technology

Mrs. Rowe's and Mrs. Smith's 2nd Graders taking part in a video conference at Broadway

"Curriculum tells you what to teach, but doesn't tell you HOW you have to, make the shift to the 21st century learning environment."

- Stacy Behmer

Teacher Feature - Tess Nichols

Tess Nichols, Kindergarten Teacher and STC at Gay Avenue, represented Gladewater ISD beautifully at the Region 7 Technology Conference in October. She was chosen to be a presenter at one of the sessions. Here's some more information about how she wowed the crowd!

Conference

I had the express pleasure of presenting at the TechMake-over Conference Region 7 sponsored on Tuesday, November 5. When the request for presenters came along, I thought finally I know something to present—Symbaloo!! I love Symbaloo. Its one of those tools that you just fall in love with immediately and know exactly how you can put it to use. Symbaloo is your own personal dashboard that helps you access all of your favorite links.

It also makes it very easy for students not only find websites, but go within the site to a certain part. For example,not just go to Funbrain, but to a particular game within Funbrain. It is very user friendly and very customizable for you. (Note, if you're interested in Tess's Symbaloo, you can see it here.)

Region 7 Tech Updates

Region 7 was very accommodating and had a good mix of sessions to attend (at the conference). They have also added many features to their website (find it here). One thing in particular, Take a Byte, is video training on different areas of technology.

Although I had to step out of my comfort zone, it was fun to be a part of this experience and no one threw tomatoes or should I say apples!!

Tess Nichols, Kinder Teacher and Presenter at the Region 7 TechMake-Over Conference.

iStation and Think Through Math

Two new tools that a few campuses are using are iStation and Think Through Math. These programs not only help the student learn by having fun lessons, they also have various reports to give a snapshot of the students strengths and weaknesses. They are also free to Texas schools through Texas SUCCESS. I invited myself to the Broadway Computer lab this week to see it in action.

iStation, the reading and language arts program, is done through a program installed on the computer. The student can then log in and complete lessons. The lessons are quite fun and more game-like. At times it was like the students weren't too aware that they were "working" because it was so fun.

Think Through Math is, of course, the web-based math program. This program has less of a gaming aspect. The student answers questions during the lesson to see how they are doing. Once passed they can move on to the test. There is a "teacher" at the bottom during the lessons for a more guided learning experience if a student misses a question a few times. The goals within the Think Through Math program are to gain points as the student progresses through the lesson. These points are banked and they can personalize their avatars or keep the points to redeem for a possible pizza party, at no cost to the school.

While both of these programs are different from each other, there are some similarities. Both are personalized for each student; the student takes assessments to see what they need more help on and the program bases the next lesson and test on where the student is. Having an individualized approach helps the student not get frustrated or bored. Another similarity is the report feature. Both programs allow not only the administrator but the teachers to run reports on the student's progress. You can see how helpful this would be in the classroom with instruction, tutorials and during the CIA process. If the student has internet access, both of these programs can also be used at home, with iStation there is a quick program download, while the Think Through Math can be done online.

Hello St. Joseph, Michigan, it's Gladewater

Some wonderful collaboration is going on in Vicky Bright's 3rd Grade classroom at Broadway Elementary this year. What started as a simple idea has now turned into a weekly get-together. Back in October, with the help of Whirlidurb Video Conferencing, Mrs. Bright's class met up with Ms. Stephanie Lear's class, also 3rd grade, in St. Joseph, Michigan. Using a collaborative google doc, they answered some questions the students wanted to know like what the other students did at recess, what books they liked and winter-time fun. Seeing the class answer in real-time made the students more excited and more inquisitive of the other school.

It was decided that they would have a weekly weather update via twitter as well as a question of the week, also done on twitter. Using the hashtags #mitx3 and #mitxqod, it's easy for the classes to find the questions and answers, keeping collaboration simple yet fun. The weekly weather update is the most thrilling this time of year. With the help of Google docs again, the teachers input the current temperature at an agreed upon time into a spreadsheet, complete with bar-chart. This gives a quick glance to compare the sites and reinforces math skills. Having an adopted class in another state brings a geography aspect into play, as well as hearing the language and vocabulary differences.

Twitter is just one way to bring together classrooms and educators. If you're interested in joining Mrs. Bright and Mrs. Lear's conversations, please follow them on twitter at @vickymbright5 and @stephanielear3. Also, search #edtech for some great tools, ideas and resources for your classroom.

December

3
GPS TLC Meeting

4
BES TLC Meeting

11
WIS TLC Meeting

17
GHS TLC Meeting

17
GMS TLC Meeting

20
End of 3rd 6 Weeks/Semester

January

6
Staff Development - Technology Lesson Forms due by 4pm.

20
MLK Jr. Day

28
GPS TLC Meeting

29
BES TLC Meeting

Next issue:

Teacher Feature
Our Teacher Feature column is back! Have a teacher in mind or do you want to be featured, email Melanie (patem) and let her know

Laptops at the MS
The Middle School is excited about their laptop carts. See what goodness is going on in the next issue!

TCEA Recap
We're headed to TCEA in February. Get the recap and scoop as to what we learned.

Google Update
You're logging in, learning about drive, so what's next? Look for an update on the timeline and what you can expect in the upcoming issue.

New Faces in the Tech Department

Technology Babies!

The technology department grew by 4 feet last month; four cute, squishy, wrinkly baby feet! Avon, his wife, April, and their oldest son, Austin, welcomed Noah and Natalie with open arms.

We don't like to talk about women's weights, but Natalie was a wee-bit bigger than her brother when they were born on November 7th. And from what we've heard, she's an eater so she'll be ready to take on her brothers when she gets older.

Their personalities are already showing as well. Noah needs loving and is already spoiled says the proud dad, meanwhile Natalie already has said dad wrapped around her finger, as it should be.

Big Brother Austin has settled right in with his new role too. He's helping grab things for his parents, but doesn't have much to do with the babies yet. That'll change when they get bigger and "more fun", I'm sure.

Welcome John!

We'd like to welcome John Tatom to the Tech Department Family. I asked him to tell us a little about himself for this newsletter, so without further ado, here's John!
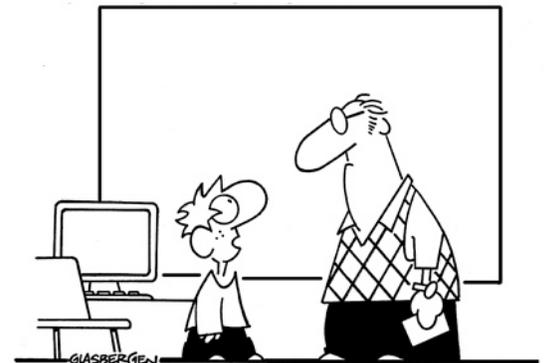
John Tatom is the system technician in the district. He serves as the Site Technology Coordinator for Broadway Elementary and Weldon Intermediate schools. His office is located in the Library at the GHS Campus.

John comes to us with over 25 years of technology experience. He retired from the U.S. Navy where he worked on various mainframe platforms, computer networks, and Satellite communications. After leaving the Navy he worked for Tyler ISD as a computer tech for about 18 months.

On personal level, John wears many hats, along with working for GISD he and his wife also volunteer for the Great Texas Balloon Race and for Longview's Alleyfest. John also is a licensed minister and preaches at many of the surrounding retirement homes. He and his wife have a passion for the elderly and they both work together to help our senior community.

So, when you see John in the hall, be sure to give him a big hello!

© Randy Glasbergen.   www.glasbergen.com

"I don't have my homework. My dog deleted it."

If you have any ideas for articles or anything you'd like to see in future Technology Department newsletters, please email Melanie at patem@gladewaterisd.com. She reads each submission and looks forward to your feedback and suggestions.