Florida Digital Educator Program

A statewide integration initiative

Karen C. Seddon

Special points of interest:

- Gaggle.net
- Hubs of Learning
- The FDE website
- **B**est **O**f e**X**ample
  - Carrie Bilancio
  - Julie Sawyer
  - Stephanie Middleton
  - Patricia Kurtz

Diane Darling has always loved integrating technology. Is there a way to integrate the iPhone?

Heather Gonzalez looks for ways to engage her students with technology in order to prepare them for middle school and the real world.

Have You Gaggled Today?

Did you know that Gaggle.net is the approved e-mail system for students in both Polk and Osceola counties? We had five optional Hubs of Learning sessions about the effective use of Gaggle.net in the classroom. Teachers are so creative. When asked, *"How do you use Gaggle.net in your classroom?"* some of the Florida Digital Educators responded with great enthusiasm.

At Mill Creek Elementary School, **Diane Darling** reports: *"Currently I am using Gaggle.net as a reward for working on class assignments quietly. If the class is working all period on whatever I have assigned, they can have the last 10 minutes for writing to their friends on Gaggle.net. It helped get more of my permission slips in, and it helped with classroom discipline."*

Natalie Odom, 6th,7th and 8th grade math teacher at Kissimmee Middle School said, *"I was able to use my digital locker in Gaggle while I was away at the Florida Council of Mathematics conference so that my students could access my video lessons. I created video lessons using PowerPoint slides (saved as a jpeg) and Windows Movie Maker. I spoke over the slides to create a video for my students to use to learn their lesson. This worked great and it was like I was here when I wasn't. The students said they enjoyed being able to rewind "me" and slow "me" down. When there were problems, my students were able to email me and explain what their problem consisted of. It has also been a means for students to "drop box" their concerns with me when they don't* want to announce them in class. Gaggle has proven to be a great addition to my classroom."
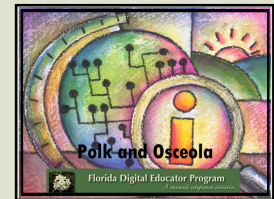
Heather Gonzalez, 4th grade teacher at Sunrise Elementary School explained, *"I love using Gaggle with my fourth grade students. Everyone has an account and we can write e-mails to each other. They e-mail me if they have questions about homework and I am able to respond very easily. I have also taken my class to the computer lab with an assignment that they had to type out in a Word document and then upload it to me. They all were successful. Gaggle has really allowed my students to prepare themselves for the future. The thing I love the most is when I hear them saying I will meet you on Gaggle at 5 so we can chat. Sometimes they talk about homework and sometimes they just talk. I have had no problems this year with any students items getting blocked. I can't wait for my students to get to middle school and high school where they will already know how to use the technology."*

The teacher who has embraced Gaggle.net totally is **Stephanie Middleton**, World History teacher at Professional Technical High School (PATHS). She explains: *"For me the question is...how am I NOT using Gaggle in my class:) I'm a self proclaimed "Gaggle Groupie".*

I use all the functions:
__E-MAIL__: alert students to missing work, send out announcements, deal with class issues (small wrist slaps), answering and receiving homework questions
__DIGITAL LOCKER__: I put all my PPT notes here for student access (if you were absent, missed something, etc), I put "How to" docs to help kids learn how to do tech things (how to save a picture, how to download a compatibility file), I put audio files used in class here, paintings used in class, any worksheet I hand out goes in here so if they lose the one I give them or forget it at school, they can print another one at home...a veritable catch all.
__MESSAGE BOARDS:__ This is where I post my weekly homework assignments to the kids. I made mine read only (cause otherwise it got WAY to confusing for them). I also will throw an extra credit opportunity with an expiration date (to reward those checking Gaggle regularly)
__CHAT:__ I use chat for test reviews. I will chat for 1 hour on the evening before a test with anyone who wants to join me (very successful). Students will go in on their own to "Meet" if they have projects they're working on and can't arrange rides to meet in person, also has been beneficial to me in getting to know some of my shy students, etc...
__BLOG__: My students created their blog and that is where they do their weekly homework. I LOVE THIS! - no more paper clutter, saves the earth, and no more deciphering illegible handwriting! I can grade at my leisure with only my laptop required! My students like it cause there are no papers to "lose" on the way to school!

For more Gaggle.net experiences, see our FDE website www.imc.osceola.k12.fl.us/EETT

Cara Bilancio, Julie Sawyer, Patricia Kurtz, Stephanie Middleton

Polk and Osceola County teachers

One of the most beneficial aspects of the Teaching & Learning Institutes this summer were the relationships formed. Four suitemates from Camp 1still meet monthly. According to **Stephanie Middleton,** *"Our suite from camp is great! We are a very diverse population! We span both counties, include a variety of disciplines and grades: middle school math, high school social studies, and multiple elementary grades. We meshed and bonded so well during camp that we decided BEFORE camp was over that we wanted to meet throughout the year, not only to keep up our friendship, but to continue collaborating and sharing the ups and downs of integrating technology this year. As we all know how the best laid plans and intentions usually go, with us saying we'll meet and then life gets busy and you never do. So before we even left camp, we all pulled out our calendars and set a date for our first meeting. We started meeting in August and choose a different restaurant that's half way between us and meet for dinner. At every dinner we choose the date and place for the next meeting. Once we met somewhere with free wi-fi, but found we worked more than shared, so I don't know if we'll do that again.*

But when we meet we catch up on our personal lives, work lives, vent about the issues we've had with technology, share triumphs in technology integration and share ideas of things we plan to do or resources for all (we even bring ideas of things we thought of for each other - like 'hey this won't work for me, but I bet _____ could use it). Upcoming plans for us include (besides our monthly dinners), a reunion of sorts this summer. Beachside hopefully!! We'd like to rent a cottage or something and just enjoy each other's company and bring our laptops of course!!!"

Julie Sawyer enjoys the adventure because, *"We meet monthly and share not just techie stuff, but also celebrate together worthy events (December was Stephanie's birthday and my National Board achievement). I have gone to Carrie's school and collaborated on a project with her kids; she plans to come to mine sometime in the new year to do the same. Through our Google group we share new tech finds with one another. Stephanie & Carrie & I all plan to go hear Pat's handbell choir play in Orlando. So, it's more than the tech - we are friends who care about what's happening in each other's lives. We are hoping to plan a little retreat for summer - maybe at a resort!*

Stephanie Middleton, PATHS, Professional and Technical HS, Osceola County

Carrie Bilancio, Spook Hill Elementary, Polk County

Patricia Kurtz, Westwood Middle School, Polk County

Optional Hubs of Learning

Audacity is a FREE open source software for recording and editing audio. It is available on Mac and Windows. Florida Digital Educators in Polk and Osceola Counties were able to take an informal two hour class to learn to edit and mix audio. The teachers learned to record their voice, add copyright free music and render an audio file. The most important emphasis of the training is to empower the students to become the editors and mixers. Teachers have time to record but making the time to edit and mix audio is more difficult. Some of the Florida Digital Educators are raising up *"Pod Squads"* at their schools. These students are learning to edit and mix audio recordings made by teachers and students to get the recordings podcast ready.
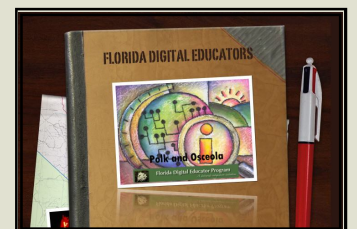
Osceola County recently purchased a new server to make podcasting very simple for the classroom teachers. Once the teachers have designed and recorded their message, the server interface will be accessible online anytime, any place to upload files to their own classroom website. Classroom recording is not new, but podcasting gives students and teachers a voice on the Internet that parents and a wider audience can "subscribe" to in order to keep up with classroom events.

The Florida Digital Educators are learning this new technology to increase writing and reading skills. Students can download a recording, review lessons, readings and classwork at their own pace and even increase fluency levels. Send your Audacity and podcasting experiences to Karen C. Seddon for an upcoming issue on podcasting.

Julie Sawyer, Michigan Avenue Elementary, Osceola County

Visit our website at
www.imc.osceola.k12.fl.us/EETT