INSTRUCTIONAL TECH NEWSLETTER

NEED HELP?

During the holiday season we don't meet at set times because most of you are so busy. However, we are always available if you need us. If you would like to meet with us just drop a line and we will be there. For example, in November we have teachers from Albany High that want to work on an online course. So, we will meet with them at Gibbons to work on that. So, don't be shy. If there is something you want to work on just drop a line or give us a call.

We will be back on our regular schedule in January. We will be at Gibbons on Tuesdays at 4PM. We meet in the library but if there is a meeting in the library we are usually in Room 102.
In November we don't have organized dates because of the holidays. However, just email us and we will be there!

If you would like to attend, please just email Sandy at Saratoga35@aol.com or call 441-5605

HOTCHALK

HotChalk makes teachers' lives easier in a variety of ways. By automating certain tasks, teachers will have more time to focus on their work. Within minutes, anyone can create an online class space, invite students to participate, effortlessly distribute assignments, organize lesson plans, and keep track of their gradebook. Everyone stays connected once the bell rings and the classroom empties. It requires you to register but it's free!

www.hotchalk.com

FREERICE.COM

Most of you know that I hate sites with banner ads. However, I found a site that I think is worth using. It's an incredibly simple and beautiful idea. It is a vocabulary site in which the kids can donate grains of rice for getting right answers to vocabulary questions.

FreeRice has a custom database containing thousands of words at varying degrees of difficulty. There are words appropriate for people just learning English and words that will challenge the most scholarly professors. In between are thousands of words for students, business people, homemakers, doctors, truck drivers, retired people… everyone!

FreeRice automatically adjusts to your level of vocabulary. It starts by giving you words at different levels of difficulty and then, based on how you do, assigns you an approximate starting level. You then determine a more exact level for yourself as you play. When you get a word wrong, you go to an easier level. When you get three words in a row right, you go to a harder level. This one-to-three ratio is best for keeping you at the "outer fringe" of your vocabulary, where learning can take place.

The program keeps track of how many people get each word right or wrong, and then adjusts each word's difficulty level accordingly. So the words at the easiest levels are the ones that people most often get right. The words at the hardest levels are the ones that people most often get wrong.
You are earn rice 10 grains at a time. Here is how it works. When you play the game, advertisements appear on the bottom of your screen. The money generated by these advertisements is then used to buy the rice. So by playing, you generate the money tha tpays for the rice donated to hungry people.

www.freerice.com

GOOGLE SKY

In previous years we have told you about using Google earth so students can get a look at where they are located. Well, Google has now gone one step further.

In addition to browsing the Earth, Google Earth allows you to view heavenly objects, including stars, constellations, galaxies, planets and the Earth's moon. To view these objects, click *View >*

Switch to Sky or click . In Sky, the Earth is hidden and the 3D viewer presents a view of the sky

When you use Sky, the view is above your current location on Earth. For example, if you go to Paris and open Sky, you will see what is in the sky above Paris at the current time. When you exit Sky, you return to this same location.

http://earth.google.com/ userguide/v4/ug_sky.html

APPLYING TO BUSINESS SCHOOL? YOUR PP PLEASE!

http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/showstoryts.cfm?Articleid=7434

At business meetings everywhere, PowerPoint-style presentations often are met with yawns and glazed eyes. But at one of the world's top business schools, such slide shows are now an entrance requirement: In a first, the University of Chicago's Graduate School of Business this fall will require prospective students to submit four pages of electronic slides with their applications.

The new requirement is partly an acknowledgment that **Microsoft Corp.'s**

PowerPoint and similar, though lesser-known, programs, have become ubiquitous tools in the business world. But Chicago says so-called "slideware," if used correctly, also can let students show off a creative side that might not reveal itself in test scores, recommendations, or essays.

By adding a PowerPoint requirement to its application, Chicago thinks it might attract more students who have the kind of cleverness that can pay off in business—and fewer of the technocrat types who sometimes give the program a bad name.

"We wanted to have a freeform space for students to be able to say what they think is important, not always having the school run that dialogue," said Rose Martinelli, associate dean for student recruitment and admissions. "To me, this is just four pieces of blank paper. You do what you want. It can be a presentation. It can be poetry. It can be anything."

Online applications already are the norm, and it's not uncommon for colleges to let students submit extra materials, such as artwork. Undergraduate and graduate applications also are beginning to ask more creative and open-ended essay questions.

http://hb1.eschoolnews.com/media/eschoolnews/eSNSept07.pdf

In part, that's to better identify students with a creative spark. It's also designed to fend off the boredom of reading thousands of grinding, repetitive responses to questions such as, "Why is University X right for you?"

But asking for four electronic slides appears to be a new idea.

Chicago's requirement might provoke groans from some quarters. It could be called corporate America's final surrender to a technology that, in the name of promoting the flow of information, often gums it up by encouraging bureaucratic jargon and making colorful but useless graphics just a little too easy to produce.

Nonetheless, PowerPoint has become the *lingua franca* of business meetings worldwide. Its 500 million copies are used (or misused) in 30 million presentations per day, Microsoft has estimated. PowerPoint is so common in the business world that "it's actually your word processor," said Michael Avidan, a second-year Chicago MBA student, who reads applications for the graduate program and helped it do a dry run.

"When you apply to business school," he said, using a buzz word for the best a student has to offer, "it's only natural that your 'deliverables' be in PowerPoint."

Martinelli acknowledges one reason for the requirement is that students inevitably will have to master the technology in their jobs. But she says students won't be judged on the quality of their slides. Rather, the slides are an outlet for judging the kind of creativity the business world seeks.

Chicago's requirement does have some ground rules: no hyperlinks, for example, and no video. Beyond that, Martinelli said, "I really don't know what we're going to get."

It's not surprising the first PowerPoint-based college application is coming from a business school. In an undergraduate admissions office, there could well be worries about applicants' familiarity with, and access to, "slideware" technology.

Community Technology Initiative

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Six Trends in school library media centers for the 21st Century

1. Flexibility in student spaces. With the recent movement toward Response to Intervention (RTI) for identifying student needs, there will be more differentiation of instruction in the future and less whole-class instruction. However, whole-class instruction will never disappear. What that means for facility planners is that student spaces must be designed to be flexible. Don't create additional conference rooms or offices, but create classroom-sized spaces that will allow clearly defined small-group spaces, while giving teachers and library media specialists the ability to flow through the area to work with all of the groups.

2. Visual literacy. The library media center of the future will need to be visually appealing and provide ample area for display of materials and artifacts. It should display materials in a manner more commonly found in bookstores than current libraries, showcasing materials rather than simply housing them. Providing for a flexible lighting pattern also will be important, so that one class can be reading in one area while another group is watching a presentation via projector.

3. Extended access. Extended day and evening programs continue to expand. More parents most likely will be using the library media center as a meeting room or a classroom for their own learning or in conjunction with their children. This will mean the facility should be placed within the school in such a way that it can be accessed directly from the outside, without having to open the entire building. If possible, it should have its own entrance and potentially its own washroom facilities. If you're building a new school library, try approaching your local public library and offering to build a shared space. Sharing to conserve limited resources can benefit both entities.

4. Technology readiness. The LMC of the future must embrace mobile technologies, including laptop and palmtop computers. Wireless networking will be expected, but there still might be a need for larger desktop computers for student production work, graphic design, and so on. And don't forget older technologies, like copy machines and laminators— they'll still be necessary as well.

5. Supervision. Make sure the space can be easily supervised. In a perfect world, one person standing at the circulation desk should be able to supervise the entire library media center. Dead spaces, where students (or adults) can hide, are not acceptable in a center that will be open outside the regular school day. Never build a library media center with two floors; these can rarely be supervised adequately.

6. A place for books. Above all, make sure you have adequate shelving for your print collection. Eliminating books because information is available online seems foolish, particularly in light of Thomas Edison's comment in 1913 that textbooks would be obsolete with the advent of educational film. Books will continue to form an important core of your central school library collection; control and access to materials are both more efficient and effective from a library media center than when managed by individual classroom teachers. **eSN**

Steven Baule is superintendent of the Community Unit School District 201 in Westmont, Ill.