



# Learning Technologies Connecting A Community of Learners

## How Do You Communicate?

More than any of our initiatives, none have reached the level of activity as our wordpress blogging platform. This pilot grew from humble beginnings with the simple goal of "tell your story". Our question - what would happen if we gave people an opportunity to open a window into classrooms or professional thinking. Many teachers started with posting homework or sharing events/activities from their class. Our administrators shared their thoughts on the larger school community. Teacher-librarians have used them to share love of books. But we do more than just share.

Blogs can create multi-way communications. So back into literacy we went - literature circles was screaming to be remade! Those who took the challenge re-

flected how using blogs increased deeper level responses from their students. It also allowed those quieter to enter into the conversation. This level of engagement was born out in other activities such as writing process from primary on up. Students who authored their own posts took more responsibility for making sure their thoughts were clear. After all, they were writing for the world, not just their teacher. Engaging in dialogue took on a whole new meaning.

Our blogs respond to needs of the participants. Teachers apply for student IDs (our id creation process focuses on student safety) allowing all a place to practice their skills of communication in a blended environment. Classes are encouraged to use the blogs to

practice digital citizenship. Adult role modeling is a strong component of their learning world.

What adds bling to our blogs? A number of new plugins have been added to your blog's dashboard. Communication presentation using polls, google doc embedder, translator, gallery or image sliders for pages and posts. If you are interested in connecting social media like Twitter or Pinterest, ask us about this plugin for your site.

The story hasn't ended. Over the next while, we will be looking for creative ways to use and extend the blogs. If you are interested in joining our growing number of bloggers, please let us know. We would love to have people experience the role of communication in a connected environment.



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### Professional Learning:

**Nov 7** - Blogging for Secondary Teachers

**Nov 18** - Fast ForWord Sites: Reading Assistant

**Nov 18** - Primary Teachers—Tech Collaboration (Gilmore Lab)

**Nov 18** - Secondary Inquiry Chat -Central

**Nov 19** - Advanced Blogging: Tips, Tricks & Tantalizing Tidbits

**Nov 21** - Fast ForWord Implementation Part 2

**Nov 28** - Tech Liaisons/Admins—Technology Updates

**Jan 11** - Edcamp Delta

**Jan 13** - Fast ForWord—Connect the Dots Series

**Jan 29** - Secondary Inquiry Chat - North

**Feb 21** - District Pro-D

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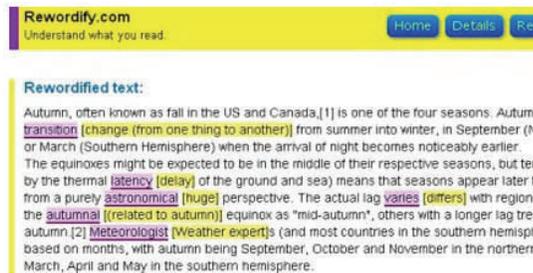


## Adding Vocabulary While Differentiating

Many of you have asked me if there is support for those who struggle with reading digital content especially when it is written above instructional reading levels. Every time a class attempts research out on the web, students are faced with information they cannot comfortably read. For the brain to have enough neuronal resources to devote to comprehension they must be able to read at their independent reading level (\*that's an extremely high accuracy rate). A handy site [no

downloading] that I've shared is **Rewordify** (<http://rewordify.com/>).

This online tool allows you to copy a text or website link into a box area. It locates and converts difficult words into more commonly understood words. For example, I copied/pasted the definition of "Autumn".



**Rewordify** highlights the difficult words in purple and inserts the common words in yellow.

Additional features in Settings, offers some ability to customize. Differentiation is attained without losing sight of the original text. You can even work on building vocabulary at the same time! Let me know what you

think and how you might use it in your classes.

## Photo Tales— Story Through Photos

A simple idea that resonated. Find an old photo and take another picture in the same spot. Then consider all the stories in-between that could be told. Imagine using this idea in lessons around "voice, sequence" or "monologue". So where does



one find those old images? There are lots of archives of old images especially of our city. Perhaps there are old pictures of the school or other buildings close by. Displaying these images can illicit discussions on history. Then take a picture of the

same area with the same angle. Develop a story that can be told through the eyes of the individual.

Imagine the integration especially if you share on the web: visual literacy, oral communication, photography, writing process, inference, analysis.

## It's Not the Apps— It's the Connections!

Quite a few schools have used part of their Pro-D on the effective use of iPads. You might have noticed the growing number of apps available at the App Store. With that in mind, it is important to keep the goals in mind. Questions such as what do I want my students to be able to



do? What apps will support higher order skills such as creation, or synthesis? What workflows do I need to think about to create a powerful environment, especially if I expect product completion? What restrictions do I need to keep in mind? Using an ipad is not the same as using a computer.

The SAMR Model may provide

Guidelines for dialogue (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition).





## Take Conversation to a New Level—Interactive Images

The world of interactivity is here to stay. Everything from gaming to design using Vine or Mozilla's Thimble.

One of the tools along this line of creation is the use of a flat image and embedding it with content information (video, images, text, music). This is the goal of **Thinglink** (thinglink.com) - bring images to life by layering information within it, much like the great master painters. Each layer offers new information and a chance to dig deeper. I was so intrigued that I took some images and produced an interactive image displaying content found on our Learning Technolo-

gies blog. The full blog post can be found here: <http://bit.ly/14tpDIK>

This is quite genius as every image now contains a story, waiting to be released off the page. The possibilities in a classroom is endless. Consider a Social Studies timeline, a historic rendition of an event, an



English Language Arts writing piece told in image frames, an inquiry with reflections through

the process, a comic showing social responsibility or digital citizenship. Or even a "howto" instruction piece to share on a blog post or digital portfolio. The teacher can even consider using it to provide examples on a rubric or performance standard. The rubric is anchored in meaning, making it truly useful in assessment.

Thinglink is an online tool making it easy to use with any device - something we love. Education accounts are free for teachers and students. [Consider a class account.]

If you are planning to use Thinglink, please let us know how you are using it. We would like to collect examples to share with everyone.

## Quickly Send Information to Class iPads

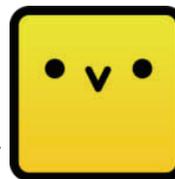
You've prepared your lesson well, details carefully thought out. While the iPad or iPod/Touches can be used as pickup-and-go device, having a workflow in mind gives a stronger experience. Imagine my "oops" after handing out 25 iPod/Touches, I forgot to set the website URL on the devices so my students could easily launch the site I wanted. You're thinking - easy - just write the crazy long URL on the board and have them type it in. I can hear it now: "It didn't work... I can't

see...Is that an O or a number?...". I can feel the tension rise.

No Problem! I had just downloaded **Chirp** to all devices. This app uses sound waves (reaching above the pitch of classroom buzz) to send out information such as links, images, or notes to all launched Chirp apps in the general vicinity.

(Recently, I saw it in London's *Topshop* to send out backstage Fashion experiences to

other chirpers. I digress.) So I launched my **Chirp** app, quickly typed in the URL and sent it out (my fingers were crossed). I was absolutely amazed when I heard ping, ping, ping across the room as each device connected and automatically launched the website. Two devices didn't work so I cranked up the volume on my iPod/Touch and sent it again. Success!



Have you used Chirp? We would love to hear what you did with it.

# Learning Technologies

## Where's the Info?

- [blogs.sd41.bc.ca/learningtech](http://blogs.sd41.bc.ca/learningtech)
- [blogs.sd41.bc.ca/fastforward](http://blogs.sd41.bc.ca/fastforward)
- [blogs.sd41.bc.ca/idevices](http://blogs.sd41.bc.ca/idevices)
- [digisandbox.wordpress.com](http://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 [Office 2013]** offers discounted price of \$11.00 plus taxes. This is available for both PC and Mac users on Win7. 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 fluency and/or comprehension? Raz-Kids may be an option to support your class program. Ask any of our Learning Tech team.



## Connecting To A Modern Audience

October was “*Connected Educator*” Month”. There was a flurry of opportunities both online as well as face-to-face encounters. All with the goal of connecting with colleagues. Now why would people from coast to coast decide this was worthy of the efforts needed to bring people together? They know that human beings with a need first and foremost for belonging. All other factors fall second. This is especially true when learning something new. We need to know that while we're trying out new concepts, that we are in a safe place to do so and we have ongoing support. As my colleagues in the Reggio world would say - “environment is the third teacher”.



Options varied as much as tastes: all of our district initiatives went into full swing giving lots of opportunity to grapple with ideas and experience activities. The web world also offered an array of choices like the Reform Symposium, Library 2.0, and K-12 Online Conference.

What became apparent was the increasing number of people using Twitter (a microblogging site) as a way to gather information as well as connect. If you think that being on Twitter is all about seeing “what people had for breakfast”, you're not alone. The key is in the hashtag (#). This defines the group you wish to connect. Groups like #edchat, #ipaded, #cpchat, #geniushour, #bcedchat offer lots of ideas both

in activities, as well as provide opportunities to explore deeper thinking in their coordinated chat times. In fact we have our own #sd41 and newly minted #bylearns stream. Come follow us as we explore ideas.

Twitter can be viewed like a babbling brook. Lots of things flow down the stream but your eye only catches a few things to more closely examine or ponder from afar. Either way it is your choice to make sense of it. And if you leave a question, chances are that it will get answered. Then another opportunity to connect begins...

I'll be at “The Global Education Conference” (Nov 18-22) [<http://www.globaleducationconference.com>] (free online) Will you?