CECA Newsletter

IT TAKES MORE THAN TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE A POWERFUL POINT

Daniel Zittoun

Recently, the Wall Street Journal printed an article, "PowerPoint Goes to School" (11/12/2002) that discussed the pros and cons of multimedia projects in schools. I was particularly troubled by some of the sentiments toward PowerPoint that included, "Writing has eroded seriously…If technologies aren't the cause of that…they are "at least symptomatic".

Let me start by stating that I am very much in favor of multimedia projects as one vehicle for learning. Having said that, don't throw away the writer's notebooks or the shoeboxes for dioramas. Using PowerPoint in the classroom need not replace these traditional activities, but rather offer another means for students to express themselves. When I was a classroom teacher, my students created PowerPoint presentations on social studies or science topics. The goal was to have students learn technology while integrating it into the curriculum. PowerPoint also gave students an opportunity to work on oral presentation skills as well as their ability to synthesize information. What is important to note is that I also had my students do a "traditional" research paper at another point during the year. We used the classic style of doing research; writing notes on index cards, making a rough draft, self –edit, peer – edit, more research, second draft, teacher-edit, and a final draft. During another period of study, I may have had my students do a diorama or a poster board, a book report/review, or some of the other wonderful projects students have produced over the years. The point is I gave students options about how they wanted to share what they have learned.

While learning different ways to communicate information is invaluable in this day and age, we should never lose site of the quality of the content itself. What good is a research paper or PowerPoint presentation if the information is inaccurate, fragmented, or if there is no organized train of thought? Regardless of the vehicle of expression, we need to emphasize substance, not style. Because of technology, the focus of education has shifted from memorizing facts to enabling students to access information, but what good is information if you don't understand it? Admittedly, it is easy to cover up a poorly researched and synthesized PowerPoint presentation with Word art, drum rolls, and colorful templates just like many of us thought we could get a better grade on our report if we put on one of those cool plastic covers or if we typed it up instead of printed it? Style over substance has been a part of education long before PowerPoint. Only now, technology makes it a lot more visible.

If the Power Point presentations are weak or the content is not good, it is our responsibility as teachers to show students this through the final grade, rubrics, and all other assessment methods we would use with any

Getting Gift Palms Ready for the Big Day

Palm Techie Helping CECA Tech Team Techies from Shepaug High School who have a pile of Palms to set up

CECA President, Howard Gunther, works setting up Palms

"Barn Raising" might be an apt analogy for the Palm setup on Sunday. The task was sizeable, multi-phased and required a commitment from many. The essential core helpers committed early, others offered to change plans if signaled by last minute alert calls. Since our beginning time was delayed help arrived in waves. Individuals instinctively gravitated to open work spots and received needed instruction from their closest colleague. Assistance came in many shapes from our savvy Palm system engineer to hard-working children of Radisson staff. The committed core CECA group went the distance undaunted by the numbers and sometimes challenging lighting. The Tech Team and Palm trainers also plunged right in to tackle the task having juggled or still juggling other demands on their time. The positive feeling experienced at the end of the evening transcended the achievement of our goal. We would like to extend a special thank you to Donna Brown who provided important assistance developing the Master Palm content and Joe Fromme who captained the setup unit flow and probably touched every Palm. A priceless working team!

Pathways to Work

Figuring out your future can sometimes be overwhelming. Many young adults are looking for a job, researching colleges or exploring career options.

The Connecticut Department of Labor's new Web site, "Pathways to the World of Work for Young Adults" is designed to help young people make educated decisions about their future. It offers countless workforce services that can help young people obtain a first job, improve skills for labor market advancement, and find links to educational resources.

Our Web site features a broad array of youth employment services that will help young people better understand career and employment options and the importance of education. You will find a wealth of information on:

* Exploring potential careers
* Researching college options
* Connecting to employers
* Recognizing job market trends & "hot" jobs
* Interviewing tips and techniques
* Writing Resumes and cover letters
* Working in safe environments

At the Connecticut Department of Labor, we're committed to the success of young people - both in the labor market and their personal lives. We're also invested in helping young people build the skills essential for adulthood.

If you are interested in expanding youth employment resources in your school or organization, just link to the Connecticut Department of Labor's Web site, www.ctdol.state.ct.us/youth/main.html You can reach our webmaster, www.dol.help@po.state.ct.us with further questions.

CECA 2002 Garden Party Winners

Vendor	Prize	Winner
Acumenic Associates	3 month Pilot Program	Jean Lowery
Advanced Office Systems	10 pack Mouse Pads	Richard Welk
Alphasmart, Inc.	Gift Certificate - Alphasmart 3000	Elizabeth Maroney
American Productivity & Quality Center	T-shirt	Arlene G. Herens
Apple Computer	iMac Special Edition	Joy P. Fitzgerald
Aunt Goodie Bags	Goodies	Marianne Kirner
Compass Learning	Golf Bag	Robert Wight
Educators Retirement Consulting	Gift Certificate - 2 Planning Sessions	Gregory A. O'Neil
Glencoe Applied Learning	Software	Christine DiNoto
K-12 Micromedia Publishing	Sunburst A to Zap	David DeAngelis
KidsEnergy, Inc.	1 year Subscription ($139 value)	Rita Coté
Lexia Learning Systems	Gift Certificate - Phonics Program	Pamela Poirier
MEGASYS	Cassette Recorder	Esther Bobowick
NetXing	Network Card	Nancy McDermott
NetXing	Answer Ball	Kristen Curley
Palm, Inc.	Mobile Monitoring Software	Sally Wanamaker
Palm, Inc.	Mobile Monitoring Software	Donna Bone
Palm, Inc.	Mobile Monitoring Software	Colin Neenan
Perma Bound Books	Harry Potter Book	Maria Schweyer
Pitsco LEGO Dacta	Gift Certificate - any one catalog item	Barbara Silvario
PLATO	Gift Certificate - 6 months of service	K. C. Nelson-Oliveria
Prentice Hall	Book Set	Nancy Patty
Prentice Hall	Book Set	Elizabeth Koskoff
Prentice Hall	On-line Access Pack	Ronna Van Veghel
Prentice Hall	On-line Access Pack	Elizabeth Preston
Prentice Hall	On-line Access Pack	Geoffrey Smith
Prentice Hall	Software	Michael C. Suntag
Prentice Hall	Software	Thomas Dillon
Prentice Hall	Golf Cap	Linda Chandler
Presentation Systems	WonderBar - Poster Hanger	Christine Y. House
RESC Alliance	Gift Certificate - one free workshop	Karen Valente
RESC Alliance	Gift Certificate - one free workshop	Pat Francis
RESC Alliance	Gift Certificate - one free workshop	Iris M. Ramos
RnB Enterprises	DVD Player	Lori Hutnick
Scholastic Book Publishers	Map Machine Software	Marcy J. Reed
Scientific Learning	On-line course	Jori Lockwood
Scientific Learning	On-line course	Pamela Munro
Scientific Learning	On-line course	Bob Olson
SNET	Oakdale tickets	Mary Psarras
Teacher Created Materials	Curriculum Activities Pack	Ron Blois
Texas Instruments	School Building Site License	Michelle LeBrun-Griffin
UNICOM	Gift Certificate for IBM Sweatshirt	Carol LaRow
Whalley Computer Associates	Microsoft Office	Kim Puzar
Workplace Group	Gift Certificate - Computer Task Chair	Alan Lishness
Zydacron, Inc.	1 Virtual Field Trip	Anita Lavada

2002–2003 SIGTel Online Learning Awards

Have you been or are you and your students involved in an original telelearning activity? If so, consider entering the "2002–03 SIGTel Online Learning Awards Contest." Since 1991, the Special Interest Group for Telelearning (SIGTel), a SIG of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), has recognized creative educators for their pioneering use of telelearning activities to provide innovative learning opportunities for students in Grades K–16.

Entry Information: All entries must describe telelearning activities that were or will be completed from February 1, 2001 to June 30, 2003. Entries must be submitted via the online form from November 1, 2002, until midnight December 1, 2002. The SIGTel panel of readers will announce the awardees by January 6, 2003.

1. Learn about the assessment of entries
2. Learn about recognition of winners
3. Submit your project!

If you have any questions, please contact the contest coordinator, Sally Bair at sbair@epix.net.

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

New for 2003   "Raptors in the City"

TECHNOLOGY CONNECTS KIDS WITH NATURE

How do you catch a glimpse of the fastest creature on earth? Go online! "Raptors in the City" is a new inquiry-based science and technology program for grades 4-6 that stars the peregrine falcon. The peregrine has recovered from near extinction and was removed from the List of Endangered Species in 1999, one of the great success stories in the field of wildlife conservation. The online portion of Raptors in the City guides children through nesting season (roughly February to June) as they watch the still rare falcons live via cameras

mounted on skyscrapers. The curriculum supports one semester of study, and the students learn environmental, biological, and technological lessons, as well as research skills, based on national science and technology standards. A complete study package for peregrine research is available consisting of assignments, resource lists, rewards, evaluation tools, a reference book, and an e-newsletter. It's easy - no software to install - and available in print form or on CD.

Nesting season (and the the Raptors in the City program) begins in February 2003.

For more information visit: www.raptorsinthecity.org

Contact person:

Deborah Mathies
177 W. Norwalk Rd.
Norwalk, CT 06850 (203) 831-0855,
e-mail: raptors@optonline.net

other project. Many teachers who lack technological self-confidence don't feel qualified grading multimedia projects. Whether or not a teacher feels confident about technology, the teacher obviously knows the content and can grade the project accordingly.

Using PowerPoint in the classroom is about giving students another tool in their toolboxes. We still need to teach writing, spelling, reading, math, science, social studies and the related arts. We must stop discussing PowerPoint and technology in terms of replacing "traditional writing" and other core subjects, and focus on how to integrate technology into the existing curriculum so that the students can do both. Whether or not you believe technology increases student achievement, you cannot dispute the fact that technology will be a part of these students' lives, and by not preparing them to use it would be a disservice to them.

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Radisson, Cromwell

Tech Corner with David Evon

What's a Wardriver? The ease of use, affordability, and compatibility standards of today's WiFi technology have given rise to a proliferation of wireless devices. If you have a wireless access point connected to your network you need to be aware of those who may try to exploit your connectivity. A Wardriver is an individual that cruises our streets with a wireless enabled laptop searching for wireless access points. Surprised? Don't be, it's a very common practice. A true Wardriver also has a GPS (Global Positioning Satellite) device attached to the computer for tracking geographical location with pinpoint accuracy. The software used while trolling for access points records the SSID (name), type of access point, encryption status, channel frequency, longitude and latitude of the device, and the time it was found active. When the Wardriver later connects to the Internet (or right then and there through your access point) the software automatically uploads the info it has collected to a Web database. Any user of this software can download from the companion Website info collected for any area of the country and use the program to lead them to any access point in the database. What this means is that your location will or already has been added to the tour route of individuals looking to acquire a free hookup to the Internet or, worse yet, access to your network and data. So what can you do to protect your wireless network from intrusion? Using the configuration program for your access point you should make the following changes to your wireless setup:

1. Change the SSID (name) of your access point - the default names used by hardware manufacturers are well known, making them easy to guess. While you're at it change the default password to the configuration utility, everyone knows that too.

2. Disable "SSID broadcast" – most access points broadcast their SSID to make it easier for users to connect, disabling the broadcast will help make your access point less visible.

3. Enable "MAC station filtering" to allow only computers you've entered into the MAC address table access to the network. Most access points that have this feature also have a utility to list attached computer MAC addresses for easy configuration.

4. Enable WEP (Wired Equivalent Privacy) to help keep your transmitted data private. Both 64bit and 128bit encryption should be available with 128bit being the better choice provided your client computer wireless cards are compatible. Once a passphrase is entered into the WEP configuration utility an algorithm is generated that will be required for use on all wireless computers communicating with the access point.

Unfortunately not all of these options are available on all access points, inclusion of these features should be taken into consideration when purchasing hardware. The security features previously discussed usually only affect wireless clients, on units that incorporate additional UTP (CAT5) ports all direct wired computers retain full access. Be aware these security procedures are only adequate for home and student networks where highly confidential information is not likely to be stored. Corporate and administrative networks would require higher levels of security available through specialized software and hardware. Residential access point hardware alone should never be used in a highly confidential and mission critical environment. A great deal more information on this topic is available on the Web and in network technology literature. By staying informed and utilizing the security features at your disposal you can ensure a safe wireless experience, the freedom of wireless computing is well worth the effort.

Palm Resources

HiCE Palm Pages
HiCE - Center for Highly Interactive Computing in Education at the University of Michigan - offers a collection of Palm applications for the classroom along with a large selection of supporting resources.
http://www.handheld.hice-dev.org

Information on teaching and learning with Palm™ handhelds.
http://www.palm.com/education/resourcelibrary/helpfulsites.epl

Handheld Applications Bibliographies
Links to resources, references such as Documents to Go guides, articles and tips.
http://www.iu5.org/imts/ptla_web/handheld_resources.htm

PDA handheld computing Resources on the Web
Extensive resource list
http://www.mona-shores.k12.mi.us/Research&Development/PDA.htm

Future Thinking?

Ken Royal

Backward Thinking and Knowing the Future When We See It

It has always made sense to me in teaching to know where you want to go, and then work toward it. I remember, a few years ago, a principal excitedly explained a new concept he had gleaned at a workshop. He called it "Backward Thinking." I thought that was fitting then and even more so now. This administrator's backward idea was essentially looking to where you want to be in the future and working backward to set in place the steps in order to get there. It just makes more sense to me to "future think" when it comes to education and technology, starting from the first step, whatever that first step is in each district or school. Future seems to be more positive than backward anyway.

When I was teaching middle school life science, a few years ago, Dr. Robert Ballard, the famous Titanic and Oceanic Explorer, said that he would do a live, online chat with my students. Well, my students and I had put together some PCs in my classroom, but because the school system used Macs, we decided that Macs in the Media Center would be a great place to do the chat. One of my classes (27 students) conducted the chat through our ePALS (http://www.epals.com/) private chat, asking rapid-fire questions. Three students acting as computer captains, who told students when to fire their questions, directed all the questioning. Two other students saved the chat for history, and I still have it in transcript form. I made the first contact, introduction, took pictures, and wrapped up at the end. Every district technology expert and high-ranking administrator was there too. The questioning and technology went beautifully.

The funniest part, technologically, happened at the end of the chat, though, when students were heading for their next classes. An observer in charge of curriculum for the district came over to me. I'm sure that I still had the wildly goofy smile of success on my face. If this had been golf, it would have been like a hole in one. "What did you think?" I said. He said, "Well, this was neat, I could see us doing this in the future." I didn't skip a beat and replied, "It just happened. The future is here."

Thinking Creatively About The Future

I have always been intrigued by the stories of

corporations hiring science fiction writers to dream up future ideas. Maybe an Isaac Asimov, or a Ray Bradbury in education technology would be able to offer some great future thinking answers. I know that the future begins where you are now, and that educationally we are all over the ballpark, but there has to be thinking beyond Palm PDAx used for measuring and probe testing? Those are good ideas. Probe testing was fun with Apple IIes and older PCs too.

I must admit that I'm not doing much better future thinking. I'm using FileMaker Mobile to do simple daily progress report checklists for students in subject areas. That's just taking something that would normally be done on paper and adding a technological twist for recording data and doing evaluations. I've asked others for future technology opinions, and many have included laptops on carts that could be rotated throughout a school. I'm always in search of more.

I happened to catch a television technology special recently. Some business CEOs were being interviewed about where they thought technology would be in the future. It was wild. These men and women were future thinking twenty-five years into the future. They also broke the twenty-five year time span into several year increments to estimate where each step would be in order to get to the goal. They were positive that these wild ideas would happen. Many ideas had labor saving and medical implications, including Nanorobotics doing Nanomedicine. Robots controlling atoms and molecules to build or modify themselves, and perform specific tasks, especially in deep space were discussed, as well as the continued quest for a robot with genuine human emotions and intuition.

When it came to kids and school, things became interesting. Students reading digital books of some sort that could be modified would happen quickly according to the experts. And further down the future road students would actually be able to enter into a hologram history. Students would not just read history, but instead, could see it happen, and even be there in hologram form when it did happen! Sort of a "You were there" for the 21st Century. The digital books seemed to be more tangible and comfortable for most of us at this time though. This is certainly a far cry from recent discussion I've had regarding when teacher should be expected to use e-mail!

An administrator I know always has something to say,

and is never afraid to say it. He's a technological and database Wizard. When I asked him his future views, his eyes sparkled. "Well, school won't remain the same; it can't. Sure, we'll have to house students somewhere for a certain part of their lives, but most of what we now do will be done, most likely, at home."

According to him, the object would be to give students training, up to a certain age, in the devices and ways to gain knowledge, and the teacher's role, as we know it, will no longer exist. There was a short pause, and then I said, "Well, we should be retired by then." I do think, though, that you can read into this the continuation and growth of home schooling, and much of it due to technological changes.

Thanks For The Reminder!

I went to school to feed my pet African frog, Martha, during a vacation week. While I was feeding her, a custodian walked in and said that he would have gladly fed the frog for me if I'd left instructions. As he turned to leave, he asked me a technology question.

"What do you think of a program that will let me speak instead of type my e-mails? AOL says it has a program that will do this. Do you think I can do it on my Gateway 133? I sure would like to say my e-mails instead of typing them!" As he was talking, I was thinking, this guy has hit the nail right on the head. He had said what I had heard Bill Gates say not too long ago. Part of the future is in speech recognition.

I do know that our technology committee did have quite a discussion about keyboarding and mouse competencies for students. We couldn't agree as to when, how, or who. I do know that the conversation ceased when someone said, "It's a matter of time before it will be all speech recognition anyway. You won't have to use a mouse, or a keyboard." I can read the headlines now, "Carpal tunnel gives way to an increase in sore throats!"

A few years ago, I experimented with speech recognition technology myself for a student who couldn't use his hands for typing. I was given some IBM continuous speech software called "Via Voice" (http://www-3.ibm.com/software/speech/). I had to train the computer to recognize the student's voice. The training took quite some time and at times the dictation didn't look at all like what the student said. A year later,

a special education teacher asked me to install Dragon "Naturally Speaking" (http://www.lhsl.com/naturallyspeaking/) on a computer. It wasn't that great either. Recently, I experimented with the new Microsoft XP voice recognition software, and I again revisited training voice software. It was interesting, but my typing and accuracy is still better than the software. It just took me too long to get the typing done when speaking the words. I couldn't help wondering about what the new Honda, with its Via Voice would be like. I'm hoping the car is sound proof enough for the voice recognition to work properly. I doubt if the automobile's voice recognition software will have anything to do with the brakes! Asimov would have really enjoyed speech recognition developments for robots, students, and automobiles.

Anyway, I told the school custodian to go ahead and experiment with the speech recognition software for his e-mail.

Where Do We Go From Here…?

So, where are we going technologically with students? Certainly, the colleges and universities are on the right track with distance learning classes. Schools and districts have taken a lesson here. Having a few computers, some distance software, and a few Web cams would make sense for homebound students, or for tutoring and mentoring students. Hiring some retired teachers, training them to use some technology equipment, and then using their academic and teaching expertise just makes common sense.

Maybe the future of technology for schools isn't as far out as brain chip implantation, robots, or wearable computing clothing made from Smart Thread. Just realize that the first new thread technology in about twenty years will begin to unleash wearable computing apparel on consumers in a few years. So, while you're future thinking about a shirt that can do more than a million computer related tasks, the reality for most of us in school environments is to be brave enough to creatively experiment technologically to do what we already do, in a new way with students. The future is now.

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CECA 2002 Imagine the Possibilities

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