

STONINGTON SCHOOL NEWS

APRIL 2007

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TECHNOLOGY LITERACY

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Educational Technology, which includes using computers, the Internet, and school networks to improve teaching and learning, is a Stonington Board of Education goal for the 2007-2008 school year. The US government, as well as the State of Connecticut, has mandated that all public school students be "technology literate" by the end of eighth grade. To meet that objective, Stonington Public Schools has recently updated the district technology plan and the K12 Information and Communications Technology Curriculum. These documents describe what a technologically literate student knows and is able to do. They include skills such as proper keyboarding techniques as well as capabilities such as publishing multimedia projects on the Web.

The pace of change in educational technology must match the ever-accelerating rate of change found in the technology available to digital consumers outside the field of education. Today people are adopting technologies such as cell phones and the Web much faster than the phone and TV were adopted in generations past. This presents teachers, administrators and staff in public schools with tremendous opportunities for teaching and

learning especially in the ability to access relevant information, but also presents educators with tremendous challenges including the costs for providing modern equipment and services and the training necessary for teachers and students.

As someone who is a parent of a public school student and as someone who discusses technology frequently with other parents, it is becoming clear that we as "digital immigrants" (people who did not grow up with digital technologies) are becoming more uncomfortable and jealous of the fact that our "digital natives" (our students who ARE growing up with digital technologies) are so much more "tech savvy" than we are. Parents are constantly looking for new ways to be involved in their children's lives; the time is right for parents to become involved in children's digital lives. Such involvement can provide parents with a better level of understanding and allow them to feel more secure in what their children are doing with technology; it can also help parents learn as well. The types of technology services that are available currently to both parents and students are amazing. Below are some examples:

Most of you have probably heard of MySpace. MySpace, as defined by Wikipedia, is a social networking website offering an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music and videos. MySpace has been in the news quite often over the past year due to security concerns regarding young children meeting older children and adults through MySpace and agreeing to meet these people in person. An alternative to MySpace is a new free service called Ning (<http://www.ning.com>). Ning, as defined by Wikipedia, is also a social networking site where you can create social websites and networks; however, Ning is different. Ning has features that let a user customize the websites and networks that they create, modify them for a particular topic or need and make them appropriate for a specific audience. Thus, Ning allows anyone to create their own private, and thus inherently more secure, version of MySpace to which they can invite only their friends.

Above, I mentioned Wikipedia twice. Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia with a twist. As opposed to typical encyclopedias (online or not) where the publishers hire

"experts" to write the encyclopedia entries, Wikipedia is written completely by users. The Wikipedia website describes itself as being "written collaboratively by volunteers; its articles can be edited by anyone with access to the web site. The name is a portmanteau of the words wiki (a type of collaborative website) and encyclopedia." Many of the students in Stonington Public Schools use Wikipedia as the initial source to better understand a new topic. Because Wikipedia is written and maintained by its users, it is often more up-to-date and extensive in its information, but it also has the potential to contain misinformation or information from a contributor's perspective.

Students are taught that, although Wikipedia is an excellent source of information, it (like any other source) should not stand alone, but should be verified by a second or even third source.

Many of our younger students have been introduced to Google Earth. Google Earth is a virtual globe program that can be freely downloaded and is available for both Windows and Mac OS X based computers. Google Earth allows students to interact with a model of our planet that contains satellite imagery superimposed on a 3D globe. Users can zoom in/out, travel from one place to the next, view 3D buildings in the major capitals of the world, and search for and view the seven wonders of the world. Google provides many layers of information that most people are used to seeing in the past in two dimensions such as topographic, population, environmental and transportation information. Think about the fun you and

your child can have as you use Google Earth to zoom in to your house and see your car parked out in front.

If you have a computer and Internet connection, the examples I cited above and a large percentage of the wonderful technology resources available to parents and students today are free of charge. This is the good news; the challenge is figuring out how to utilize all those potential resources and keep up with the rate of technology changes and improvements. Again, there's good news; your children can help. They can serve as a resource to this wonderful digital world and allow you and your child to learn together.

Stonington Public Schools is working hard to increase its use of technology. You can now stay up-to-date with what is happening in the schools by reading or subscribing to the SPS Blog at stonington.org. You can also receive school cancellation and other important information electronically by making sure your child's school has your up-to-date email address. We are all moving together toward becoming "digital natives".





ATTENTION

Effective for the 2007-2008 school year, the Stonington School News will not be distributed as in the past. An electronic version will be posted online at stonington.org and print copies will be available at each school.



**APRIL 2007
SPS DISTRICT CALENDAR**

SUN	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT
1	2 6:30 SHS SEF mtg. 7:00 PMS SBIT mtg.	3 Elementary Parent/Teacher Conferences – Early Dismissal 1:10 6:30 WBSS PTO mtg. WVSS YMCA Assembly – Thriftiness	4	5 WBSS 4 th Grade Trip to Hartford	6 NO SCHOOL Good Friday	7
April 2-5 WVSS Book Fair		April 2-4 WBSS Spring Book Fair				
8 EASTER	9 6:00 DMS SBIT mtg. 7:00 SHS K-12 mtg. 7:00 SHS Budget Hearing	10 PMS Spring Pictures 9:30 WVSS PTO mtg. 5:15 MMS SBIT mtg. 5-8 DMS PTO Book Fair 6:30 PMS Family Dodge Ball 7:00 SHS Kaleidoscope	11 PMS Spring Pictures 6-8 SHS – DMS Music Concert 6:45 MMS Special PZC mtg. WVSS Spirit Day- Wear Your Favorite PJ's Day	12 7:00 BOE mtg. Central Office	13 Middle School Report Cards go home	14
		4/9- 4/13 DMS Book Fair				
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
SPRING RECESS						
22	23 3:30-4:30 WBSS After School Enrichment 4:30 WVSS SBIT mtg. 7:00 SHS Town mtg. on the Budget	24 5:00 SHS SBIT mtg. 5:00 WBSS SBIT mtg.	25 5:30 WBSS Pasta Supper Fundraiser @ Calabrese Club 7:00 PMS PTO mtg.	26 3:30-4:30 WVSS After School Enrichment 6:30 MMS PTO mtg. 6:30-7:30 PMS – WBSS 4 th Grade Parent mtg. on Looping Classes	27 PMS 6 th Grade Dance	28 Pawcatuck River Duck Race 6:30 SHS Hall of Fame Banquet
29	30 3:30-4:30 WBSS After School Enrichment	1 Budget Referendum	2 5:30-8 MMS Family Night Book Fair	3	4	
		4/30- 5/04 MMS Book Fair				