technology

Students in Mrs. Reyna's 5th Grade Science class working on the SmartBoard

"When faced with a steam-rolling technology, you either become part of the technology or part of the road!"

- Nigel Willetts

Changes - You've Seen 'Em

Technology changes often and GISD has been going through that too. Let's talk about some of those tech modifications you've seen already this year.

Tyler SIS

The biggest difference you've noticed has been our new student information system, called Tyler SIS. Learning a new system can be overwhelming but everyone we've encountered has met those challenges head-on. By now you know SIS because of attendance and grades but it does so much more than that. Parent Portal is starting to roll-out, thanks to the patient and persistent staff at Admin. This is a wonderful communication tool to get your parents involved in their student's education. They can see assignments, download the worksheets (if you've uploaded them) and even read if their student had an office or health office referral. Students at the middle and high school now have their ID badge pictures loaded into SIS; and hopefully, with some planning, the younger campuses will have pictures too. Discipline referrals are coming and we're looking forward to having that tool at your fingertips within Tyler SIS.

Data Projectors

Data projectors have been updated and mounted in the high school and middle school classrooms that have a SmartBoard. Long-range plans are to have them mounted in all SmartBoard classrooms district-wide. This protects the projectors and frees up more space in your classroom and will get rid of most of the shadows when presenting at the board.

It will be interesting to see what new technologies come around and we are excited to bring those to you too.

number of work orders closed since 8/19

Help Desk

406

Since teachers reported back to school on August 19th, the Technology Department has closed out 406 work orders; an average of 14 per day. Although that tally is impressive, you have to keep in mind the department has been shorthanded as well. We know you need the technology in your classroom and office working the best it possibly can, therefore we try and take care of your work order in a timely manner. Because the first of the school year is busy and we've had one less technician, we appreciate your patience as we work hard to get to your request. We are running close to what we did last year in regards to average work orders closed per day and are thrilled by our numbers.

Monsters are invading our classrooms!

Class Dojo has been implemented in the younger campuses based on the Discipline Committee's recommendation. If you haven't heard of this neat little web-based program here's what the website says: ClassDojo is a classroom tool that helps teachers improve behavior in their classrooms quickly and easily. It also captures and generates data on behavior that teachers can share with parents and administrators.

What this means is more time is spent doing instruction and less time dealing with behavior problems. It's not only about discipline either, you can reward students with points and come up with an incentive program with those reward points. All of this is done with colorful little monsters that the student/parent can update and personalize it, giving ownership to the student. The student can see what they are doing well at and what they need to improve on too. By having a secure online environment, the parents can also see where their student is excelling and use it at home as a rewards based system also.

We've heard from many teachers on how well Dojo is working in their classrooms. Mrs. Easley, Kindergarten teacher, says "The kids are really responding to the positive. My kids are begging to see their dojo everyday." And Mrs. Timmons, a 3rd grade teacher at Broadway, says "They (the students) do get a big kick out of it, and they sure snap to attention when they see it pop up on the screen, or hear the distinctive "ding" that tells them someone got a point." At the middle school, "We all have access to the kids", says Jamie Cook. "This makes the kids know that they are accountable to every teacher." She goes on to say, "As I hand out the rewards in class, the other students clap… It works!!!"

Overall it's been a huge success so far and it'll be interesting to see how high those positive point get by the end of the year!

BrainPOP and EdHelper - Two Tools at Weldon

We've seen new technology tools being used this year and we'll tell you about them in the next issue, but there's nothing wrong with tried and true instruments either. Weldon has a subscription to BrainPOP for the year and is already using it. BrainPOP is a website that uses animated videos, quizzes and worksheets that grab the attention of the student. The website is easy to use; seven curriculum areas are broken down, within each area you can choose the topic that go with your lesson plan. Students can watch at school, at home, or even from a mobile device. It even works with your SmartBoard or Promethean Board, giving you many different ways to integrate it into your daily classroom routine. Not only that but there are content specific games the students can play to reinforce learning and have fun! BrainPOP has numerous interfaces; BrainPOP is 3rd Grade and up, BrainPOP Jr. is K-3, then there's also BrainPOP Espanol and BrainPOP ESL.

edHelper is a subscription based worksheet generator. Where this plays into technology is you can use these worksheets on your interactive white board and have students come to the board and complete the sheet. This is a good way to get technology into their hands but give them group practice during the week. This K-12 website covers everything from holidays to regular subject matter and can be a huge asset with your SmartBoard or Promethean Board.

Calendar

A quick view of upcoming important dates

October

1
GHS TLC Meeting

7
Technology Lesson Forms due by 4pm.

22
GPS TLC Meeting

23
BES TLC Meeting

29
GMS TLC Meeting

30
WIS TLC Meeting

November

First Week
The stork is coming! Bateman Twins are due!

5
GHS TLC Meeting

8
End of the 2nd Six weeks!

11
Technology Lesson Forms due by 4pm.

28
Andrew's Birthday!

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

More Tips & Tricks
We know you use them, so we've got more for you!

Revisit Dojo
Want to re-visit how Dojo is being used on the Middle School campus? We'll take you with us as we talk to the students.

Tech Tools In Use
Broadway is using two new programs in their computer lab. Read about them in the next issue.

Children and Technology

By: Melanie Pate

I normally don't put little personal stories in the newsletter but something struck me and I thought I'd share. A little background on me: I have two kids; one a GMS Cub, the other is a feisty 4 year old named Jaylon. We have some technology items at home and let Jaylon play on the tablet often. We've got parental controls and the Kindle FreeTime app so he can only play age appropriate games. However, we do let him play some other games, carefully monitored of course.
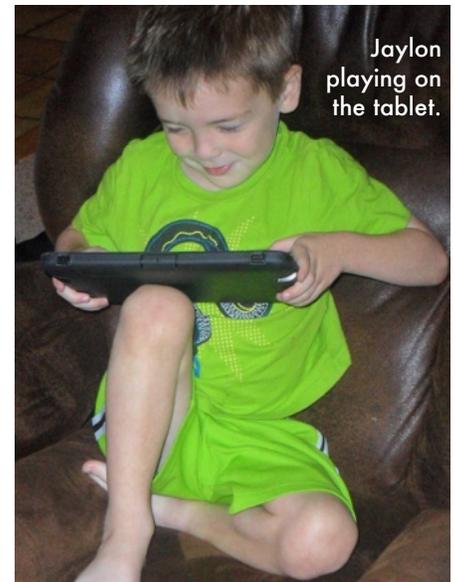
So you're probably wondering why I'm telling you about my son's tablet habits...hang with me, I have a point.

Way back in the day, I learned how to type on a typewriter, in a room with 20 other students. We had books to teach us "asdf" and "jkl;". We had to, gasp, put paper into the machine when we were through with our first sheet. And during our class period, we heard the hum of the typewriters between our timed typing tests. I was an 8th Grader. Now, I see our 4 year old holding technology in his hands AND he knows how to use it! He searches for games and asks me to "downwoad it Mommer".

Your Students and Technology

Students in your classroom are growing up in the technology age. We, as adults, may be apprehensive about new gadgets but the students you interact with probably know more about them than you think. They believe computer time is a fun experience, not realizing that they are actually learning something. Embrace that technology and show your enthusiasm with it too. Use technology in your classroom in new ways, don't be afraid to Google ideas or ask your fellow teachers. Jump at the chance to go to conferences; not just for a few days out of school but for the wealth of knowledge and resources that you will encounter. We know what works for one class won't work with the next, but that's where you can make technology fresh and new everyday.

There it is...my point. Realize that your students need technology, crave it and know how to use it, even at age 4 and younger. I'll leave you with a quote from Jaron Lanier - "We already know that kids learned computer technology more easily than adults, it is as if children were waiting all these centuries for someone to invent their native language."

Jaylon playing on the tablet.

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.