

# Heights Bits and Bytes

*Colonial Heights Schools' Office of Technology and Learning*

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Instructional Technology Integration Specialists

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## Moodle

### To MOODLE or Not To MOODLE?

By Buddy Palatiere

**Moodle** is a course management system designed to help educators who want to create quality online courses. It also can help educators create effective online learning and resource communities. Help can be just a click away. The software is used all over the world by universities, schools, companies and independent teachers. Moodle is open source and completely free to use.

Colonial Heights Public Schools has a moodle server in place to handle a variety of course offerings. The web site address is: <http://moodle.colonialhts.org/> and it can be accessed from any computer in the world. Mr. Paul Riding has been a driving force in developing course work on the moodle. His class, Technical Foundations, is completely on the server. Only his students can gain access to it. They have lessons there. They take quizzes and tests there. They even get feedback and can interact with one another in a forum on the moodle.

The Technology and Learning staff has put together a class that each staff member was emailed a login and password to. This class is called: Technology Help Desk and is located on the moodle server. This is a collection of directions in how to use different pieces of technology and software. It is not a complete list, but some of the offerings include: How to PowerPoint: Add a hyperlink, Add sound, Add a Video, Add Clipart, Conduct a survey etc.. It also has a section on how to use Microsoft Excel and How to Manage your Email account and change the settings. Please take time to visit this site and use the How-To's. If someone from the office of Technology and Learning is not available right a way, go to the moodle site and logon. There is a good chance there is a How to listed that can help.

In the future we will be holding In-services on how to create your own moodle class and hope that teachers take an interest in its development.

## Computers on Wheels-COWs

By Debbie Mayes

In each elementary school six Computers on Wheels, or *COWs* for short have been deployed. Each grade level at the elementary level will share a *COW*, which is made up of a Gateway lap top computer, a VGA projector, and speakers on a mobile cart. Each Library/Media Center and Computer Lab will still have one *COW*. Teachers can make use of the *COW* in the computer labs to demonstrate how to use an Internet site they are going to use during computer lab periods or while teaching in the lab using the Internet or other software.

*COWs* in the classrooms will make it much more convenient for teachers to infuse technology into their lessons. It takes about three minutes to set up the *COW* for use in the classroom. Instructions are attached to each *COW* cart. Teachers can project Videos from United Streaming, use PowerPoint presentations, and use Internet sites with the Computers on Wheels. Wireless access is available on each *COW* cart. This will allow teachers to use the network to access their files and connect to the Internet while teaching with the computer in the classroom.

I wish to extend my appreciation for the hard work and assistance that Mark Webster, Doug Adams, Dave Korb, Buddy Palatiere, Michelle Petet, Denise Underhill, and Sharon Murdock provided us in order to get the *COWs* ready for you.

## Computer On Wheels User Tips:

- 1) Connect the Network cable from the wireless access point to the Network port in the wall.
- 2) Plug in the long power cord which provides power to everything on your cart, check to be sure the power switch is on.
- 3) Turn on the computer using the power button. Log in using your regular log in user name and password.
- 4) Remove the lens cover from the projector. Turn on the projector, push the power button twice, the first time you will see the orange button, the second time you will see the green button.
- 5) Focus the picture using the black knob just behind the projector's lens.
- 5) If your computer screen does not project, push the Fn (function button) and the F3 key (LCD button) at the same time, it will project what is on your computer screen.

## School Culture and IT Security

By Mark Webster, Director of Technology and Learning

One of my responsibilities as Director of Technology and Learning is using foresight, and exercising stewardship by looking at the big picture relating to technology in our schools. In his article, "Keep on Keeping On: The Basics of Business Continuity," Harvey (2005) discussed the relationship between business continuity and disaster recovery. My colleagues in education will surely agree that the business of education is as important as anything else that goes on in the private sector! Technology is increasingly becoming an integral and even critical part of teaching and learning, school administration, and school business operations. In September of 2003, *only three weeks after beginning my job* as Director, I was faced with an emergency that I did not expect. Hurricane Isabel came through Virginia, and the network server at Lakeview Elementary School failed. Students, teachers, and staff at Lakeview lost all of their network data, including the entire library collection records. As we recovered from this particular disaster, the longer term process of looking at the big picture was crucial. This emergency was the catalyst that inspired a determined and orchestrated effort by our technology team, to build an enterprise level solution to improve technology and data security in Colonial Heights City Schools.

However, what I now find myself admitting is that changing our school culture relating to IT security and safeguarding data is a little more difficult than I expected. Because computer security is such an important matter that concerns everyone who uses a computer at our schools, our School Board has approved a Computer Acceptable Use Policy. You will recall that at the beginning of the school year, the School Administration Office distributed the updated Employee Handbook, and that employees were required to sign a statement that they have read and understand its contents. Beginning this school year, the Employee Handbook now includes our Computer Acceptable Use Policy. In public education, just as the safety of our children is of paramount importance, it is important to understand that, because school technology and data are deployed in the service of our students, they are resources we are entrusted with to safeguard and treasure.

In his article "Cyber Security: A Survival Guide," Seiberling (2005) ob-

served how school districts everywhere recognize that although their growing mountain of information can help improve educational outcomes, there are growing security risks involved with keeping this information safe. Many of these security risks that affect a school district's capacity for information survival are due to school cultural factors. Seiberling describes concrete scenarios in which the behavior of various staff persons from central office administrators, to teachers and principals, to IT staff, to support staff, all seriously affected a school system's ability to recover from information disasters. Seiberling states that "probably the biggest misconception is that cyber security is solely the responsibility of the district's technology point-person."

One of Seiberling's real world examples is that of a main office secretary, working with a student sitting nearby waiting to see the principal. She mutters under her breath, "password, password" then opens her drawer to look for her sticky note, and is then interrupted when a scuffling erupts in the hallway, and she must step out of the office to deal with two students pushing each other. In the story, a familiar truant is sitting in the office waiting to see the principal, and because the student has observed the secretary's password ritual, the password is written down by the student, and later used to hack the school's information system to change grades. There are similar examples described where the behavior of different staff persons can compromise the safety of school data and information. Ultimately, dealing effectively with the larger issues that impact IT security requires the awareness and due diligence of all educators and school staff.

In her article "Weaving a Safety Net" in the journal *District Administration*, Mallard (2005) advised that IT directors and superintendents should meet to discuss IT security, technology upgrades, policies, and personnel matters. I am very grateful for the leadership of our Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Joseph Cox, who has supported me and our Technology team as we have sought to make improvements in our technology systems and infrastructure, and to move key initiatives forward. During the Superintendent's "Leadership Advance" retreat during the summer of 2006, I enjoyed sharing a presentation on IT security with school and central office administrators.

IT security and safeguarding data have often been on the agenda for my

technology staff meetings. In the technology staff development sessions that are offered for members of our technology staff, we have included training sessions on critical topics such as procedures for managing data backup systems, and our Computer Acceptable Use Policy. Technology and other school staff have in the past recommended certain changes in our policy to enhance the use of technology, and the Superintendent and School Board have approved changes to our policy on three occasions since 2003.

In conclusion, let me share with you some observations. Recently, one of the major projects and initiatives I have been involved with is deploying wireless networks at Colonial Heights High School and Colonial Heights Middle School. This required me to tour our buildings, inspect classrooms to plan installations, and perform follow-up visits to check on the status of newly installed wireless access points. I was amazed at the number of classrooms where I found teacher computers with email screens open, and other instances where the student information system was open on the screen, such that grades or attendance records could be tampered with. We need your help. During the first week of the new calendar year, school technology staff assisted me with distributing a "Using Your School Computer" brochure to all staff. The little publication summarizes our computer use policy, and covers related information concerning Internet access and safety, computer accounts and passwords, computer security, and using email. Please keep your copy handy as a ready reference, and be familiar with its contents. With your help, your awareness of the importance of computer security and safeguarding school data, and your ongoing efforts in following some common sense computer practices, this will help to improve our school culture as it relates to IT security. Thank you!

## References

- Harvey J. (2005). Keep on keeping on: The basics of business continuity. *AIIM E-Doc Magazine*, 19, retrieved online.
- Millard, E. (2005). Weaving a safety net. *District Administration*, November, 2005, 34-38.
- Seiberling, C. (2005). Cyber security: A survival guide. *Technology & Learning*, February 15, 2005, 31-40.

## Web Sites for Teaching and Learning

### **Ask Dr. Math**

<http://www.mathforum.org/dr.math/>

### **Colonial Heights Public School's Moodle Site**

<http://moodle.colonialhts.org/>

### **This Librarian entertains you while you search!!**

[www.msdevey.com](http://www.msdevey.com)

**123Powerpoint.com Provides Teachers, Students with PowerPoint templates, backgrounds, photo library, fonts, background music, and sound effects.**

<http://www.123powerpoint.com/>

**Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators is a categorized list of sites for enhancing curriculum and professional growth. It is updated often to include the best sites for teaching and learning.**

<http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/>

### **Kid's Clubhouse**

**Contains lots of activities, divided by grade levels. Includes weekly logic problems/brain teasers and discussions of kids' books. By the Houghton Mifflin Company.**

[www.eduplace.com/kids/index.html](http://www.eduplace.com/kids/index.html)

### **National Geographic Kids**

**Contains science experiments, and an excellent archive of colorful features. Some sections require Shockwave, which is downloadable from the site. From the National Geographic Society.**

[www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/index.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/index.html)

# A Tech Tutorial

## Internet Search Tips

**Make a list** of related terms that might help you to find different ways to refine your search. If you are looking up real estate, what type of real estate? Rural or residential? If you are looking up recreation what type of recreation? Golf courses, restaurants, or parks? What other things could you be looking for?

**Find alternative words** that could be used in place of the word you have on your first list. For example if you are looking for a home, maybe use house. If you are looking for hothouse, try greenhouse or indoor gardening or hydroponics instead.

**Use upper and lower case letters.** These can make a big difference. Type in brown and search. Then type in Brown and search. Sometimes using upper and lower case can make a big difference in the results found. The search sites looks for a proper noun only.

**Use plural and singular words.** This can also make a big difference in your results. I was looking for a list of Indiana schools. I used Indiana school first and found nothing but individual Indiana schools. I changed school to schools

**Use Boolean indicators.** Use **AND**, **NOT**, or **OR** to refine or expand your search. They must be typed in all caps. The most important word should be listed first.

**AND** (sometime +) will give you sites that have both words.

**NOT** (sometime -) will give you sites that have one word, but not the other

**OR** will give you sites that have either one of the words or both.

## Internet Search Tips

**Use quotations around phrases to form strings.** (i.e. *"Bull Run Golf Course"*). Search engines find all the words between the quote together and in that order. This is referred to as a string. With this search, most all of the sites you find will be sites about a specific golf course and not sites concerning the American Civil War or bulls or running or courses you might take.

**Results are ranked by order of importance**, so as you go down the list you may not be as likely to find what you want. But DON'T always think the first page of results always gives you the best chance for a match. It has been my experience that sometimes it is the second or third page that has the sites I need. It depends on the topic. Refining searches can help save a lot of time.

**All search sites do not have all sites.** I know the Internet is massive. There are no guarantees for finding your topic. The best you can do is to practice using different search sites and different techniques. You might try some of the different search sites and techniques listed on this sheet, but these are not all that exist. I would suggest you find a search engine you like and learn all you can about it. The search sites give you suggestions on how to improve your chances of finding what you want on the web.

## Your Technology Team

By Buddy Palatiere

Do you know your Office of Technology and Learning Team? They are Mark Webster, Doug Adams, David Korb, Paul Riding, Buddy Palatiere, and Debbie Mayes. Our School Computer Support Specialists include: Julie Bowles, Marge McAllister, Denise Underhill, Michelle Petet and Sharon Murdock. Are you aware of what these 10 individuals are responsible for? In our system we have over 1,600 computers (desktops and laptops), 200 printers, 50 projectors, 13 Smart Boards, 10 scanners, 20 digital cameras, 5 Personal Response Systems, 100's of different software titles and licenses and 25 servers among other peripherals. They are charged with keeping everything technology running seamlessly and ensure that all units and software licenses are up-to-date.

Mr. Webster, Director of Technology & Learning is responsible for overseeing all aspects of our technology. From planning purchases, engineering IT, to overseeing a staff of 5 and making sure technology enhances education, are all aspects of our technology plan. Mr. Doug Adams, Network Administrator, maintains the 25 different servers, makes sure all 3000 student and 300 staff accounts work and that the intra and internet all work seamlessly so email and all the saved documents stay saved. Mr. David Korb, Technology Support Specialist, keeps approximately 1,600 computers and literally hundreds of software titles up and running. He creates the image (ghosts) for all computers so that upgrading

## Your Technology Team

all programs and installation of new programs do not get in the way of the educational process. Paul Riding, Support Specialist, takes care of the High School's Student Laptop Program Computers and sees that all student machines stay functional.

Instructional Technology Integration Specialists, Buddy Palatiere (secondary) and Debbie Mayes (elementary) are busy helping teachers use technology in the classroom, solving problems and lending support. Training teachers and helping write curricula for teachers take up most of their time. Buddy has 171 staff members he deals directly with and Debbie has 134 to help out. The School Based Computer Support Personnel, or sometimes called NINJAS, are the first line contact for the Office of Technology and Learning to the staff. These five ladies are responsible for technology inventory, trouble shooting computers, network and printer problems, along with aiding teachers in the computer lab. They keep their school's web site up to date. They work for the principal of the school they are assigned to and are the direct link for technology so that the entire technology system works without any problems.

With thousands of computers, printers, peripherals and software titles system wide, the 10 members of the Technology and Learning team pitch in and help one another. If something does not work, the educational process slows so our team works to stay on top of problems. So the next time you turn on the computer and everything works, think of the team of 10 who try to stay out of your way so you can do your job. When something does not work, know that one or all of this team will work to see that it can be fixed in a timely manner.