

bits & bytes

Technology News Update

Niskayuna Central Schools
Technology CORE Team

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Shakespeare Webquest

Recently, students in Heather Leader's 8th grade English class began their study of *Romeo and Juliet* by going back in time to the English Renaissance. This "time travel" was achieved through an Elizabethan Webquest created by Heather. Through the directions and links provided in the Webquest, groups of students created an Elizabethan newspaper covering such topics as Shakespeare, the Globe Theater, the *Romeo and Juliet* play, and life during the Renaissance.

According to Heather, "The Webquest took some time to complete, but it was worth it because I was able to guide their study through the links I provided. Their completed newspapers were really great."



Check out the Webquest at:
<http://www.albany.edu/~hl1719/webquesthl/webquesthl.htm>

Find Answers at answers.com

Looking for a quick resource for basic information? Check out answers.com for great definitions and explanations of over a million topics. Also try their "1-ClickAnswers" software that allows you to highlight a word or phrase in any document or Web page and quickly access information about it!

Weekly Student Emails

Have a great week!

Sincerely,

Mr. Matthews



Dan Matthews communicates with his first grade students and their parents through weekly emails. He includes a brief message to the parents describing what the class accomplished the previous week and what upcoming activities they should be aware of.

For students, he has special features, such as "Magic Mondays" (magic tricks) and "Atomic Tuesdays" (science experiments). He also tries to include some good math practice Web sites, online books, and occasional social studies, science or health Web links that relate to current classroom activities. He also provides his personal Sourceline number and Web site URL.

Messages are composed in html format, so that Dan can make the background colorful, with various sized and colored text. He also includes pictures from the classroom and interesting "animated gifs" (graphics that can move within the email itself).

Dan finds that this method of communication offers an exciting format by which to connect the classroom with the home.

4th Graders

Working with SUNY Interns

Craig 4th graders have had the opportunity to work with 2 graduate students from SUNY Albany. Their goal was to design a multimedia presentation that would integrate the use of technology within the 4th grade curriculum. Deciding to use PowerPoint, the graduate students designed a Web site instruction page that the students could toggle back & forth between while using that software. The product will be an electronic scrapbook documenting the entire year. Each student is developing a personal scrapbook which normally would have been created with pencil & paper.

Online Electricity Activities

Mary Gildea's 4th grade class tested how electrical circuits work through an online program, "Exploring Connectivity," coordinated by Dr. Don Millard, a Niskayuna parent and director of the Academy of Electronic Media at RPI. The college has received a National Science Foundation grant to create teaching materials about engineering topics, and Millard & Gildea are collaborating to create materials for fourth-graders. Students will also be exploring the program with their parents at home. To try it out, go to the following RPI Web site and click on the Internet Explorer files. (You will need to have Shockwave installed on your computer.) <http://www.academy.rpi.edu/projects/ccli/modules/k12/>



More Booklets!

Sarah Conboy's 2nd/3rd grade combo class has been diligent in developing their keyboarding skills. All this practice really paid off when they began creating booklets sharing important events in their lives. This started as a single written classroom assignment about one important event. When the children asked if they could write more after the first essay was completed, Sarah decided to have the children type their initial papers into an AppleWorks booklet template in the computer lab. They created their own covers, completed the typing of their first important event, and are now typing their ideas directly into their booklets without having them initially written on paper. The children are very excited about how this project is developing, and they are continually thinking of new ideas and taking great pride in their work.

Karen Hess's 1st graders are creating their own fairy tale booklets using the Kid Works Deluxe software. Karen developed a template, including important story components from their fairy tale unit, in which the students typed in missing information. They then chose electronic "stickers" (graphics) that complemented their writing, and enhanced these pictures using paint & drawing tools.

Apple OSX Online Tutorials!



A large number of district Macintosh computers are currently being upgraded to Apple's newest operating system - OSX (10.3). Sessions have been made available for teachers to become more familiar with this new computing environment, but there are also some great online tutorials for it as well. Here are a few:

http://www.apple.com/pro/training/macosex_basics/

<http://www.biola.edu/admin/computersupport/tutorials/osxtutorial.cfm>

<http://www.atomiclearning.com/macosexx.shtml>
(For a slightly older version - OS10.2)