

# TECH CONNECT

May 2009

## Hopatcong Borough Schools **TEACHERS' TECHNOLOGY NEWSLETTER**

Interactive Activboard and Activotes - Kristine Mendyk  
*Durban Avenue School*

"I try very hard to integrate both Activboard hardware and software into my curriculum everyday. Having an interactive white board such as an Activboard has created a new way of teaching and learning in the classroom. It is a seamlessly integrated system that includes an interactive whiteboard, learner response systems, lesson design and delivery software and most importantly, meaningful integration of the curriculum. Activotes, the assessment learner response systems linked to the Activboard, allows me to instantly gain insight into whether my students understand a concept, lesson or idea while creating an engaging environment that encourages contribution and creativity. Activotes is a wireless, user friendly, handheld electronic voting system that integrates with my interactive whiteboard. Activotes give students the opportunity to share their opinions and responses during a lesson by "voting" on multiple choice questions I pose on the screen. Instead of sharing one at a time, all students can participate regularly, which increases the engagement level of my students. As a teacher, I get immediate feedback on my students' understanding. The Activote system shows me which answers each student has selected and even how long it took them to answer, enabling me to monitor and adjust throughout the lesson. Students revel in the opportunity to use Activotes. When students have the ability to anonymously indicate their answers for questions during all phases of lessons, I am able to know in real-time what needs to be reviewed or re-taught. This is priceless for me as a teacher as students are learning the content at the same time I am assessing their understanding. Students cannot rush ahead and no one is left behind. Also, paying attention and class participation is way up! Activotes is a fast effective way to obtain responses from my entire class, encouraging and motivating even my most reluctant students to participate."

Wireless slate + SmartBoard= Increased class interaction! - Roz Craig  
*Tulsa Trail School*

"SmartBoards use resistive technology, which allows one point of contact on the board at a single time. This means that multiple students cannot touch the SmartBoard simultaneously. With a classroom full of students who are eager to use the SmartBoard, this could be a problem. However, Mrs. Craig, a second grade teacher at Tulsa Trail, has recently incorporated the AirLiner Wireless slate into her classroom. With this wireless slate, students are able to interact with the SmartBoard from their seats in conjunction with students working at the board. Mrs. Craig is also able to interact with her SmartBoard from anywhere around the room. The AirLiner increases class interaction and enhances student learning."

Danielle Kovach  
*Tulsa Trail School*

"If you are looking for new ways to incorporate technology into your classroom, visit Tulsa Trail School's technology blog. This blog is updated weekly with internet sites, United Streaming videos and tips that teachers may find useful. You can visit our blog at [www.tulsatrail.blogspot.com](http://www.tulsatrail.blogspot.com). Feel free to comment on any of the postings. We would love to hear your feedback on any of the sites listed!"

**Alexis Geanakopolous**  
*Hudson Maxim School*

"I would like to share with all staff an amazing, free website called [www.spellingcity.com](http://www.spellingcity.com). It is an award winning website recommended by one of the Bilingual/ESL websites. It can be used in grades K-12 to review and practice reading, content area vocabulary, sentence completion, etc.

### **WHAT IS SPELLINGCITY?**

"SpellingCity is a new and innovative interactive educational site used to help students of all ages improve their spelling and reading comprehension skills. The approach of this website is to enforce the elements of spelling through interactive learning. SpellingCity offers over 38,000 words and sentences. Each of the words is spoken by a "real" human voice to offer the students more clarity. With each "teacher" or "web-site" created list, a student has the option to: Teach Me, Test Me, or Play a Game.

"The "Teach Me" option allows students to look at each word of their spelling list while the word and coordinating sentence are being read aloud. The "Test Me" option lets students take a test from any spelling list at any time. The "Test Option" gives the student the ability to hear just the word or have the sentence read. The "Play a Game" option allows students to play a variety of learning games with ANY spelling list.

SpellingCity offers learning games such as Unscramble, Sentence Completions, Audio Word Match, Word Search, Unscramble the Sentences, and many more.

#### Other Features

1. Create and print handwriting worksheets in three different fonts, including script.
2. Teachers can create "lists" that can be saved and accessed by parents.
3. Teachers may use lists from the website such as leveled Dolch Lists, synonyms, content area vocabulary, etc.

### **"HOW I USE SPELLINGCITY"**

"I use content area, grammar and seasonal vocabulary using the following interactive games: Audio/word match, Unscramble the Words/Sentences, Alphabetical Order, Word Search, etc. At Tulsa Trail, students use the Smartboard to review. At Hudson Maxim, first grade students work in pairs using the Audio/Word Match and class computers. You can also differentiate by creating "leveled" lists to accommodate all students.

If you have ESL students, the Audio/Match game is a wonderful way to reinforce pronunciation and reading. The lists take minutes to create and can be adapted to all content areas except foreign language.

SpellingCity also has numerous other features for more advanced students. Please take the time to try out this new website. You will not be disappointed."

**Doug Spencer**  
*High School*

"New things in my room are the use of the SMARTBoard to provide notes for those who are absent on a regular basis and to place selected series of lessons for Trig, Calculus and Intermediate Algebra on the OnCourse website as pdfs for purposes of review and relearning for his students."

**Name:** Tanya Pagano

**School:** Durban Ave. School

**KidBiz:** "Students in my class log on to kidbiz3000.com twice a week. When they log on there is an email waiting for them in their inbox with a link to an article. This article is tailored to their individual reading level. They then respond to the email and read the article. Then they can either summarize each paragraph or do a thought essay question. They take a multiple choice quiz on the article and even get to give their opinion in the poll.

**StudyIsland:** "The students in my class have begun using a program which has quickly become their favorite. At studyisland.com my students are able to access standards based activities while playing games they enjoy. I also use this program in my classroom as full class reinforcement during test prep both using the activboard and the pen and also using Activotes.

**Read Across NJ:** "My class participated in a webcam teleconferencing activity with a class from Hillsdale, NJ. Students in my class read multiple fairy tales and biographies. They picked a character from a fairy tale such as the Elves from *Elves and the Shoemaker* or the Wolf from *The Three Little Pigs*. The students then wrote a biography for their character. They described the character they were writing about and ended with "Who am I?" The day of the activity my students read these biographies to the other class who in turn tried to guess what character was being described. The other class performed a reader's theater for us. After the activities, my students discussed similarities and differences of where they live, what they do for fun, and what activities they do at school with the other class."

**Nancy Barnard's Kindergarten**

*Hudson Maxim School*

"We are enjoying our new Activ Board immensely!! The kids and I love it and use it everyday across the curriculum."

**Maria Stendor, Mike Leahey, Diane Veres, Art Nemeth and Terry Collington**

*Middle School*

"The Blue Team at H.M.S. has been working on an interdisciplinary project throughout the year. In Science, Mrs. Veres discussed storms and safety focusing on the dust storms in the mid-West during the 1930's. Mr. Nemeth covered world economy and the students created graphs depicting economic factors. Mrs. Collington, after reading *OUT of the DUST*, along with Mr. Leahey wrote news articles about the Depression, the Dust Bowl, the rabbit drive and other topics specific to this time period. Political cartoons and advertisements from this time period were also created by the students.

Students with Mrs. Stendor are taking all the work created in the team classes and publishing newspapers from the Depression. Students have been researching for feature articles, typing on Word, and using Publisher as a format for the newspaper.

Besides this project, the sixth graders of the Blue Team have created flow charts on this year on various topics in Social Studies. Teacher created power points have been viewed and students have been encouraged to try their hand at creating power point presentations. Research on the internet is an ongoing activity and students are referred to specific websites to expedite the research. Creating documents that are publication ready with pictures to enhance the research are encouraged. The final product will be a poetry book about the Dust Bowl."

**Sue Hill, Neil Pallotta, Doug From, Joanne Canizaro and Collin Wells**  
*Middle School*

“The Middle School eighth grade team: Sue Hill, Neil Pallotta, Doug From, Joanne Canizaro and Colin Wells, along with high school teachers, Doug Spenser and Sandy DeRose, have spent this year in a program affiliated with Kean University called Professional Learning Practice (PLP). We are members of the New Jersey Cohort of this international group, along with Jeff Hallenbeck, Middle School Principal, and Dr. Joanne Mullane, Curriculum Supervisor. Together, have spent the past year immersed in social networking in education.

After attending a face to face meeting and learning about a number of networking sites designed to help teachers teach and learn in the 21st century, we put the knowledge into practice. Through weekly meetings, as well as a couple of “virtual” meetings, the team put together a plan utilizing social networking sites to which we have been introduced, such as Twitter to connect us with the ongoing changes in education; Delicious, enabling us to choose RSS Feeds to keep us up to date with trends in education; Edublog which taught us how to use Blogs in the classroom; as well as Podcasting, both audio and visual. These sites have enabled us to communicate with the students and to receive communications as well. They have also kept us abreast of the latest (sometimes up to the minute) educational trends.

We have been integrating these learning sites and skills into our daily lessons to bring our students up to speed with 21st Century learning. We have created a plan designed to address NJ Core Content Standards in Technology. After completing the project, students will not only demonstrate proficiency in the standards but will demonstrate knowledge of 21st Century learning. We plan to turnkey this to our peers, using iMovie and Teacher Tube (an educator’s site for video, similar to the ever popular YouTube) at a faculty meeting at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year.

We will be meeting our NJ peers in another face to face meeting at Kean University on May 21, 2009. We will showcase our plan in a number of ways: We will show a video that will be played throughout the day documenting our project, and we will have a stationary display with graphics documenting what we did. We are looking forward to this meeting, as it will highlight our year’s progress in the program.”

**Pamela Hutchinson**  
*Hudson Maxim*

“ItzaBitza is software that’s designed to enhance many skills that include eye-hand control and academically speaking, reading skills. Students are interactive and must complete tasks within various settings that include camping, forests, etc. In case the child cannot read all or any of the words, they can drag their mouse over the words to hear them. Then, they simply draw with their mouse items that are needed to complete special tasks. For instance, the child must draw eight berries and lure a bear over with their computer mouse to eat the berries. Or they must draw a cave for the bear and watch while the bear crawls into the cave. Their drawings come to life and are integrated into the story. There are also rewards and challenges that inspire further participation in the story scenarios as they continue to improve their computer skills.

“In addition, I’m currently using a ‘virtual piano’ and other music websites to enhance various skills including self-confidence. A special education student was able to play a solo on the virtual piano for the class! The programs allow students to practice short tunes as well as compose their own music.

“Lastly, I am researching a program, called Co-Writer that is designed to inspire the child who struggles with writing. It’s a word prediction program that includes various topic banks of information. With a small learning curve, ideas can flow and sentences are more easily formed with a lot less frustration. Another program of interest is called Dragon Naturally Speaks, a speech-to-text program.”