# Learning Technologies Connecting A Community of Learners

## Happy New Year— Setting New Intentions

Happy 2013 everyone! One of the wonderful things about working in education is that every day brings a fresh start. And the start of the new year is a perfect time for this. Whether it is a new strategy you're attempting, or new curriculum to tackle or that crazy piece of technology that landed on your desk, you can anticipate excitement trying to work it through. In fact, many times it isn't that you run out of ideas to try; it's more likely that there are too many things to try. This is especially true when it comes to technology.

Starting out the plan with questions may help to frame both thinking and learning. Questions such as: *"What do I want to accomplish? What am I passionate about? What is important enough to expend my energy? How will I connect with others during the process and share my journey? "*

Maybe the hardest part is the first step. Check out the Staff Development Calendar. It continues to provide a source of learning sessions. Don't forget District Pro-D is just around the corner on February 22. Or if you have a specific idea, feel free to email our Learning Tech team.

**Professional Learning:**

**Jan 16, Feb 27** - Secondary Inquiry Assessment Team cont.

**Jan 17** - Fast ForWord Connect the Dots Series

**Jan 17, Feb 12** - Writers Workshop Learning Series cont.

**Jan 21, Feb 5, Feb 26** - Learning Technologies Inquiry Team

**Jan 22 -**Tech Snack-Symbaloo Bookmarking

**Jan 22** - Raz-Kids Intro Series 2

**Jan 24** - IPad Sync Process

**Jan 30, Feb 19** - Ipads—Now What Series

**Jan 31, Feb 7** -Jumpstart Blog Series 3

*Check SD Calendar as sessions are regularly updated.

## Why Write?

Like any skill, writing takes practice - a lot of practice. Feedback, feedback and immediate feedback specific to the criteria is needed to gain competency. Now that's quite a bit of writing you say. Perhaps one possibility may be the tool— Google Docs is an online collaborative writing tool that has the distinct ability to allow ongoing feedback to grow writing. Integrated with mini-lessons in revision (*eg. Zoom In, Show Don't Tell…*) provides opportunities for success. Our Writers Workshop series continues on this journey.

# Another use for — Google Forms

Assignments, whether they're writing, reading, research or projects, all have certain things in common. Assessment—time that may be stretched beyond the hours you have.

Google Forms can be used to gather, record comments, collate and analyze information. Consider a writing assignment in Google Docs, to be viewed with the performance standards. Rather than using 30 sheets of paper performance standards, why not try a single form. Your comments are automatically added to a spreadsheet, where you can filter by criteria. Use the information to group your students for targeted instruction, show a history of growth over time, or notes to share with parents. Whether it is formative assessment or documenting learning or a summative review, there is no end to the possibilities. For some working examples, see our blog under Writing Workshop or Literature Circles.

Goal [area to focus]
- ☐ MEANING - connection, ideas, detail
- ☐ STYLE - clarity, variety, impact of language
- ☐ FORM - organization, sequence, connecting words
- ☐ CONVENTIONS - sentence grammar, punctuation, spelling

**Strategy**
Voice

**What's Next**

# Newsletters with a Professional Look

From time to time, teachers have news to share with parents or students have assignments to show. Have you considered using **MS Publisher**? This handy software is part of the Microsoft suite of tools and is on your computer's base image. Use it to create stunning newsletters, brochures, presentations, flyers, ads, calendars and even greeting cards or postcards. [Our newsletter uses Publisher.]

Here's how: Go to Start > Programs > Microsoft Office > Publisher. You will be provided with a range of options for templates. Choose a template that fits your purpose. Simply add your content in the text boxes. Make sure you save, save, save your work!

*Hint:* Showing students the template sections and connecting them to research processes may help to frame the flow of their content. Happy creating.

# iDevice Management How To's

You were going to get a couple "just as a test" you thought and then it quickly became a landslide. Yes, it's all those iPads or iPod-Touches that are floating through your building. And each teacher has different ideas on how to use them so the 'apps list' grows at an exponential rate. How do you get the apps on all of the devices?

Syncing numbers of ipads can be a challenge and there is no end to information on this topic out on the web. Learning Tech has designed a simple process with cost-effective equipment to manage the process so this may be the answer you are seeking. Come to a demonstration session to see this in action. You can register on the Staff Development Calendar — iPad Sync Process—January 24th.

## Visual Organization of Words and Texts

Online tools that create word clouds provide a visual organization for understanding information. (Great for analyzing any reading!) Texts are typed or copy/pasted and the cloud generator analyzes the content for similarities and differences based on a math algorithm. The resulting visual cloud representation might be used to discuss theme, character traits, or vocabulary in essays. Or they can be a way to create visual effects in a PowerPoint presentation or newsletter.

Choice of tools range from simple to complex. Probably the most known is **Wordle** (wordle.net). Font, layout and colour offer opportunities for unique results. [For iPads, try **Word Collage**, which allows for saving to the camera roll and exporting to various apps.] **ABCya** (abcya.com/word_clouds.htm) has simple sliders and basic instructions for young students. **Tagxedo** (tagxedo.com/) adds features such as the ability to upload images and photos to create almost any shape making this my go-to site.

Other tools are a close cousin but focus on showing text in various ways. **Festisite** (http://www.festisite.com/text-layout/#2,0) allows you to take text and arrange them in shapes (heart, spiral, rebus, mazes). A definite 'must have' for that poetry unit

www.tagxedo.com

or special event.

Though not a word cloud, **Spell with flickr** (metaatem.net/words/) creates words as tiles [all images that are found on flickr]. This could generate visual memory for those instances you need an idea to stand out.

## Comics as Communication

Sometimes pictures are worth more than any lesson you can create.

**ComicLife**, a software on the base image is a full comic book creator. Many teachers have used it with students to create instructions, stories, buddy class books or research assignments by incorporating images, photos or drawings.

However, sometimes you just need a few graphic cells to convey a point. **Comic Strip Creator** (learnenglishkids.britishcouncil. org/en/make-your-own/comic-strip-maker) is an online tool with a host of characters, backgrounds, and talking bubble shapes ready for you to create your own storyline. Another one is **Make Belief Comix** (makebeliefscomix.com/Comix/) with similar choices. Both sites allow completed comic strips to be locally downloaded. Consider using these as pull together focal points or summaries, political satire, activities in differentiating between thinking bubbles and speaking bubbles, compare and contrast arguments or use as statements inserted in presentation slides, *Glogster* posters or blog posts.

# Learning Technologies

## Where's the Info?

- blogs.sd41.bc.ca/learningtech
- blogs.sd41.bc.ca/fastforword
- blogs.sd41.bc.ca/idevices
- digisandbox.wordpress.com

**Staff Development Calendar:**

http://blogs.sd41.bc.ca/staffdevelopmentcalendar

**Contact Learning Technologies Team:**

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## Worth Checking Out:

**Microsoft's Home User Program** offers discounted price of $11.00 plus taxes. This is available for both PC and Mac users. Access to the Program Step-by-Step Guide is available on the District Portal (http://portal.sd41.bc.ca). See Welcome page under VENDOR EMPLOYEE DISCOUNTS.

**Raz-Kids**— Have students who are struggling with reading and reading comprehension? Raz-Kids may be an option to support your class program. An interactive information session will be held on January 22 (3:30pm). Check out the details on the SD Calendar.

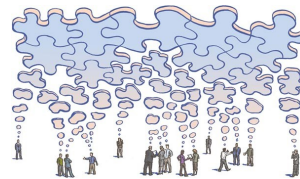# Communicating and Connecting To A 21stC Audience

There's a question we get asked a lot and it may be surprising. It's "how or where do you find all your mentor texts to engage in literary conversations?" Mentor texts are texts that are used to reveal a concept (reading or writing) and launch into discussion. Picture books (fiction, non-fiction) are great as they are usually short and have great illustrations. Or consider articles from news, essays, ebooks. [Hint: repeating the same story may allow deeper thinking.]

Here's a flavour to add to your list and what you might focus:

**Squeak, Rumble, Womp, Womp, Womp** - Wynston Marsalis [onomatopoeia, rhyme; visualize, show-don't-tell, mood];
**Randy Riley's Really Big Hit** -

Chris Van Dusen [inference, connections, personal narrative—belief in self]; **Pete the Cat and His 4 Groovy Buttons** - Eric Litwin [when things don't go as planned-connections, personal narrative]; **Stand Tall Molly Lou Melon** - Patty Lovell [strength, self-assurance; connection, inference, quotations as attention grabbers]; **Over and Under the Snow** - Kate Messner [asking questions, description, mood, alliteration]; **I Want My Hat Back** - Jon Klassen [emotion, connection, word choice]; **Millie Fierce** - Jane Manning [character transformation, word choice]. **Blackout**-Rocco [inference]

Looking for texts on 'kindness'?

Try: **Each Kindness** - Jacqueline Woodson; **Wonder** - R.J. Palacio.

How many times have you heard "I can't see the pictures" during a read aloud? Answer? E-projection. Images need to be in digital form (try a camera, scanner) and saved in a folder on computer. Connect the computer to a projector. The images can be shown on a screen by flipping through them. If you have an iPad/ iPod Touch connected to the projector, then use it as a 'document camera' by accessing the camera app and laying the book below the camera. It will display the image and even screen capture it so you can add notes and upload to the web.