

Heights Bits and Bytes

Colonial Heights Schools' Office of Technology and Learning

Volume 3, Issue 1

Special Start of School Edition: "Bits and Bytes from the Director," Mark Webster

September 2007

Technology Summer Institute

Welcome Jose Morales

Jose Morales joined the Technology and Learning staff this summer as our new Technology Support Specialist and Desktop Architect. He came to the Heights with much expertise in technology support, including experience working in K-12 public education. He served in roles as a Supervisor of Tech Services, and Tech Support Specialist for the New York City Board of Education. He has a Bachelor's degree from State University of New York.



Taking Technology Integration a Step Ahead

Our second CHPS Technology Summer Institute was attended by 64 individual staff members, who learned important skills related to integrating technology into teaching and learning, while earning recertification points. Teachers and staff from all schools were represented. The Institute was held from July 30 to August 24, 2007.

Participants received technology instruction while having an opportunity to "play" with many instructional software applications and technology tools. A total of 174 three-hour classes were attended, and topics covered included: Computer Basics, PowerPoint, Personal Response System (PRS), Moodle, How to Search the Internet, Podcasting, Star_Portal, Marco Polo, Test for Higher Standards & e-Tool Kit, SmartBoard Use, Digital Photography and Editing Software, United Streaming & COW Use, Harcourt Math Center, and "Open Computer Time."

These many classes were taught by our ambitious Instructional Technology Integration Specialists Buddy Palatiere and Debbie Mayes. Mark Webster taught some courses in Podcasting, and Paul Riding some courses in Moodle. Participants who were some of our "best customers" and who attended multiple sessions received some gifts and incentives!

<http://www.colonialhts.net/technology.cfm>

New Laptops for Faculty at CHHS & CHMS!

On August 30 & 31, 2007 faculty at CHHS & CHMS received new laptops! Dell D630 model laptops were distributed, and teachers received laptop orientation training from Buddy Palatiere.



Technology a Step Ahead Award Given to John Brannan and Rick Ridpath

The new *Technology a Step Ahead* Award is given in recognition for extraordinary efforts to use technology effectively for teaching and learning. It doesn't necessarily mean using technology merely because it's trendy or new, but because it makes things better for our students! For the previous 2006—2007 school year, high school teacher John Brannan received the award for his countless hours using technology with his Honors Biology students. He's developed PowerPoint presentations and electronic assessments, and found innovative ways to use technology, such as moving his course to Moodle.



Also for the 2006-2007 school year, middle school teacher Rick Ridpath received the award for the creative ways that he's found to integrate technology into his curriculum. Mr. Ridpath was one of the original 15 middle school teachers who received laptops, and his pioneering spirit has led him to venture into creating and using multimedia rich content, and using technology with his students in creative ways.



Introduction to Podcasting for Teaching and Learning

During February of 2007, I attended the educational technology conference EdTech 2007 and was amazed at the number of sessions that focused on podcasting. This technology may or may not be "the next big thing" in technology integration, and I had to remind myself that ideally it ought to be the curriculum driving the technology, and not the other way around. However, there have been many success stories already with podcasting as a tool for teaching and learning. It's a fascinating technology that engages students, and it can be an effective tool for classroom instruction, electronic communication, and student learning.

Overview: What is Podcasting?

Podcasts are audio programs, and sometimes multimedia, that are distributed on a regular basis over the internet. They can be listened to on a computer or downloaded to an iPod or MP3 player. It is a common misconception that an iPod is required for listening to podcasts!

While podcasts are similar to the audio and video digital content streamed from a website, they're not the same thing. The digital content in a podcast is accompanied by a "newsfeed" that is hosted on an Internet server. The user can subscribe to the podcast with special software that can read this newsfeed, which is typically distributed through a technology called RSS (Real Simple Syndication). Podcasts are made up of episodes released regularly over time. The podcasting technology means the listener does not have to keep checking websites to see if anything new is available, because the software automatically notifies the listener when a new episode is published.

Podcasting for Teaching and Learning

Here is a summary of possible podcasting applications for K-12 education:

- A teacher creates a podcast with daily homework assignments and other classroom information.
- Parents download the podcasts to stay up-to-date on their children's school activities.
- Kids create a podcast to apply what they've learned, and to share it with other classrooms.
- A teacher records his or her lesson for students to download as a podcast. This benefits students who are absent as well as by those who need extra reinforcement or want to review.
- Technology support staff podcasts quick tech support tips for teachers to access as they need them.

What is Required to Listen to a Podcast?

K12Handhelds.com discusses the different devices that can be utilized for listening to podcasts, including Palm handheld computers, MP3 players, iPods, and desktop and laptop computers. ***It's important to note that you only need your desktop or laptop computer; no handheld or mobile device is required!***

It is a common misconception that an iPod is required for podcasting!

Software for Playing Media

Different media players can be used for listening to podcasts. Windows Media Player, Real Player, and iTunes (which includes Apple QuickTime) are all great media players that can be used for podcasts. However, please note that Apple's iTunes and iPod have become very popular, and Apple uses a different format that is not compatible with the Windows Media Player. While many podcasts are available online in the broadly compatible MP3 format, files in Apple's AAC format may require iTunes. You may want to consider downloading and installing iTunes (which is free) so that you'll be able to play the some of the podcasts in Apple's format that are available online.

Software for Subscribing to Podcasts



If you have *iTunes*, you can use this, and ***you won't need any other software for subscribing to podcasts.*** If you don't have iTunes and use another media player on your computer, you'll need a software program for subscribing to podcasts. These programs allow you to subscribe to RSS (Real Simple Syndication) feeds and enjoy podcasts as they're created, and as your subscription software notifies you of the new episodes. There are many programs available that let you subscribe to podcasts. Here's a list of some of the options:

http://www.podcastingnews.com/topics/Podcast_Software.html

Besides iTunes, the only program Webster can recommend from firsthand experience is ***Juice***.

<http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net/>

Juice is a popular program, and was created by the same developers who created the free audio application ***Audacity***.

To Download iTunes (free)



Go to -

<http://www.apple.com/itunes/download/>

It is free for both the Windows and Mac OS.

Plases note that like Windows Media Player or Real Player, iTunes is a media player that may become associated on your computer with various media file formats (actually iTunes includes the Apple QuickTime Player).

Online Podcasting Course in Moodle: Podcasting Made Easy for Teaching and Learning



To learn more about podcasting, and to explore how to use the free audio recording software called *Audacity* to create your own classroom podcast, please check out Mark Webster's online podcasting course on our Moodle server. Just go to:

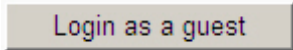
<http://moodle.colonialhts.net>

and then select *Technology* under "Course Categories, and then select the Moodle course *Podcasting Made Easy for Teaching and Learning*.

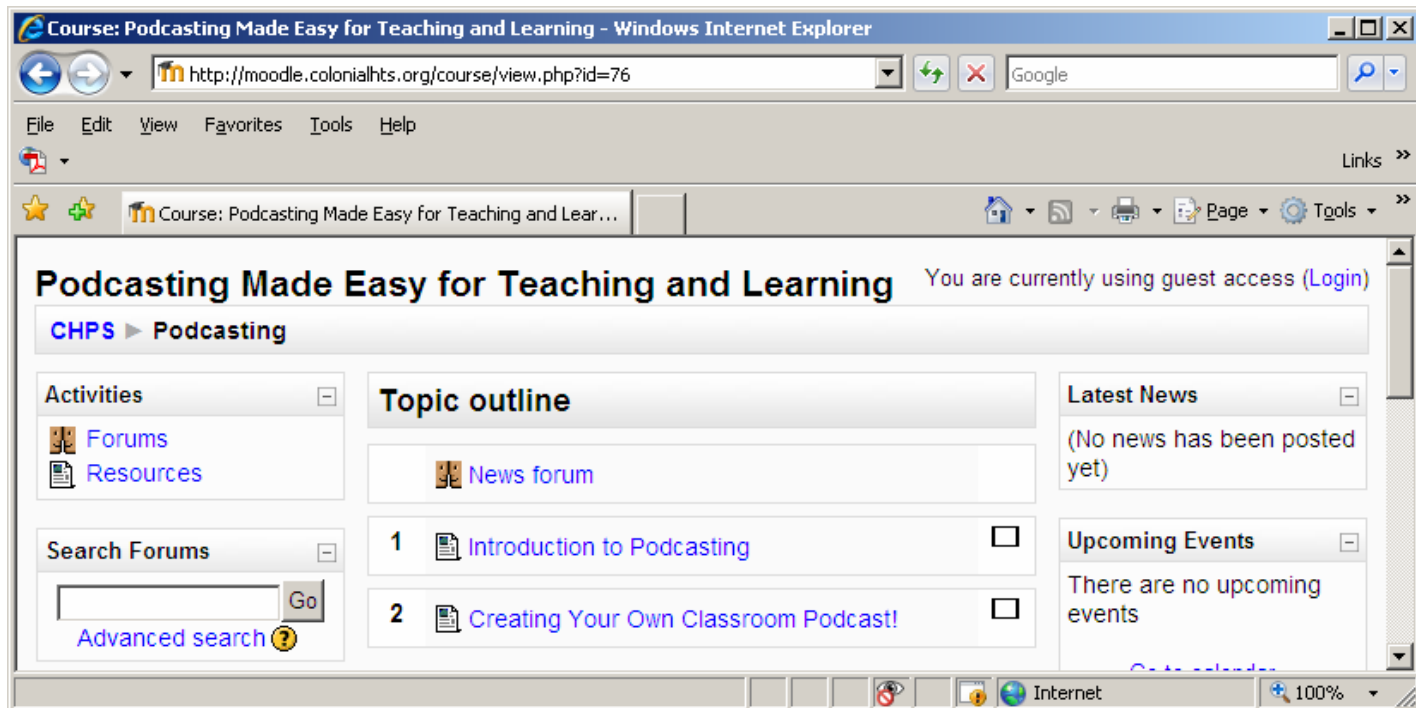
Here's the actual Moodle course address if you'd like to type it in your web browser:

<http://moodle.colonialhts.org/course/view.php?id=76>

Then just click on the button to login as a guest.



There are two modules in this online tutorial, including *Introduction to Podcasting*, and *Creating Your Own Classroom Podcast*.



Elementary School Technology News

New Tablets for Elementary School Principals

Principals at the elementary schools received new Gateway M285 tablets this school year.

New Ninja!

Welcome Diana Penn! North has a new Computer Support Specialist. This lady has a good sense of humor, and in the past she's done computer training work with Sun Trust, computer programming and help desk support at EDS, and computer support work with the Army.

New RIDE Software—Responding to Individual Differences in Education

Dr. Jo Read, Director of the Office of Support Services, has procured new RIDE software that provides teachers access to proven, research based strategies to help address the needs of students. A main focus of this software is that it allows teachers to meet the requirements of pre-referral and inclusion mandates.

We have site licenses for the three elementary schools and the middle school. The RIDE application links to video clips that demonstrate instructional techniques, and the multimedia content is installed on the school file servers. Please ask your school's Computer Support Specialist about this software if you're interested in having it installed on your computer.

Wireless Access and COWs at our Elementary Schools

The roaming herd keeps coming. . . Last school year several D-Link DWL-2100AP access points were deployed at each elementary school to provide wireless connectivity for our "COW" carts, which are "Computer on Wheels" mobile carts with a laptop, LCD projector, and speakers. These mobile laptop carts make integrating technology into teaching and learning very convenient for teachers, and allow teachers to present engaging and powerful lessons to students. So OK, it's fun to have a COW! :-)

Surprise Classroom Computer Upgrades?

It is rumored that Technology and Learning is exploring the possibility of upgrading some computers in elementary school classrooms during the fall of 2007. Stay tuned!

Elementary School Technology a Step Ahead Awards

The new *Technology a Step Ahead Award* is given in recognition for extraordinary efforts to use technology effectively for teaching and learning. It doesn't necessarily mean using technology merely because it's trendy or new, but because it makes things better for our students! This September of 2007, teachers at each of the three elementary schools will receive this award for the innovative ways that they used technology during the previous 2006—2007 school year. Stay tuned!