

Heights Bits and Bytes

Colonial Heights Schools' Office of Technology and Learning

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Newsletter Editors: Debbie Walwer and Buddy Palatiere

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Instructional Technology Integration Specialists

iPods In The Classroom by Buddy Palatiere

Do iPods have a place in the classroom? Imagine 25 students all hooked up to iPods. Then imagine the teacher trying to get their attention to start class. Well imagine no more. This sight is an ongoing occurrence in Mr. Rick Ridpath's History class at CHMS. Mr. Ridpath has created a library of video clips, songs, pictures, and PowerPoints which are relevant to his subject material. His students can use these iPods for review of material covered and revisit a short film clip of yesterday's lesson. Mr. Ridpath has also found some recordings of songs with pertinent materials to give his students a different instructional method. He has even recorded his own song creations to enhance his subject material. All in all his students seem to have taken to the iPods very well and are using them daily. It is a lot of work creating the media library of relevant materials, but Mr. Ridpath is on the cutting edge of technology and will evaluate this effort to see if these iPods enhance instruction or are a distraction.

Podcasting Announcements by Buddy Palatiere

Ever wonder what goes on in the schools? Try clicking on the home pages of Colonial Heights High School and North Elementary School and finding the link to Morning Announcements Podcast. The Computer Technology Support Specialists at CHHS and North have been recording the morning announcements, up-loading them into a software program called Audacity, cleaning up the recording, adding music to it, then loading it on to their respective schools' web sites. Mrs. Bowles and Mrs. DiNoia have taken on this responsibility and have added another way to keep the public informed as to what is happening in our schools. The feedback from the public has been wonderful. Mrs. Bowles who has been podcasting the morning announcements for the High School for over a year has received dozens of positive feedback about the podcasts. Parents, school officials and students have all commented on what a positive impact these podcasts have made. Keeping the parents and public informed and hearing the positive comments about the schools and students makes a difference. As Mrs. Bowles said: "It may take me about an hour to create the podcast, but its benefits are worth it after all the positive comments the kids make. Anything that keeps the parents informed can only be a positive reflection on our schools."

Variations of 100! A Virtual Math and Science Lesson

By Debbie Walwer

In February Mrs. Bage's fourth grade class celebrated the 100th day of school by taking part in a virtual lesson provided by the Math and Science Innovative Center. Students spent an hour exploring patterns in our math and science world. Connections were made between scientific and mathematical concepts including SOL strands. Students learned about fractional components, algebraic thinking, number sense, matter, and scientific investigation. The lesson enhanced learning by blending internet video, 21st Century skills and engaged strategies such as patterning, puzzles, and games. Students were connected with the Math and Science Innovative Center using a web cam and Illuminations software. Several classes across the Richmond area attended the class at the same time. Students in Mrs. Bage's class were able to see other classes working on the same lesson using the web cam. In order to take part in a virtual lesson provided by the Math and Science Innovative Center, teachers must attend training provided at the center. During the training you experience the lesson, receive experimental materials and handouts to use with your students during the lesson, and learn how easy it is to receive the lesson with only one computer, a projection system and Internet access. Our school division is a member of the MSiC consortium. I encourage you to visit the MSiC and investigate their schedule of virtual lessons.



Mrs. Bage's fourth grade students are actively engaged in the virtual lesson celebrating the 100th day of school.

Technology for Special Needs

By Debbie Walwer

“Today’s classrooms include learners with a variety of needs and abilities. Teachers need to be sure that all students have access to, not just the same content, but also the technology needed to facilitate, supplement, and enhance learning. All of us have access to free computer-based tools and online resources that enable almost any student to use technology successfully.” (Education World, <http://www.education-world.com/>, February 15, 2009) There are many students that may benefit from the use of accessibility tools. These tools will make it easier to reach all of your students using technology.

**Accessibility on a PC-Click Programs>Accessories>Accessibility in START>
or go to Accessibility Options in the Control Panel to find these Windows tools:**

- Narrator: This tool for the visually impaired reads aloud all windows and text.
- On-Screen Keyboard: Users with physical limitations can open a window containing a keyboard layout and then use the mouse to type on that keyboard.
- Magnifier: This tool for the visually impaired increases font and graphic size, and inverts text colors (changing white to black, for example).
- Sticky Keys: With this tool, for users with limited hand or finger movement, keys such as SHIFT or ALT can be pressed once rather than held down for commands or typing.
- Filter Keys: Students whose disabilities may cause them to type extra keystrokes will benefit from this tool, which eliminates extra characters or symbols.

For more tools and resources, go to Microsoft’s Accessibility Technology for Everyone page.

<http://www.microsoft.com/enable/>

Integrating Technology into the Curriculum

By Debbie Walwer

Integrating technology into classroom instruction must happen across the curriculum in ways that research shows deepen and enhance the learning process. This means more than teaching basic computer skills and software programs in a separate computer class. “Under the right circumstances, technology has been shown to accelerate, enrich and deepen student understanding of basic skills, promote critical thinking, problem solving and team learning, motivate and engage students by bringing relevance and real-world applications to academics, strengthen teaching and learning and connect students and teachers to rich learning resources beyond the classroom.” (<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Technology/vastudy/vatcst2.pdf>) The Math and Science Innovative Center’s virtual lessons (see article on page 2) are a perfect example of teaching and learning, connecting students and teachers to resources that otherwise would not be available in the classroom.

Learning with technology allows students to be intellectually challenged while giving them realistic experiences. Many resources online provide classrooms with more interesting, diverse and current learning materials. New technology tools, such as document cameras, projectors connected to computers, and video streaming offer educators effective ways to reach different types of learners. When technology is effectively integrated into subject areas, teachers grow into roles of facilitator and coach. Technology helps make teaching and learning more meaningful and fun.

The question is not “if” technology belongs in today’s schools . . . The real question is whether or not the American education system is using technology effectively.

Connect to a World of Learning—What's new at Discovery Education

By Debbie Walwer

United Streaming is now Discovery Education Streaming.

Discovery Education streaming integrates seamlessly into the curriculum with 5,000 full-length videos segmented into 50,000 content-specific clips. Use of this digital video-based learning resource has been scientifically proven to increase academic achievement.

After you have set up your Discovery Streaming account you will find a calendar feature by going to the Teacher Center>Curriculum Resources>Calendar. Teachers can use this feature to make history come alive everyday by showing your students video content that presents events that happened on a particular calendar day, week or month.

Discovery Educator's Network is part of Discovery Education Streaming. This resource offers downloads from teachers willing to share their work. Many resources are available such as streaming videos that have been edited by teachers to better suit their curriculum, study guides, and pod casts.

The Teacher Center also provides weekly teaching topics that include video, lesson plans, and discussion guides for that weeks Thematic Focus. To browse these weekly teaching topics go to Teacher Center>Curriculum Resources>Thematic Focus. An archive of past topics is also available.