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STEM Fair, Videoconference Money, Robotics, and High Tech High: TIPS for February, 2011

...maintained by Jeffrey L. Jones, Site Admin, last updated 2/3/2011

TIPS - The Technology Feed Vol 10, #6 (February, 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

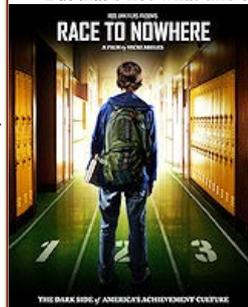
Brief musings on the implementation of technology integration in Fayette County Schools...from the Office of Instructional Technology



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

Wednesday, February 02, 2011 10:43 AM: Why a Race At All? Numbers, Education, and High Tech High

The current education reform initiative "Race to the Top" (RTTT) promotes the objective of closing gaps and increasing performance of all students through programs measured by specific criteria, and through merit funding of programs that best meet that criteria. The program takes the goals of the Bush administration's high-stakes-testing-driven "No Child Left Behind," and pushes it towards what it views as positive reform initiatives. But that's not what this essay is about.



Recently I went to an airing of a documentary by filmmaker Vicki Abeles, titled "Race to Nowhere," an attempt to apply the "Race to the Top" concept to the idea that the numbers game promoted by NCLB (and, tangentially, by RTTT) is an empty promise which actually does damage to student success, self-worth, even health. The film attempts to do this by following Vicki's own journey through parenthood, and the parenting experiences of several others, as viewed through the lens of several education experts and advocates. It follows several students (not, incidentally, all three of Ms. Abeles' own kids) through a process of struggle and crisis, ostensibly caused by over-zealous demands on student achievement. Its billing as an indictment of current educational policy, unfortunately, falls a little short, since the "victims" in this case are mostly upper-middle class students of what one might presume to be type-A parents (Ms. Abeles is, herself, a former Wall Street attorney). But in the process, the film manages to score some hits against our numbers-driven educational assessment and reform mechanisms.

It isn't really that surprising that education reform these days is driven by numbers. So is everything else. We live in a system of sales quotas, tax brackets, salary and bonus amounts, portfolios/liquidity statements, debt levels, automobile values, even church attendance. All of these things are supposed to be, somehow, tied to something called "quality of life," but, really, no one is sure exactly how. As dozens of studies on state lotto winners have shown, beating the numbers rarely nails down that "quality of life" concept. "Race to Nowhere" contributes to that discussion by noting that, in fact, there is almost no relationship between beating the education game (straight A's, high SAT/ACT scores, lots of extra-curricular activities) and being one of the upper 0.01% of our population in earnings, respect, even visibility. As a matter of fact, many of the highest-paid executives in our country couldn't manage to scrape together more than one successful year in college.

So we've come full circle back to the whole idea of "Race to the Top" - education reform.

About four or five years ago, I met a young and enthusiastic librarian at Henry Clay High School, Amanda Hurley, fresh from some direct exposure to a school reform concept called "High Tech High" (<http://www.hightechhigh.org/>). It was the first I'd heard of it. The latest time I heard it was in Greg Drake's office just this past week, and I was reminded of this wonderful idea. In an age when technology is often viewed as the vehicle for (or at least the implication of) education reform, these schools have consistently shown how it can be done. Although the school title promotes technology (and most specifically deliver "STEM"-tilted curricula), it is how education is delivered, implemented, and assessed that is the most revolutionary about this school idea. Technology consistently supports and implies student-driven instruction, project-based learning, and collaboration through connection, three consistent themes of mine throughout these essays. Of course, these pedagogical approaches do not require technology infusion, nor does technology infusion force them to the front. That is what is so powerful about "High Tech High."

As defined on the "High Tech High" website, these schools are designed around four fundamental principals:

Personalization.

Programs and instruction are design around an individual student needs, and include one-on-one and small-group attention from faculty

Adult World Connection.

Instruction is designed to reflect a direct connection with workplace interests and student goals, both through curriculum, and through hands-on experiences outside of the school walls and in the workplaces themselves.

Common Intellectual Mission.

A common problem with traditional schools is the split between college and career/vocational tracks. HTH blurs these boundaries, and makes assessment performance-based.

Teacher as Designer.

This school concept places a premium on interdisciplinary lesson design, team teaching, and problem-based learning.

All of these concepts are well-supported by technology integration, which can provide important real-world connections through virtual tools such as online learning systems and videoconference platforms. Technology can also provide platforms for collaborative work which transcends traditional classroom boundaries.



But the power of these ideas isn't solely associated with technology tools. They are education ideas that have been





promoted, developed, and delivered for many years. Besides those already mentioned above, there are several possible readers of this blog who can speak directly to these school design ideas. One is Amy Johns, director of the **Information Technology Career Academy** at Bryan Station. Another is Ron Chi, principal of **The Learning Center at Linlee**. This school embraces many of these ideas for its population.

These home-grown examples also well-exemplify the additional stated goals of HTH schools: to serve the entire spectrum of regional populations, with specific attention to under-served ones. Fayette County has, as a highly-promoted goal, the closing of achievement gaps, which is exactly the same issue.

As Fayette County Schools' student population expands, and as technology becomes more ubiquitous in the classroom, it's time

to take the principles of HTH and apply them much more broadly to education reform in our district. Of course, there are several barriers we need to overcome on our way, including an existing school design tradition which specifically works against these ideas – including closed classrooms, and topic and ability segmenting/tracking.

But the biggest barrier is this idea of a race, a competition, a numbers game which serves education watchers, but fails to serve students. Gaps in mathematics scores are only important if they point to gaps in the abilities of our students to be successful in their own lives, and the post-secondary workplaces and schools in which they'll participate. But we can address that problem directly. Project-based and collaborative learning, with direct connections to the "adult world," are where students learn these things. Connections with ideas, workflow processes, businesses, and each other are pivotal in this pursuit. Unfortunately, these things are almost impossible to quantify, especially through our current high-stakes assessment scores.

The "Race..." idea also implies a sense of urgency, that our time is limited in our pursuits. That is very true. But, as educators, and policy designers, we should avoid our society's tendency to take anything with an implied need for speed or performance, and turn it into a competition, and, by extension, take "competition" into the school and classroom as a "best practice." The implications of HTH are that collaboration, community, and connection are much more important than competition as a design force behind instruction and school design.

It's time to bring High Tech High to Fayette County!

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

Student Technology Leadership Program

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

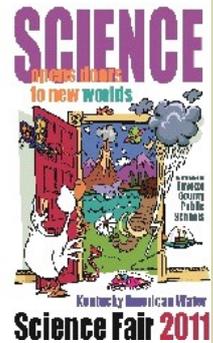


...from the desk of Julie Gaskin, District TRT

Tuesday, February 01, 2011 9:33 PM: STEM Fair 2011 Invitation



FCPS District-Wide STEM Fair unites with the FCPS District-Wide Science Fair
 Saturday, February 12, 2011
 Bryan Station High School
 STEM Fair Public Hours: 9:00-11:00
 STEM Fair Awards Ceremony: 11:30
 Science Fair Public Hours: 12:00-3:00
 Science Fair Awards Ceremony: 3:00



It's About Your Kids Online, 9:30-10:00 & 10:15-10:45
 Guest Speaker Marty Park, Kentucky Department of Education
 Learn how to talk to your kids about being a citizen in our digital world. Discover strategies to help students help themselves.

STEM Fair Showcases: Students explain their use of technology to support science, engineering, and mathematics.

LEGO Robotics: School team displays and robotics information

VEX Robotics: Demonstrations of projects which encourage teamwork, leadership and problem solving.

Art Gallery: A gallery walk of art created by Fayette County students. Open studio time and tutorials will be provided by Lafayette High School STLP for students who are interested in working with digital artwork.

Gaming: Everyone is invited to come play student created games, provided by Bryan Station High School STLP.

Internet Safety: Do you know what your child is doing online? Talk to Bryan Station High School students and find out precautions to take with the Internet and how you can help safeguard your child.

Student Presentations:
 Alice's World (programming)
 Elementary Editing with Pinnacle People
 JCM Bullying Public Service Announcement
 Programming with JAVA

Please join us at Bryan Station High School on Saturday, February 12th.

★ [STEM Fair PDF handout to share](#)

...for more, visit this blog at <https://edtech.fcps.net/blog/blogs.aspx?blogid=16314>

Video Conferencing Events, PD's and Collaborations

Wednesday, February 02, 2011 9:46 AM: CILC Content Dollar Bank - Money for VC Events!

Just a reminder to all schools...

Greg Drake, Coordinator of Instructional Technology for Fayette County Schools has set up a content dollar bank with the **Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (CILC)** to allow each school to choose a video



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



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

conference free of charge! To date, this bank has not been accessed by very many schools. We would like to encourage everyone to visit the CILC website and look for a content related video conference to enhance your classroom instruction, and engage your students.

One popular content provider is The **Center for Puppetry Arts** in Atlanta, Georgia. These sessions are very interactive and each student leaves with a completed project. Other content providers include the **Cleveland Institute of Music**, the **Library of Congress**, the **Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum**, and many, many more. Visit www.cilc.org for more information. When you find a session that is right for you, please contact Jeffrey L. Jones, Diana Hendrix or Jamie Burch with the Office of Instructional Technology for steps to register for the event.

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



Robotics

(Personal blog)



...from the desk of Leanna Prater

Wednesday, February 02, 2011 3:47 PM: Congratulations to our First Lego League Teams!

Congratulations to all of our teams who competed at the State First Lego League Competition on January 29th in Bowling Green.

Fayette County teams which placed at the state level are:

Robot Design Award (1st Place): "JC-3PO," from Jessie M. Clark Middle School in Lexington, KY. Team members are Nathan Allan, Jonah Andreatta, Benjamin Bossert, William Bossert, Alex Brinkhorst, Ben Howell, Drew Norby, Seth Rogers, Mitchell Slavik, and Jared Young. Coached by Mark Evans and Stacey Rogers.

Robot Design Award (2nd Place): "Warrior Bots" from Winburn Elementary School in Lexington, KY. Team members are Ben Gardner, Samuel Springate, Andrew Tapia, and Kevin Zhang. Coached by Ashley Rosen.

Team Spirit Award (2nd Place): "Denominators" a neighborhood team from Lexington, KY. Team members are Seth Bashore, Cody Leslie, Kylie Russ, Ryan Norton, Taylore Jordan, Zachary Jordan, and Alec Barron. Coached by Jeff Norton and Jessie Yannelli.

Be sure to stop by the Robotics Expo at the STEM Fair and visit school teams preparing for the STLP RCX Robochallenge to be held this April at Georgetown College.

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

Announcements

Technology News



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

Wednesday, February 02, 2011 2:06 PM: KySTE 2011/Louisville -- Early Bird Registration Almost Past!

The Kentucky Society for Technology in Education's spring conference is nearly upon us. Early Bird registration expires Feb. 11 -- register now, and save \$35!

- **What?** KySTE 2011, the conference of the Kentucky Society for Technology in Education.
- **When?** Feb. 28-March 2, 2011
- **Where?** Galt House, Louisville, KY
- **Who?** Presenters include Pamela Hambric and Karen Williams/Russell Cave Elementary, Kim Overstreet/PL Dunbar High, Jamie Burch and Jeffrey Jones/Office of Instructional Technology, and 240 other presenters from across the state and beyond. Keynote from education innovator Ian Jukes.
- **How?** Links and descriptions are available from the [KySTE website](http://www.kyste.org)



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

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

Tuesday, February 01, 2011 10:14 PM: Excel Tutorials in Atomic Learning



[Atomic Learning](http://www.atomiclearning.com) 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.



Excel

Microsoft® Office Excel is a powerful tool you can use to create and format spreadsheets, and analyze and share information to make more informed decisions. The tutorials offered by Atomic Learning can help you and your students make use of this software. Atomic Learning offers tutorials covering versions 2000, 2003, 2007, and the new 2010 version, covering topics such as working with tabs and ribbons, statistical analysis with Excel, formatting charts, pivot tables, and much more. Within each of the lessons are several 1-3 minutes tutorials on how to do very specific things - and [Atomic Learning](http://www.atomiclearning.com) is available 24/7 to students and teachers!

? Navigation Tip: Remember you'll need your login and password from your school STC.

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

