Technology

"It is important to remember that educational software, like textbooks, is only one tool in the learning process. Neither can be a substitute for well-trained teachers, leadership, and parental involvement."

- Keith Krueger

Teacher Feature

You probably remember when you had to study William Shakespeare and his works. The confusion because of the "old" language, the wordiness of the speeches, and the length of some plays confuse even the best of students. Let's take a look at how one of our High School teachers brought The Bard to technology.

Bringing the 16th Century to the 21st

Today's answer to Juliet's famous question of, "O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo?" might just be "Facebook message me and we'll talk about it". Ok, so maybe not but you get the idea. Shakespeare has gone social in Coach Kevin Clark's class this year with the help of Facebook and texting. The final project for Romeo and Juliet is a dual project Coach Clark "stole" (or Tech Lifted) from another teacher online. It includes a writing assignment and alternative assignment with technology options on both sides. Students use technology every day and by giving them the option of incorporating it into a project allows them to "delve into a portion and make it their own" says

Tybalt's Facebook Page

Coach. It's more than an essay, although that is a choice; it's Romeo and Juliet come to life through the computer or phones.

R, meet me @ my balcony. <3 J

The first part of the assignment is writing. One of the options is to rewrite the balcony scene as if you were there and would relay it to a friend via text. This "requires a bit more depth than just reading and or watching the play" explains Coach Clark. Because a student is re-wording this famous scene, they have to understand what is actually being said,

which is sometimes difficult with Shakespeare. They also need to grasp the feelings of both Juliet and Romeo; desperation at the situation and love for each other.

Juliet, you have a friend request from Romeo

On the alternative side of the assignment, students could choose numerous ways to show their creativity and understanding of Romeo and Juliet's story. One way this could be done was to make a Facebook page for one major character and one minor character. They must include pictures, status updates and friends. Facebook is a wonderful tool to see these characters as people, have them interact with their classmates and put themselves into their chosen characters's shoes. According to Coach Clark, most students did well with using Facebook, although, "it did require close monitoring and a bit of leniency". Having your students make a Facebook page in class requires classroom management skills and diligence by the teacher. However, allowing them to integrate this type of social media and technology into their classwork, opens up a student's mind that there are many ways to complete an assignment, Shakespeare can be cool and that homework isn't always "work". All in all, Coach saw an increase in motivation with his students, and they seemed to enjoy the project overall. I think it was a win-win for all involved.

Summer Training Opportunities

Summer is a great time to brush up on your technology skills, learn about the technology in your classroom or even find a new hobby. See what free classes there are with ePower and Region 7.

"The Educational Technology department (at Region 7) and the ePower Institute provide educators with the latest technology tools and technology training to make a positive impact on student performance and expand opportunities for all students. ePower provides technology training, teacher, Lynda.com training, LearnKey (online technology application training), and includes United Streaming (Discovery Education media content) and Moodle hosting." (ePower) Gladewater ISD employees can participate in this training for free. An email was sent out in late May with a catalog of available trainings during our summer break. Options include on-site and online courses for everything from SmartBoard training to Mac Basics to how to de-clutter your life.

You will need to find the class you're interested in and register through Region 7. To do this, you will need a Reg. 7 account, so make one if you haven't already.

Please also note the registration deadlines for the class. Some early opportunities have a deadline that is right around the corner. Some classes may also fill up, so if you see one you want sign up now.

Workshop information and registration contact is listed for each session if you have any issues with registering for a class or if you want more information on a specific training.

ePower. Retrieved from
http://www.esc7.net/default.aspx?name=ePowerSchool

ePower Region 7

Summer Trainings

Click here to download the catalog.

Year-In-Review

The Summer of 2012 was a busy time for our tech department. The technicians were going from campus to campus and touching each computer to change over servers. This, as you can imagine, was quite a large task. The changeover took weeks of long hours to make sure all was just right for the start of the school year.

The year started with new Xerox copiers all over the district. iPads were given to GMS teachers and a class set were installed there as well. We rolled out laptop carts at the High School for teachers to check out and use in class. Some teachers were also a 1-to-1 class and had the cart full time in their room.

SmartBoards were installed at the High School and Middle School too; we were down-right busy at the beginning of school.

Also early on in the school year, Broadway implemented the new digital CIA notebooks and after some pains, it's really taken off. Every 6 weeks they submit their notebook via our server. It's reduced paper and saved Ms. Byers' back from lugging around binders. Broadway teachers also are a part of our iTe@ch program in which they learn more about their macs and what wonderful programs they can use in the classroom. The open lab was outfitted with all new iMacs and so far we've seen an increase in the usage of the lab.

Throughout the year we've had new SmartBoards installed at Gay Avenue and at Broadway. We've done Promethean Board training at the Middle School and the High School too. iPads are being tested out in the hands of some of our youngest students at Gay Avenue as well.

Video conferences were a big hit this year on our K-5 campuses. Weldon joined in on some game show conferences and got them ready for the upcoming STAAR test. It was fun to watch the students discuss answers, work together and compromise during these conferences. We think they enjoyed it too.

Work orders were never ending. As of June 3rd, we've closed out 2000 work orders this school year! That's about 11 per working day. Whew, we're ready for summer!

End-Of-Year Tech Tips

Before you head to the beach this summer, we have a list of things to do with your technology items so they stay in working order ready for next school year. Following these simple things will save you some headaches in late August.

1. If you are going somewhere and leaving your laptop behind, be sure to charge it to 50% then shut down. By doing so, you can help save the battery life. If you either leave it at home or if you take it with you on vacation, remember to keep it in a secure location. If you do travel with it, use the provided laptop case or one similar.

2. Backup, backup, backup. We all keep a lot of documents on our computers. The way to keep those safe and secure is to do a good backup before you leave for the summer. You can find information on how to create a burn folder here.

3. When sitting on the beach, keep your cool lemonade and other drinks away from your laptop. Liquids wreak havoc on technology items but when you add sugar to the mix it's even worse! If you MUST have a drink nearby, use a lid and extra precautions to make sure you won't have a soggy sticky mess in your computer.

4. If you have an iPad, keep it safe and secure in your cover. iPads are not very happy when they are dropped and some cases on the campuses don't cover the corners well. We've noticed when they are dropped or fall, they seem to always hit an exposed corner and shatter that screen. If you're at the Middle School and would like us to make your iPad more secure in your case, let Melanie know by emailing patem@gladewaterisd.com and she can do a quick fix. But do it fast, she'll be hard to catch during the summer!

5. Protect your technology items during our severe weather. This goes for your personal items too. If there's a thunderstorm coming your way or lightening before the storm; unplug, unplug, unplug! Even with surge protectors it's best to unplug your computer as an extra precaution.

Looking Ahead

2012-13 was a great year that saw quite a few changes. We're looking ahead at the differences you'll see for the 2013-14 school year.

1. Bye bye Lynx, VSI and EDP! In March we started working on saying good bye to those programs and converting all our information to Tyler SIS. When changing over to an entirely new student information system, there is a lot of data to go through, as you can imagine. Administration and tech staff have been hard at work to make sure all the courses, students, contact information, history, and more are moved correctly to the new system. All of this "behind-the-scenes" work is important to make the transition as smooth as possible for all of us. No worries; you will have training on Tyler SIS and we'll try to make the change as seamless as possible. With this program you can input grades, attendance, referrals and more. You will be able to see your students picture and any health alerts that you need to be aware. Not only this but you can see notifications for your campus and district when you log in. It's a one-stop-shop! There's also a parent side with the "Parent Portal". The parents/guardians of our students will be able to log in and see the student's grades, attendance and any health visits or office visits too. The change is pretty big, and we understand that. However, we will be behind you 100% in learning the program and any troubleshooting you may need along the way.

2. Google! Yes, yes it's true. We're headed to Google. You should receive a newsletter about Gladewater Going Google soon. We're anticipating this transition from FirstClass to Google to happen in the Fall. The Tech Department is really looking forward to these changes and what it means for you in terms of storage, collaboration, and mobility. If you have any questions don't hesitate to ask one of us here at IT.

3. Our summer goal is to have data projectors mounted! Our technicians will mount the data projectors in your ceiling if there's a SmartBoard/Promethean board in your room. You've asked for it, so we will work hard to make it happen before you return.