Technotes

Infinite Campus Update: Open Gradebooks in Grades 7-12 via the Campus Portal

This fall, at the secondary level, students and their parents have extended access within the portal of Infinite Campus to include student grades with ongoing progress noted. This expanded use of electronic gradebooks will provide parents and students with timely information regarding their academic progress. One of the many benefits of this system is the ability to remain current and organized, and to keep a running record of achievement. An ongoing average will reflect assignments graded up to that point in time, with the final average of the quarter posting to the report card. Students and parents will be able to view the grading components and check for missing or incomplete assignments. This Gradebook access replaces the need for traditional Progress Reports. In addition, a new report card for grades 3-5 will be utilized this year. This report card will also be available on the Portal so that parents can reference it more regularly and aid in the District's work to realize a reduction in printing and paper usage.

Technology Integration Program 2nd Cohort

The Technology Pilot Program that started last June has expanded to include another 10 participants with the addition of a second cohort which started in November. As in Cohort 1, the teachers participating in the new cohort program also received a laptop, projector and a document camera for their exclusive classroom use. Teachers have been receiving professional development in the classroom, as well as online using MOODLE in the 30 credit program. Participating teachers will use Moodle for both professional development and for classroom use, use Infinite Campus Grade book regularly and contribute and share technology resources with other teachers in the program. In year 2, teachers will train or teach their new knowledge to other staff members during such times as faculty meetings, department/grade level meetings or Superintendent Conference Days and make a commitment to utilizing the technology and integrating it into the curriculum on a daily basis.

Three Village Superintendent's Conference Day Technology Training for Teachers

On Nov 12, 2010, teachers in reading, social studies, science, music and special education attended workshops aimed at incorporating technology into the curriculum. Reading teachers K-6 attended a workshop on **Castle Learning** presented by Gerry Cohen of the Castle Learning Corporation. Castle Learning provides technology supporting critical reading and listening skills. JHS reading teachers explored the applications of the **READ 180** program. *READ 180* utilizes a teaching system that provides an instructional path and resources for assessing students and differentiating instruction. WMHS social studies teachers learned about **Moodle,** the learning management system, that lets teachers provide documents, graded assignments, quizzes, discussion forums, etc to students with an easy to learn and use interface. Social studies teachers at the JHS got a preview of the **Smartboard,** Castle Learning, and the **Discovery Education** video collection. WMHS Science teachers investigated the new **Easi Teach Software** for the **Polyvision Eno Board** systems in their new classrooms while the JHS science teachers were treated to a demonstration of the **Interwrite Mobi System** and e-**clickers**. The Mobi System supports student-centered, collaborative learning where both teacher and students can concurrently interact with and contribute to the same digital content--ideal for team activities, learning simulations and student exploration. Music K-6 teachers explored the use of Smartboard and the secondary music teachers were instructed on how to use the presentation systems in the newly constructed music classrooms.

Instructional Technology Staff: Kerrin Welch-Pollera, Jim Fargione

Castle Learning
Now for Grades 3-12 !

Formerly, a regents review product, **Castle Learning** is now a web-based student NYS assessment review product for students in grades 3-12 providing practice with field-tested questions, instant feedback and progress reports to pinpoint a student's strengths and weaknesses. Castle Learning is easily accessible from school, library, or home wherever an Internet-connected computer is available. Castle Learning Online gives students control over how they learn. They can create their own assignments and evaluate the results, select a unit and sub-unit of study in subjects from grades 3-12, answer questions, receive hints for incorrect choices and defined vocabulary, and work at their own pace with an opportunity to retry the question. Instant feedback includes a full sentence reason for correct choices. Assessment reports evaluate strengths and weaknesses and even supply definition/vocabulary study sheets to hone their knowledge on terms giving them trouble.

The Special Education Dept is working with Instructional Technology to provide students with special needs the assistive technology necessary to remain competitive with their general education peers. Case managers are now becoming informed AT providers and incorporating standard instructional technology tools used by the mainstream population into their instruction.

PPS staff members have played a vital role in integrating new assistive technology in their classrooms. Some have acquired grants to pilot tools, including alternative augmentative communication devices such as the iPad and iTouch. Keeping in mind that technology is a dynamic process with inherent challenges, issues are embraced with the philosophy that views these challenges as opportunities for growth.

Other recent special education initiatives include:

- registering students for Bookshare, a free online digital library for print disabled readers;
- using mainstream instructional technology tools for assistive technology purposes (e.g. Inspiration, Kidspiration, Type-to-Learn, Discovery Education);
- using MS Word assistive technology features (e.g. autosummarize, thesaurus, text-to-speech, graphic organizers) to improve student writing;
- piloting MyStudyBar, a free, open-source application for literacy needs such as graphic organizing, screen masking, magnification, word prediction, talking dictionary, text-to-speech, and speech-to-text.
- Use of MOODLE by resource room teachers to assist with access to course materials and assignments in their mainstream classes.

On the Web
Seven Search Engines for Students

Sweet Search is a search engine that searches only the sites that have been reviewed and approved by a team of librarians, teachers, and research experts. In all there are 35,000 websites that have been reviewed and approved by Sweet Search.

KidRex is a new kid-safe search engine powered by Google custom search. KidRex uses a combination of Google's safe search mode and their own database of filtered keywords, phrases, and websites. In the event that a questionable website does get past the filters, KidRex has a site removal request form.

Ref Seek is a search engine designed for academic use. Ref Seek seems to eliminate the advertising and paid links found on commercial search engines. Ref Seek's intention is to serve only search results that are academic in nature.

Famhoo is another option for kid friendly searches. Famhoo simply provides a stricter family filter than the filters available on mainstream search engines.

Ask Kids is the kid friendly, kid safe version of the popular search engine Ask.com which provides students with suggested topics and links to resources for those topics. A great aspect of the search results that Ask Kids provides is the option to refine searches based on a student's age.

Wolfram Alpha is a computational search engine If students have any questions involving numbers, Wolfram Alpha is the place to go.

Google Scholar is a search engine designed to search scholarly journals, Supreme Court records, and patent records. In some cases the results will link to abstracts of books and articles that you will then have to obtain from a library or book retailer. In other cases results will link to fully viewable documents.