.

**** IMPORTANT****

Due to the new date for the STEM Fair, the date for the registration and submission of the Digital Citizenship contest has changed. Please note new date.

The deadline for registration and submission of entries is **January 25, 2011, 4:00 pm**. The school's STLP coordinator must post all registrations and submissions. Contest information and general Information about the STEM Fair can be found here: <http://teach.fcps.net/stlp/>

Student Technology Leadership Program

A discussion of STLP activities, issues, and projects in Fayette County Schools.



...from the desk of Julie Gaskin, District TRT

Tuesday, November 23, 2010 11:38 AM: 2010 Fall Showcase Winners



Maxwell Elementary



Julius Marks Elem

STLP Fall Showcase University of Kentucky November 11, 2010

We are very proud of all of our Student Technology Leaders who participated in this year's STLP Regional Fall Showcase. The student groups who will advance to the state level of showcase competition in May include:

- Dixie Elementary: *Apple Tree of Learning*
- Dixie Elementary: *WAVE News*
- Julius Marks Elementary: *Media Mania*
- Julius Marks Elementary: *JME is Keen on Green!*
- Maxwell Elementary: *WMAX - ¿Que Pasa en Maxwell?*
- Winburn Middle School: *Warrior Morning News and Announcements*
- Winburn Middle School: *Warriors Reach Out*
- Winburn Middle School: *Warrior Techsters*
- Winburn Middle School: *Warrior Warehouse*
- Bryan Station High School: *Aeronautics Showcase*
- Bryan Station High School: *Computers and the Environment*
- Bryan Station High School: *Teaching Mom & Dad*
- Bryan Station High School: *Math Lab*
- Bryan Station High School: *Multilanguage Office*
- Eastside Campus of Fayette Technical: *The Green Machine*
- Paul Laurence Dunbar High School: *PLD Power Rangers*



The student groups who will advance to the state level of presenter competition in May include:

- Julius Marks Elementary: *Editing with Pinnacle*
- Morton Middle School: *Pinnacle*
- Paul Laurence Dunbar High School: *Commitment for a Cause*

Congratulations also to Chris Thompson from Paul Laurence Dunbar who won first place in the Archimedes penny boat competition and Landon Williams, also from Paul Laurence Dunbar, who won a Zune from Microsoft for second place in the Live at EDU competition.

💡If you are reading this in TIPS, click the link below to reach the original blog location so you can see the comments that have been added and post your own.

Robotics

Tuesday, November 30, 2010 10:43 AM: Competition of the Mind: First LEGO League

(Personal blog)



...from the desk of Leanna Prater

Teams in Fayette County will compete on Saturday morning, Dec. 4th at the University of Kentucky Student Center Ballroom for a spot to compete at the state competition. Fayette County teams have been working hard to "explore the cutting-edge world of Biomedical Engineering to discover innovative ways to repair injuries; overcome illnesses and disabilities; and build healthier, stronger bodies and answer this question: What kinds of problems keep people from leading happy and healthy lives?" Team research projects are just one area of this competition. Teams must also demonstrate ability to work together, discuss technical decisions made in building and programming a robot as well as compete in the robot field game. To prepare for the field game, teams built and programmed an NXT LEGO Robot to complete missions on this year's board.



KY State First Lego League Competition will be held January 29, 2011 at WKU's Diddle Arena in Bowling Green.

If you are interested in starting a LEGO Robotics team at your school, but need some help to know where to begin, please contact either Leanna Prater (leanna.prater@fayette.kyschools.us) or Julie Gaskin (julie.gaskin@fayette.kyschools.us)

...for more, visit this blog at <https://edtech.fcps.net/blog/blogs.aspx?blogid=40708>

Atomic Learning

An introduction to some of the online tutorials and lesson ideas available from Atomic Learning.



...from the desk of Julie Gaskin, District TRT

Monday, November 29, 2010 10:37 AM: Discovery Education Tutorials in Atomic Learning



Atomic Learning offers short, online, video tutorials and lesson ideas to help you embrace technology and integrate it into your classroom. AL has been purchased for all FCPS students and staff.



Discovery Education

Discovery Education provides thousands of videos, images, and other resources for Kentucky public school teachers, students, and colleges of education, searchable by keyword, content area, grade, and standards. The tutorials offered by Atomic Learning will help you and your students learn to make use of this resource including using the video clips in other applications. The series of tutorials on [Discovery Education](#) include Getting Started, Video Options, My Content, Teacher Center Tools, and Extending Your Use. Within each of these lessons are several 1-3 minutes tutorials on how to do very specific things - and [Atomic Learning](#) is available 24/7 to students and teachers!

? Navigation Tip: Remember you'll need your login and password from your school STC. I've provided a direct link to the [Discovery Education](#) tutorials but you may also like to go to [Atomic Learning](#) and discover the multitude of tutorials offered!

...for more, visit this blog at <https://edtech.fcps.net/blog/blogs.aspx?blogid=41976>

Video Conferencing Events, PD's and Collaborations

Upcoming video conferencing events, PD's and collaborations from CILC, MAGPI and more.



...from the desk of Jamie Burch, District TRT

Tuesday, November 30, 2010 2:35 PM: MAGPI December Events for Non Members



MAGPI

Pandemic: Part of the Science in the Cinema Program

December 8, 2010 | 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM EST

For Students in Grades 9-12

Cost: Free!

More Information/Registration: <http://www.magpi.net/Community/Programs/Pandemic>

Join Dr. Peter N. Wenger, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Associate Professor of Preventive Medicine and Community Health and Associate Professor in the School of UMDNJ Public Health for a discussion of the PBS NOVA program *Rx for Survival: Rise of the Superbug*. Students should be familiar with the documentary (at minimum, the portions about resistant germs and viruses) and should prepare questions ahead of time for Dr. Wenger. MAGPI is pleased to be a partner in the STARS Science in the Cinema project.

The STARS Science in the Cinema program is a project in development with Garden State Distance Learning Consortium, NJEDGE, Verizon, MAGPI, New Jersey Association for Biomedical Research, Rutgers University, UMDNJ and Kent State University.

Superbug: Part of the Science in the Cinema Program

December 15, 2010 | 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM EST

For Students in Grades 9-12

Cost: Free!

More Information/Registration: <http://www.magpi.net/Community/Programs/Superbug>

Join Dr. Peter N. Wenger, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Associate Professor of Preventive Medicine and Community Health and Associate Professor in the School of UMDNJ Public Health for a discussion of the PBS NOVA program *Rx for Survival: Rise of the Superbug*. Students should be familiar with the documentary (at minimum, the portions about resistant germs and viruses) and should prepare questions ahead of time for Dr. Wenger. MAGPI is pleased to be a partner in the STARS Science in the Cinema project.

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...for more, visit this blog at <https://edtech.fcps.net/blog/blogs.aspx?blogid=33972>

Announcements

Technology News
...from the desk of Julie Gaskin, District TRT



ArtRage

ArtRage is a free downloadable paint program that is known for having realistic behaviors of the tools and paper varieties. Many options are offered in the free version and, for a limited time, Fayette County has special pricing for the full Studio Pro version. Please contact julie.gaskin@fayette.kyschools.us for more information.

David Page and Jason Sturgill, Lafayette High School art teachers, will be providing professional

development on how to use these programs and how to incorporate their use into your lessons.

Thursday, December 2, 4:30-6:30 or

Thursday, December 16, 4:30-6:30

Lafayette High School, room 133

Sign up online: [Professional Development Online Menu](#)

...for more, visit this blog at <https://edtech.fcps.net/blog/blogs.aspx?blogid=18376>



The contents of this website are intended for the enhancement of instruction only. "It's About Kids"