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VITAL News

Virginia Initiative for Technology and Administrative Leadership



Happy Holidays!

Technology Makes a Great Gift

Just got back from the annual Technology Leadership Conference sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education. David Warlick, the keynote speaker, had a lively, informative session. See my report below.

Now on to the more important stuff...How's your Christmas shopping going? Have a list? Checked it twice? In this newsletter we present several

educational games, toys, and resources that would make perfect holiday gifts for your faculty (and maybe even for you). With Christmas just ten days away, you may have to wait until the new year to order, but I'll bet your teachers will forgive you when they see the neat stuff you've gotten them.

*Hope you have a great holiday!
See you in the new year, Karen*

Who Knows What the Future May Bring?

David Warlick has been part of the Internet's educational community for as long as I can remember. His website, [Landmarks for Schools](#), should be on every teacher's favorite list. For years, he has sponsored the Global Grocery List, a telecollaborative project that has students all over the world share the costs of typical products like bread and peanut butter. So, I was very excited to have a chance to hear Warlick at the recent Technology Leadership Conference. I was not disappointed.

Warlick's presentation was called "Learning & Literacy in the 21st Century," and he began with a simple observation: This is really the first time in the history of education that we don't know what the future is going to look like. That makes our job as educators very difficult. For instance, in the past, literacy has not changed all that much: students should be able to read and write,

right? According to Warlick, reading now is much more than simply decoding words. Instead, readers have to be able to perform four steps in order to be considered literate. They must find information, decode it, expose it and then organize it in a meaningful way. He talked about helping students learn how to employ information in their own learning.

Warlick recommends teaching students how to process digital information, particularly raw data that can be found easily on the web. His example of using an Excel spreadsheet to chart earthquake data was simple but compelling as it revealed a map of the "ring of fire."

Want to learn more? You can find Warlick's presentation and all his handouts and links at his website: [Learning & Literacy in the 21st Century](#).

Newsletter Contact: Karen Work Richardson ,
karen@ivyrun.com

Interactive Web Design Made Easy

Wouldn't it be great if your teachers could easily take their digital content like handouts and worksheets and create interactive web pages? Sound impossible? Not anymore. At the recent conference, I was introduced to a software program called SoftChalk.

Their Lesson Builder program looks just like a word processor but has several built-in tools that make it easy to add pop-up windows and in-line comprehension quizzes. Having just finished a major online project that included lots of complicated scripting, I was excited (and a little chagrined) to see how easy they had made it for teachers who know nothing about html coding, to create exciting, interactive webpages.

The company offers a 30-day demo that can be downloaded from the website. Visit SoftChalk.com to learn more.

Our Gift to You...

As part of our VITAL workshops, we work with administrators on how to use technology resources to align curriculum. Many of you have asked if this same content can be offered to teachers. We are pleased to announce that this content is available online, packaged in an interactive webquest called [Using Technology to Align Curriculum](#). As they complete the webquest, users go through the process of evaluating a lesson plan and then employing various tools to align the objectives, strategies and assessments with the SOL.

Two additional webquests help users move through the process of locating, evaluating and integrating technology resources into lesson plans. One focuses on [The Scarlet Letter](#) while the other is based on a [4th grade science SOL related to weather](#).

These webquests would make excellent resources for professional development and are available for free.

"SOL To Go" Makes Learning Fun

Two former elementary school teachers, in an effort to help their students learn SOL content, created a board game called "SOL To Go." Players become pizza toppings and move around a pepperoni path, answering questions based on the SOL. There are separate sets of questions for grades K-5 and a cumulative set of questions for middle school that can be used with the same game board. If you prefer, you can get all the questions packaged in a CD ROM that works on both Windows and Macs.

Visit the Kidz Solutions website to learn more. While you're there, be sure to check out the reviews including one from John Caggiano, a VITAL participant from Hampton!



Jump Into Learning at LeapFrog

I left my LeapPad on my desk recently, and when I returned, the secretaries were crowded around it, competing to see who could identify the most states in the least amount of time.

The point is: LeapFrog makes products that appeal to kids of all ages. My current favorite is the iQuest handheld, designed for middle school and high school students. It's easy to use and includes learning modules and quizzes on a variety of topics.

With the MindStation, users can connect their LeapFrog products to the web and download new content. I recently installed SAT test prep questions on my iQuest.

Visit LeapFrog online to learn more.