

Tech CORE Minutes

11/1/06

Attendance: Shayna DeCanio, Leah Wertz, Sarah Glassman, Pat Gosda, Nancy Sieper, Chris Jennings, Cindy Castren, Annette Romano, Cheryl Cufari, Mike Greene, Dan Matthews, Kelly Opiela, Jess Fitzgerald, Kim Prettyman, Charlie McCambridge, Lisa O'Brien

Tech Standards- updated standards were posted in the Tech CORE First Class conference after the last meeting. Mike also shared a hard copy to review. On the website there will be links associated with the each standard providing a more detailed explanation, as well as possibly some exemplars.

Discussion:

1) Minor typos were identified and corrected.

2) Next step? - Mike will work during the school year to get standards up on the website. He will include exemplars. Please send him more examples as they are identified.

Mike could go to grade level/ department meetings and talk about what teachers already do, what standards that they are willing to commit to, and what resources/training they need to accomplish these goals. Professional development would be designed around these needs.

It was noted that this data gathering process will be slow, but it may be an effective way to compile more complete information. Consideration was given to whether we should also discuss issues at a large meeting, such as the March Professional Development Day. The overall feeling is that it would be more beneficial to have small group meetings and identify the needs of each grade/department initially.

Staff Development- Mike questioned whether training should become more building based. He would be happy to provide training and resources, however he feels that each building has individual needs and should have time to work on their own technology goals. He has had difficulty arranging for districtwide training, as time does not seem to be readily available for it.

1) Rosendale has already dedicated some of their faculty meetings to technology. The 2nd meeting each month is now for technology training. During each meeting new skills are introduced. The staff was paired, with teachers who have technology experience working with those who need support. Dan organized the program and gets help from others as appropriate. The faculty is receiving credit for the hours. It was felt that the Rosendale model would be appropriate for all elementary schools.

2) The concern was raised on how the needs would be meet at the middle and high school levels. Training might be done at department meetings based upon interest, or several topics could be offered at faculty meetings for teachers to select from.

3) Charlie suggested using funding to support training and piloting new programs. We would need to approach the district with our ideas and how they would meet the standards.

4) To get inservice credit there needs to be work/ projects done outside of the normal school hours. Suggestion - all teachers should receive equivalency credit for learning a skill. Those who want inservice credit would need to do an outside project and implement it in the classroom.

5) It is important that Tech CORE reps share what we discuss at building faculty meetings. Make sure you take several minutes at each meeting to show something briefly about a technology skill, or review an important topic. Mike will discuss with principals the desire to have time made available at each faculty meeting.

First Class

Make teachers aware that their First Class user interface may change in appearance as a result of a recent update of the server software. They will need to upgrade to the new client software (v8.3) in the near future. On the district First Class home page (fc.niskyschools.org) there is a link to download the new version. You will need to upgrade this software on each machine that you regularly use to access First Class. The new version looks quite different, and has a number of new features. Examples:

Workspace- can be used to collaborate and share files with others.

Documents- primarily for First Class documents.

File Storage- place for files other than First Class (e.g. images, word processed)

Web Publishing (previously Home Page folder) - stores web pages

If you click on the New Web Page button you can create podcasts, blogs, web calendars, etc.

Podcast- great way to host these files.

Trash- makes it easier to “undelete” items deleted during that same day.

Charlie discussed the need to inform staff ahead of time of upcoming changes in software. He will make sure that adequate notification occurs in the future. Charlie will post a message to the entire district announcing this recent upgrade. Encourage TA’s to help with problems. Inform Charlie of any issues.

PowerMediaPlus- Service that has replaced United Streaming videos

If you had an account with United Streaming, most of the time you can use the same password and user name (All Hillside faculty need to create a new account...). TA’s and media specialists were given building passcodes that are needed to create new accounts.

Mike suggests streaming videos only to preview them. If you are going to use a video with students, you should download it.

PowerMediaPlus includes searchable videos, audio files, images, teacher guides, student worksheets and a podcast hosting capability.

Training Center- towards the bottom there are training modules that teach specific skills utilizing Flash animation.

BOCES is offering their own locally hosted PowerMediaPlus service that the district will be considering. They will be adding resources requested by local districts.

Bandwidth-

We need to be considering how much bandwidth we require. Each 5 megabits we add costs approximately \$10,000. We obviously want to provide enough bandwidth to accommodate instructional needs. At times recently, instruction has been impaired because of bandwidth shortages. The idea of prioritizing bandwidth use was also raised.

Mike suggested that we ask teachers to document those times when there is an issue with limited bandwidth. Important information to report would include the type of activity, time of day, number of students, and type of problem encountered.

The bandwidth issue also needs to be considered with our new VOIP phone system. There will be a phone in every room with outside capability. Fortunately, VOIP requires minimal bandwidth compared with many other activities.

iTunes- Mike discussed two aspects of the iTunes software that need to be addressed. The first is the use of streaming radio stations, which can require a substantial amount of bandwidth. Are they being used for educational purposes? Different stations require different bandwidth. We need to be aware of this and choose stations that require less bandwidth when using them in the classroom.

Second, we need to be conscious of using purchased or “ripped” music in a way that complies with “fair use”. Generally, distributing music (e.g. within student-generated projects) outside of the school building, including posting on a website, is a violation of fair use. It was suggested that this should be shared in an upcoming issue of “bits & bytes”.

Bytes & Bites- Feedback from the spotlight on Craig issue was very positive. Each school has been assigned a month to provide content for an issue. Rosendale is responsible for November.

6-Year Replacement Cycle

Mike shared spreadsheets of replacement cycle purchases. Based upon this data, we should be able to more easily determine areas that have not yet been addressed and need to become priorities. Take some time to look at these spreadsheets prior to our upcoming budget discussions. For next year, we have already discussed the need to replace the H.S. learning laptops. What might be other priorities?

Mike also shared an update on this year’s budget purchases. Considering the already purchased equipment, as well as proposed purchases, we are within the budget and have about \$30,000 left for this year. We may wish to look at funding some pilot programs, such as iPods for foreign language.

Charlie handed out the newest Apple price list. For determining PC laptop purchases, the high school teachers need to identify what capabilities they require in order to build their systems for next year. We may discover that different machines will be purchased for different departments, based upon their specific needs.