



# Jefferson Township Public Schools Office of Instructional Technology

*"Developing 21st Century Skills One "Byte" at a Time"*

**Newsletter**

**December 2009**

## The Rise of E-Books, Digital Content and 3 Dimensional Reading / Writing

The term e-books is a hot topic lately. During the holiday season if you shop online or visit a book retailer I am sure you have come across some of the new e-book readers. Amazon was the first to enter this market with the [KINDLE](#). Barnes and Noble recently introduced their version of an e-book reader called The [NOOK](#). Each reader offers similar features including the ability to store thousands of full text books. Their screen size is the size of a paper back book at a minimum. They have an easy to read screen that can be used in brightly lit environments. Their batteries will last for days and you can scroll through pages via a touch screen or on screen navigation.

While this may seem like a high tech option for a traditional task (reading) there are some genuine advantages to these devices and e-books in general.

E-book readers currently can be purchased for \$250 - \$350. Most new release books can be purchased for \$9.99 compared to \$25.00 for hard cover print copies. E-book readers have features such as highlighting text, bookmarking pages, as well as the ability to bring all of your books with you in one small device.

E-book readers are wifi capable. Most communicate over the 3G cell phone network directly to their provider (Amazon, Barnes & Nobel etc..) for free. You can purchase and download books over this connection without incurring any charges other then the cost of the text. Some of them (and soon to be all of them) will connect via standard wireless.

The implications of this type of connectivity are profound. Let's think of this in terms of school textbooks. The 3G and wifi connectivity allow texts to be updated instantly via a download. When Pluto is not a planet anymore our science books can be updated the next day. We will not have to wait for a new release of a textbook nor will we incur the cost of moving to a new series.

Wifi capabilities will allow for access to digital content at the student desk within the e-text. Links within the text to multi-media, interactive websites, additional resources, and supplemental materials will be immediately accessible. Example: a student reading a chapter on dividing 3 digit numbers can click a link to see a visual tutorial that demonstrates the steps.

Recently, Calif. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and other state education leaders announced that they will be working together to compile a list of free, open digital textbooks that meet state-approved standards and will be available to high school math and science classes this fall. Gov. Schwarzenegger said that "as California's budget crisis continues, we must find such innovative ways to save money and improve services." (Read "[California considers open digital textbooks.](#)")

It is inevitable that the materials we use to instruct will be moving to this medium. While there are a number of advantages, there are also a number of areas of concern. Access to technology is a big one. As these devices come down in cost, districts will consider their costs vs. the costs of textbooks. In my opinion, there will be a point that the advantage will move to digital devices and e-books. The accessibility of wifi in schools will also make this transition easier. I envision a \$100 wifi enabled eBook reader in the hands of every student.

What I believe to be the number one area of concern is "How do we prepare our students and faculty members to maximize the potential of this medium? How are we using variations of these technologies now to prepare our students? **Continued.....**

## Three Dimensional Writing and Literacy

The ability to read and write in 3 dimensions is a key 21<sup>st</sup> century skill. Almost all online text is written in this format. With the addition of blogs, wiki's, SharePoint portals, and collaborative tools in the workplace it will be important for our students to learn to read and create this type of content

### How can we develop this skill?

We should ask ourselves, are we using wiki's or [Moodle sites](#) to create interactive content for our students? Do we assign projects that allow students to create three dimensional, interactive texts? Do we provide opportunities for students to publish work using Web 2.0?

### Example: Hyper-Linking Narrative

Students create a narrative document with links to additional content. Text with-in the narrative will link to a PowerPoint presentation, video clips, more detailed explanations, images, etc...

## Project Ideas and Tools

### Interactive PowerPoint Presentations

These presentations are PowerPoint's without the bullets. Students create presentations with navigation. Imagine a slide that diagrams a cell. Each area of the cell is labeled. By clicking on the label you are redirected to a slide with additional linked content. This could be a student narrated explanation, additional images and diagrams, a video clip, or text. A simple click will take you back to the original diagram.

### Moodle - Online Course Management Software

[Moodle](#) is best described as an open-source version of blackboard. Teachers and students can create discussion boards, online assignments, live chats, blog postings, wiki pages, and quizzes. Students can create blog postings that can be reviewed by classmates and faculty members. Moodle provides an opportunity for students to write for an audience. Because it is web-based it will allow for the creation of 3 dimensional content as well as 24/7 access. Learning is on demand with this tool.

## Wiki Pages

[Wiki's](#) are web pages with an edit button. Groups of students can collaborate on one page. The pages can include text, images, audio, video, hyperlinks, and discussions. Students can work on their own independent pages or in small groups. Content is shared, accessible by all, and available for threaded discussion. Student pages can be written 3 dimensional just as the websites they are accessing are designed. Student writing can be published with the ability of the teacher to leave guiding comments along the way.

### Digital Story

Multi-Media is one of the most utilized content on the web. Sites like youtube, web television, online movies, news clips, and general multi-media content are growing in popularity at an alarming rate. The delivery of content via online multi-media streams is slowly outdated the television. More and more we see corporations using this medium for target marketing, training, and collaboration among employees. Just yesterday I learned how to install ceramic tiles by watching a youtube video.

Digital storytelling allows students to publish work within this medium. It is a medium they are familiar with and it provides an authentic experience for them. It is a fantastic way to publish their work for a global audience. Using free software available in our District we can have students create this type of content in groups or individually. Examples include: Student writing with images and narration, explanation of complex topics, documentaries, commercials, interviews, or infomercials.

We now have access to a number of web 2.0 tools that can be integrated into our curriculum. I ask that you enter the new year with a goal to explore at least one of the available tools. Over the next 6 months try to integrate one of these tools into your curriculum. I will be available to assist through the entire process. \*

Continued.....

## Websites of Interest Primary

The following websites are great for Early Readers:

### Starfall

- [www.Starfall.com](http://www.Starfall.com)
- Starfall has been helping people learn to read for years, and it's still the best. Its scaffolding is great, and its stories — both fiction and nonfiction — are engaging. I'd particularly recommend the [I'm Reading](#) section for older students.

### Storyline

<http://www.storylineonline.net/index.html>

- Storyline contains celebrities in the screen actors guild reading books. Each book has lessons and activities.

The following websites are great for Writing Enforcement (primary level)

### BBC Bitesize Revision for Writing

- A great website for writing instruction/reinforcement is.... the [BBC Bitesize Revision for Writing](#).

### Scholastic - Create a Tale

- Scholastic's [Create A Tale](#). Students can create a tale using step-by-step instructions including images.



## Google Introduces Some New Search Tools in their labs.

### Google News Timeline

<http://newstimeline.googlelabs.com/>

Google News Timeline is a web application that organizes information chronologically. It allows users to view news and other data sources on a zoom cable, graphical timeline. You can navigate through time by dragging the timeline, setting the "granularity" to weeks, months, years, or decades, or just include a time period in your query (i.e. "1977").

Available data sources include recent and historical news, scanned newspapers and magazines, blog posts and Twitter status messages, sports scores and various types of media like music albums and movies.

Get started with some of our favorite queries like [Nobel Physics Prize](#), [Jack Nicholson movies](#), [Barack Obama quotes](#), [Baseball news photos](#).

### Living Stories Search

<http://livingstories.googlelabs.com/>

The Living Stories project is an experiment in presenting news, one designed specifically for the online environment. The project was developed by Google in collaboration with two of the country's leading newspapers, The New York Times and The Washington Post.

### All in one place

Complete coverage of an on-going story is gathered together and prioritized on one URL. You can now quickly navigate between news articles, opinion pieces and features without waiting long for pages to load.

### Easy to explore

Each story has an evolving summary of current developments as well as an interactive timeline of critical events. Stories can be explored by themes, significant participants or multimedia.

### Smarter reading

Updates to the story are highlighted each time you come back, and older news is summarized.

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**