



Instructional Technology Newsletter

Developing 21st Century Skills One Byte at a Time

Writing for an Audience - The New Learning Paradigm

Writing in the 21st century has gone digital. We are keyboarding instead of applying penmanship. We post to message boards, blogs, emails, Twitter accounts, corporate intranets, Facebook and various other web-based sites and services. Writing has also become threedimensional. You don't need the latest pair of 3D glasses to experience three dimensional writing. Just open up any webpage and you will find text that contains hyperlinks to additional content, embedded videos, embedded documents and audio streams.

Students, teachers, and our 21st century workforce must possess the skills to navigate, consume, analyze, organize and apply information that is written in this format. In order to be successful in the 21st century we also need to learn how to write three dimensionally. For our students, this requires opportunities to write for an audience by utilizing a web-based publishing platform.

The recent edition of Educational Leadership, published by ASCD, focused on the topic "Teaching Screenagers". One particular [article written by Will Richardson](#) discussed the importance of student publishing their work online. The article quoted a recent study by the [Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project](#). This study showed that 75% of teens regularly use social-networking sites and the vast majority publish updates, photos, videos, and more ([Lenhart 2010](#)). Analysis of this activity identified that these posting are primarily "friendship-based" ([MacArthur Foundation, 2008](#)).

While it is an important skill for students to learn to navigate and find success in the "social web" it is equally important that they are provided with opportunities to apply the foundations of "what good writers do" to web-based publishing. Writing is a process. It is also a significant contributor to student learning and achievement.

Reflection is an example of a writing process that can be applied to any subject area. In the past students maintained reflective journals on paper. These journals were written for one audience, the teacher. While there is value in the process of reflection and writing, our students are missing out on the opportunity to share their thoughts with an audience, collaborate with individuals who share similar interests, and learn from others who read and respond to their thoughts, opinions and summaries.

Journaling in the 21st century has shifted from the notebook to blog postings. Students who are provided with the opportunity to publish their thoughts, ideas, and opinions in a blog are writing for a global audience. This forum differs from writing in the "social web" They are now writing for an audience that they do not know.

As teachers we must not only provide our students with opportunities to publish, we should also model it. Each year, a growing number of educators are maintaining their own blogs. Teachers share their thoughts, instructional strategies, successes in the classroom, student work examples and new resources.

Jefferson Township
Public Schools



February 2011

Points of Interest

- 🕒 **Student Publishing— a new learning experience.**
- 🕒 **Collaborative note taking**
- 🕒 **Posting documents on your website in the correct file formats.**

Inside this issue:

Student Publishing	1
Google Docs Notes	2
Posting docs online	2
What's cool online	3

The Best Way to Save Files to Your Teacher Website

It has recently been brought to the attention of the district that a number of parents and students are not able to open up the documents that teachers are posting on their blogs, webpages, etc..

In many cases the document may be created using a version of Microsoft Office that is newer than the version that a student has at home. We have also identified instances where Microsoft Publisher files have been posted online. Publisher is a program that is not part of the standard MS Office package. Many families do not have this software at home.

In response to this information, the technology department has created a few resources to assist our faculty in providing documents online that all students and parents may access and read.

The first resource we created is a tutorial page that provides step by step instructions for saving all documents made with Office 2007 or Office 2010 in a format that can be

opened by earlier versions of office. We provide instructions for making this the default save format for your version of Office, or you can save to that format on a case-by-case basis. [That tutorial may be found by clicking here.](#)

The second resource we provided is a tutorial page that provides steps to convert any document to PDF format. PDF format is a universal file format that can be opened on any computer with Adobe Reader installed. Adobe Reader is free to download and install.

Microsoft office 2007 & 2010 as well as Publisher 2010 have an option to save a document as a PDF by selecting it in the "save as file type" drop down under the save menu. All other types of documents need to be converted to PDF using a free 3rd party software. We have selected CutePDF. Our tutorial page provides a link to download and install CutePDF. We have also included instructions for saving a file in PDF format in Of-

fice 2007 and 2010. [This tutorial page may be accessed by clicking here.](#)

When posting a document on our Wordpress blog server there are some constraints that you must be aware of. The file that is being posted must not contain any types of symbols in the file name. The easiest way to save a file to be published on a blog is to eliminate any symbols or spaces in the file name. This will ensure that the file will open when a student or parent click on it on your blog.

Please also remember to observe the copyright rules for the reproduction and posting of materials. Copies of textbooks and workbooks may not be scanned and re-published online. Images and Videos must also be free of copyright protection. You can read more about the copyright rules [on my wiki](#) on the copyright and information literacy pages.

Using Google Docs for Shared Note Taking

Google docs is a web-based, free, compatible version of MS Word, MS Excel and MS PowerPoint. All of our students and faculty have access to our [private Google Apps Domain](#) which includes Docs.

Google docs are accessible online. Each document created may also be published as a webpage. This provides a link to the document that may be posted on the web for the world to view, but not edit. Additionally, documents may be shared with other students or teachers

within our domain. When shared, a document may be edited by the individuals that it is shared with.

All of our classrooms have student machines available. Students may access Google Documents from these machines by logging into their accounts.

Have you considered assigning one or more students to the job of Google Doc note taker? The assigned students may collaborate on one Google Doc. They will compile notes, comments and any other information that is shared in the les-

son. At the end of the period this document may be published to the web or shared with the other members of the class.

Research has proven that collective knowledge exceeds individual knowledge. By allowing a few students to document important information from a class we are providing all of the students in the room with a valuable study tool, a variety of perspectives, and additional opportunities to learn from others.

Writing For An Audience Continued

Many teachers allow students the opportunity to guest post on their blog. A student may write about a topic they are covering in class. Teachers may invite subject area experts to comment on student blog postings or to guest write a posting that students may comment on.

Our district offers a number of platforms for students to publish online. [Our district Moodle server](#) offers a variety of online discussion forums as well as more structured Journals. Our WordPress blog server allows for the creation of an unlimited number of blogs that are fully customizable. Teachers can create a class blog with student writers. All postings and comments may be moderated by the teacher.

[Our Google Apps for Education accounts](#) provide student access to Blogger as well as Google Sites. These tools

may be utilized to create a publish individual or student blogs.

[My most recent blog posting](#) talks about [Kid Blog](#). This is a blog platform for students grade 1-12. It allows teachers to set-up and manage class blogs with a few clicks. Each student has his or her own blog. The blogs may be viewed by the world, only members of the class, or only the teacher. The teacher can view each blog from one screen. My new [Digital Writing Wiki](#) contains a number of resources

that support this initiative.

When students maintain their own blog they open themselves up to new opportunities to learn from others.

Students who are provided with the opportunity to publish their thoughts, ideas, and opinions in a blog are writing for a global audience. This forum differs from writing in the "social web" They are now writing for an audience that they do not know.

They create a digital presence for themselves. This presence is the first step in developing their online presence. As Will Richardson states " They are now Googleable".

The future for the job seeker and employer is going to be less concerned about the resume that is printed as a word document. It will be about the interactive online portfolio of work, writings and just "how Googleable" you are. ([Richardson, 2011](#))

As educators, we have the responsibility to provide opportunities for our students to create their online presence. We also share in the responsibility of educating students to be safe online and develop information literacy skills. We must instill in our students the fact that what they share online is permanent and may also represent the first impression of a college, employer, or new acquaintance that Google's their name.

What is cool on the web?

Digital Writing Wiki

<http://digitalwriting.wikispaces.com>

This is my newest publication. This wiki is devoted to providing resources that support the writing process in the classroom using digital tools.

Build a RAFT based Writing Prompt for Social Studies

http://www.writingfix.com/WAC/Writing_Across_Curriculum_RAFTS_Soc_Studies.htm

This website provides an interactive tool that teachers or students may utilize to develop and RAFT based writing prompts.

Kids Blog

<http://www.kidblog.org>

This free site allows teachers to create fully moderated blogs for each of their students. The interface is easy to use and setup.