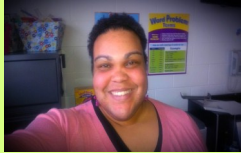


Talk Nerdy To Me

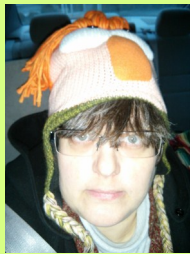
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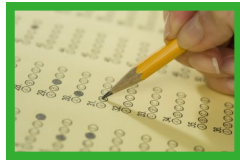
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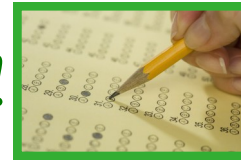
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It's Testing Time !



Yes, teachers, it is that wonderful time of the year once again. To prepare for the Writing Assessment this month and the Westest in May, I have come up with some helpful tips to get everyone through this test taking season. Tip 1: remain positive, Tip 2: Review, review, review, Tip 3: Create incentives

Tip 1: Remain positive about the test.

I know that many teachers dread this time of year but don't let your students know how you feel about this test. Remain positive and remind students of the importance of doing their very best. It may even be helpful for students to review their previous scores, so they can focus on their weak areas for this year's test.

Tip 2: Review, review, review

Review previously taught skills. Most students have difficulty on the Westest with skills that were taught at the beginning of school year. It is always a good idea to review previous lessons a couple of weeks before the tests begin so students can refresh their skills.

Tip 3: Create incentives

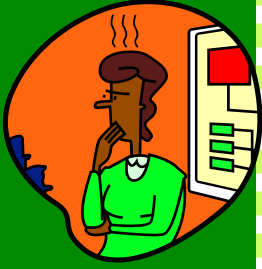
Have incentives for those students that took their time on the writing assessment this month. Some incentives might include pencils, erasers, and other school supplies that students may be in need of. I have found students like to receive prizes that they can actually use within a school setting.

Did You Know?

Did you know that the smell and taste of peppermint has been proven to increase productivity and brain function? Try this theory on students this test taking season.



-Erika Woods



TALK
NERDY
TO ME

I think it's fair to say that personal computers have become the most empowering tool we've ever created.
- Bill Gates

The Need for Computational Thinking

We are in the middle of a crisis in education. We all recognize the need to incorporate technology into our lesson plans; but did you ever stop to think about who is responsible for making that technology available for you? There is a shortage of qualified computer programmers in the United States at a time when demand has never been higher. Why are students not pursuing computer science degrees in college? It is because they have not had the proper exposure to computer science in their K-12 education. West Virginia is falling woefully behind other states in preparing students for a career in computing. We have no CSOs for Computer classes in the ele-



mentary and middle schools; and there is not a specific certification requirement for a teacher to teach computers.

What can we do? We can incorporate computational thinking in our entire curriculum. The definition of computational thinking as defined by Jeanette Wing of Carnegie Mellon University is: "the thought processes involved in formulating problems and their solutions so that the solutions are represented in a form that can be effectively carried out by an information-processing agent."

The processes involve:

- **Decomposition**—breaking a

problem down into manageable parts.

- **Pattern Recognition**—We look for patterns in everything we do: math problems, art, science, reading, writing, etc.
- **Pattern Generalization and Abstraction**—filtering out unnecessary information and representing the problem in a way that can easily be deciphered; examples: maps, charts, mathematical equations, etc.
- **Algorithm Design**—figuring out a step-by-step method for solving problems.

Please help us spread the word: our students need more than an education in Microsoft Office. They need to learn how computers work. There are many free resources for teachers of all subjects to incorporate computing into education:

- www.scratch.mit.edu Scratch is a free program from MIT designed to teach beginners and children the basics of programming with immediate visual results.
- www.alice.org Alice a free program from Carnegie Mellon University that allows users to program 3-D figures in 3-D space.
- www.CSunplugged.org is an entire curriculum of computational thinking without using a computer. Students learn about how a computer processes information while doing fun activities.
- www.csta.acm.org This is the website for the Computer Science Teachers of America. On this site are resources for teachers to expand computer pro-

gramming in schools at every level. It shows the desperate need for this education; and how our state compares with others in preparing our students for a career in computing.

- www.teachengineering.org is a website with resources for project-based learning in STEM fields
- <http://tinyurl.com/a88o4e3> The NASA Educator Resource Center in Fairmont, WV is an excellent resource for any teachers who wants to include some project-based STEM into their lessons.
- www.kodugamelab.com Kodu is a free game-creating software from Microsoft that students can use on their Xbox 360 or on computers at school to easily design their own video game.

With so many resources out there available for introducing students to the wonderful world of computing, why are we wasting so much time on PowerPoint presentations?

-Maria Marsicano





TALK
NERDY
TO ME



“Read Across America” Should Not Be Limited to One Day

March 1, 2013 may have had the title of “Read Across America,” but that does not mean that the excitement has to end there.

There are many ways that schools can get students interested in reading. With all of the technology that is available today, kids have access to print in many forms. Reading is not limited to finding a paper anymore. Creativity may be the key.

Teachers need to be clever with how their students access technology in their classrooms. In a perfect world, all students would have access to computers and laptops all day, but that is often not the case. Computers, iPads, notebooks, and other tools can be used in group settings. Students can be assigned these tools to use during stations, as they complete seatwork, or in place of written paper and pencil assignments. The possibilities that these tools can provide in a child’s success are endless. Digital Resources

There are many sites available that can allow students to choose what they are reading. Put the learning experience in the hands of the student! Give them something entertaining to read, while educating them at the same time. A wealth of knowledge is at their fin-

gertips, if they just learn how to find it.

<http://wonderopolis.org>

Have you ever wondered why zebras have stripes? “Wonderopolis” is a site developed through National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) that answers these types of questions. The site features a “wonder” of the day and allows the viewer to search other topics as well.

<http://www.nga.gov/kids>

Not the greatest artist? That’s fine when you can create your own artwork on the National Gallery of Art’s website. Not only can you exercise your own artistic abilities, you can also read about some of the art found at the gallery in Washington, DC.

<http://www.si.edu/>

Traveling to a museum may have never been a possibility before, but now it is can be brought to you instead. Everybody would find something to be curious about after visiting the Smithsonian Museum’s website. They tell about everything from space explorations to cameras that have changed through the years. There is even a place where students can learn about internship op-

portunities at the museum. This site could very well plant the seed for a dream come true.

<http://pbskids.org/whiteboard/>

PBS kids is not just fun and games. This resource provides specific skill related practice for use with whiteboards. That doesn’t mean that they are activities limited to being completed on the whiteboard. Students can complete them on the computer as well. Activities cover anything from adjectives to writing their own newspapers.

<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com>

Accessing newspapers from around the world just got easier. This site allows you to read newspapers from just about anywhere. Some newspapers can even be translated into other languages. Newspapers can be used to teach many different subjects in many new ways. Students, who would rather not read fiction, may also find a new appreciation for reading, when it applies to current events.

- Linda Steinkamp

Ocoee Middle School

Ocoee Middle School is Florida's State Demonstration School that serves almost 1500 students in the 11th largest district in the nation. It has been recognized as an Apple Distinguished School for an unprecedented three years in a row. As a technology showcase school, Ocoee Middle hosts regular tours for visiting educators and administrators to see teachers modeling the use of current technology in the classroom. The school is so progressive that it even has its own [Facebook](#) page.

As part of [FETC 2013](#) I was privileged to tour this innovative and progressive middle school. The school was rebuilt in 2000 in a unique design that fosters an excellent team teaching environment with flexible walls that allow students and teachers to share technology resources. I witnessed the teachers using new technologies such as 3D projectors and [Turning Point Responders](#) that can be downloaded as an App to turn any mobile device into a Responder. Teachers also model the use of [Doceri](#) and [Class Dojo](#).

Innovative and creative electives are offered such as Video Game Design and Digital Video Production where students learn math, reading and writing skills within the framework of the design process. I was impressed as students gave an overview of the software that they use produce a daily school newscast shot in their green screen room. One of the most surprising things I saw was that students were allowed to use their cell phones for class work. It is a powerful tool that most schools fail to utilize. A math teacher had students scan a math problem using a QR code when they walked into the classroom.

Preview this video for a taste of this innovative school.

<https://teacher.ocps.net/brandon.kari/videos/h2dtraining.mp4>

If you are offered an opportunity to visit this amazing school I would definitely recommend it. -Sue A. Meador



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

West Virginia Statewide Technology Conference 2013

The West Virginia Statewide Technology Conference serving participants from higher education, K-12, and state agencies announces our return to a face-to-face conference for 2013. The goal of the conference is to foster partnerships between educators by sharing knowledge about the latest advances in educational technology.

**Morgantown Event Center and The Waterfront Place Hotel
Morgantown, West Virginia**

July 29 - 31 and August 1, 2013

It will be an exciting learning opportunity that you won't want to miss!

WV State Technology Conference 2013

Exciting news the WV Statewide Technology Conference 2013 will be held July 29 – 31 and August 1, 2013 in Morgantown, WV. The conference is returning to its traditional face to face format this year after a one year trial as a virtual conference. I was curious as to why it was a virtual conference last year so I contacted John Miller WV Assistant Director Office of Instructional Technology. He stated:

“To be honest, we tried the virtual format for the Statewide Technology Conference out of necessity last year – there are only two ven-

ues in the state large enough for the conference. Both the Charleston Civic Center and the Morgantown Waterfront Resort were booked during the time we needed to hold our annual conference. Our Virtual Technology Conference was a huge success though.



Waterfront Place Hotel Morgantown, WV.

Nearly all who attended gave positive feedback. However, a number of people requested that we return to a face-to-face conference or that we mix face-to-face with some virtual options. Our goal is to have a Statewide Technology Conference where some participants can attend in person while others attend virtually. This year, we are returning to the face-to-face format. But, we will have a follow-up virtual portion in the fall. Anyone who attends the face-to-face conference may participate in an extra day or two of virtual sessions which will build on the face-to-face sessions.”

So now you know and can make your plans to attend this exciting event this summer.

- Sue A. Meador