



Has It Really Been Twenty Years?

I gave my first educational technology professional development workshop in 1988, when I taught the other English teachers in my department how to use a free word processor to create their mid-term and final exams.

We didn't have database software or test bank creators in those days, just FrEDWriter. In searching for the exact name of the program, I found the documentation online:

<http://www.umich.edu/~archive/apple2/8bit/docs/fredwriter.a.txt>. I laughed at the four things you needed to know to use the program, especially the first one that said, "KEYS on the keyboard make LETTERS on the screen. How simple can you get? The teachers I worked with embraced the program, not just for making their tests neater and cleaner, but also for lots of other productivity uses. And, I suspect that one area in which we can claim some success in terms of technology is in teacher productivity. From word processors to presentation programs to email, many teachers are finding ways to use technology to making their jobs easier.

Fast forward to 2008: we have new student standards from ISTE (<http://tinyurl.com/yud7yh>). While they include some "old" standards such as being sure students have technological proficiency, they are less concerned with technical skills and more concerned with what have been dubbed "21st century" skills like creativity and collaboration. While I don't have a quarrel with the new standards, I wonder how well these process oriented skills can be integrated with the classrooms where content--that stuff that's going to be tested in May--is king. A colleague of mine put it quite succinctly: the messages of educational technologists do not align well with the messages of standardized curriculum and testing.

So, what are we to do in order to support our teachers in these new uses of technology while helping their students also succeed on the tests? I'll be honest with you...I don't have an answer. Maybe the best way is the way that worked for me 20 years ago. Rather than asking teachers to reinvent themselves and their classrooms, find ways to better align the technology standards with the curriculum standards. For instance, under the Creativity and Innovation standard, students are to "create original works as a means of personal or group expression." Don't teachers already do this? Those original works may not be technological, but I know lots of teachers who have students make posters or shadowboxes or three dimensional models. Here's a place where, given the right amount of support and access, a teacher might see how technology could be added to the mix. That's just one example. I challenge all of us to find more ways to make that connection between the old and new.

Conference Calendar

The best place to look for educational technology conferences is at T.H.E. Journal (<http://www.thejournal.com/>). Their searchable calendar is a comprehensive guide to national and international conferences. In this space, we'll be featuring conferences of particular interest to Virginia educators.



Virginia Society for Technology in Education, February 24-27, 2007, Roanoke, Virginia.

Come see how technology rocks in Virginia! This state-wide conference is now in its 22nd year. With over 1,200 attendees and a full two-and-a-half days of presentations, hands-on workshops, and the always popular extravaganza, this conference is high energy. Co-sponsored by the Virginia Society for Technology in Education and the Virginia Department of Education. Learn more at the website:

<http://www.vste.org/conference.html/>

FETC, January 25- 28, 2008, Orlando, Florida

It's really a mini-NECC, and it's in Florida in the winter. What could be better? While the conference is a bit Florida-focused, it has a national reputation and caters to many different audiences from teachers to administrators to media specialists to technology directors. Registration is open now. Learn more at <http://www.fetc.org>.

National Educational Computing Conference, June 29-July2, 2008, San Antonio, Texas

This is the biggie! Thousands of people from all over the world, more presentations and events than you can imagine, and technology everywhere. Registration is open and there is a tentative schedule posted at the website. If you're planning on going, now is a good time to make your hotel reservations. Here's the website for more information: <http://center.uoregon.edu/ISTE/NECC2008/>

K-12 Online 2007, October 22-26, 2007. Online

The second annual conference is over. But, I'm leaving this one up because you can still attend! And, you can attend last year's conference, too. It's archived at William and Mary. Go on, check it out. You can attend a conference that is over from your own desk. Don't you just love the web? Learn more at

<http://k12onlineconference.org>.

Good Reads



We can't be good technology ambassadors if we aren't well-informed. Each month, I'll be highlighting interesting, relevant sources from research projects to government reports and ezines to bloggers.

Horizon Report

This annual report from the New Media Consortium (NMC) highlights six technologies that the writers believe will be of particular interest to education in the future. This time, the technologies include user-created content, social networking, mobile phones, virtual worlds, new scholarship and massively multiplayer educational gaming. While the focus is on higher education since most of the

NMC's members are institutions of higher education, the areas should be of interest to those in K-12 as well.

Here's the link: <http://www.nmc.org/publications/2007-horizon-report>

Just for Fun (and maybe some learning, too!)

Nobel Prize Games

If I could explain it to the average person, I wouldn't have been worth the Nobel Prize.

~Richard Feynman

Think all those Nobel Prize winners are just too smart for you? Well, they probably are, but you can feel a little better about yourself by playing the games at this website. Each one is based on Nobel Prize-awarded achievements. There's an international trade simulation, a game about the ear, and a quiz that tests your memory of *The Lord of the Flies*. You can even help the peace doves disarm the world of nuclear weapons. While you're at the site, be sure to check out all the other great information about the prize and past prize winners. Who knows? Maybe one of those antsy kids in your third period class will go on to win! Here's the link:

http://nobelprize.org/educational_games/.



Finding Gold at YouTube

I understand why many schools block YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>). It's content is definitely "iffy," and even if you could block out the bad stuff, bandwidth is often compromised when teachers and students access the video sharing site. But, more and more legitimate organizations are creating their own YouTube channels. Here are just three examples.



Nobelprize.org

The Nobel Prize Channel

After playing a few of the Nobel Prize games mentioned above, I discovered that the Nobel Prize committee also has its own YouTube channel, which features interviews with winners along with videos of the presentations themselves. Here's the link to the channel: <http://www.youtube.com/thenobelprize>. I would recommend starting with the interview with Bishop Desmond Tutu on leadership, which can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrCeVwwu0Xc>.

The Royal Channel

A little news blurb from the BBC showed up in my aggregator right before Christmas. Seems the British Royal family has started its own YouTube channel. Its main feature is Queen Elizabeth's annual Christmas message, beginning with her first one, delivered 50 years ago. This year's message is also available. There are also videos about royal life, including one from 1917 that features Queen Alexandra, the wife of Edward VII, touring the rose sellers. Here's the link: <http://www.youtube.com/TheRoyalChannel/>



Ignite! Learning
Transforming Classroom Curriculum

Ignite! Learning

This company's main business is producing curriculum materials for the middle school classroom. Their YouTube channel, which includes some 50 videos, gives a sample of some of their materials. The videos delve into a range of topics in different content areas. Some of the videos, like the one about habeas corpus, address current events. They are short and upbeat; I think they provide examples of the types of videos students could even make. Here's the link: <http://www.youtube.com/ignitelearning>.

Educational Technology Leaders Honored

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) recently honored eight outstanding educators for their advocacy and use of educational technology in the commonwealth's public schools. The awards were presented during the department's Educational Technology Leadership Conference, Dec. 5-7.

The Educational Technology Leadership Award, presented annually, acknowledges outstanding school division leadership in education technology planning and implementation. Division superintendents in each of the department's eight study regions select individuals for the award. Recipients are chosen because of their success in helping school divisions improve teaching and learning through the use of instructional media and technology. The 2007 winners are:

- Christopher Baugh, technology integrator for Suffolk City Public Schools, Region 2
- Dr. Lynda Gillespie, director of instructional technology for Chesterfield County Public Schools, Region 1
- Victor M. Gosnell, director of technology for Bedford County Public Schools, Region 5
- Shirley Harper, director of technology for Page County Public Schools, Region 4
- Dr. Oliver A. McBride, retired superintendent for Carroll County Public Schools, Region 7
- Sean P. Sharp, instructional technology teacher for Floyd County Public Schools, Region 6
- Freddie Terry, director of technology for Brunswick County Public Schools, Region 8
- Nancy Welch, instructional technology resource teacher for Mathews County Public Schools, Region 3.

Gosnell was also recognized with the 2007 State Educational Technology Leadership Award.

The 2007 Educational Technology Leadership Award was presented to Joyce Faye White, an educational technology specialist with VDOE, for her role in encouraging effective integration of technology into teaching and learning. The annual award goes to a Commonwealth of Virginia employee for supporting educational technology.

The Virginia Educational Technology Advisory Committee (VETAC), which advises the Virginia Board of Education on educational technology, also presented its 2007 VETAC Leadership Award to current chairman John Littlefield of Suffolk City Public Schools. The award is presented to individuals who have demonstrated strong leadership both statewide and in their participation as a member of VETAC.