"Do not confine your children to your own learning, for they were born in another time."
– Chinese Proverb

From the Director

What happened to November? One minute, it was October and the next time I looked up from my desk, it was almost December. As a result of that strange time displacement, this is our combined November/December newsletter.

Last year at this time, we sent you our first newsletter. In it, I wrote:
"I'm excited for all that awaits us in 2016. We're going to be adding even more devices, finding innovative classroom technology uses, rolling out a new web site, doubling the speed of our Internet connection, wiring more schools, revamping the Insider, increasing our use of data to drive decisions and using our technology tools more effectively."

We made a lot of progress this year, including the addition of more than 1,400 Chromebooks, bringing our total to over 4,000 across the district. The Insider and the district website are updated, with school websites in progress. We cabled 5 schools last summer with the rest being completed by next summer. More teachers are using technology in increasingly creative ways. We've added professional development opportunities. Overall, we have a lot to be proud of this year.

Our department appreciates all that you do every day to support our students and our staff. We hope that everyone has a very happy holiday season with plenty of time with friends and family and many new happy memories created.

New Telephone System

During the winter break, 101Voice will replace our district telephone system. The picture at left is a portion of the stack of 700+ phones being prepared for installation. We recently sent an email to all staff providing a training video and a quick user guide to help everyone prepare for the change. After viewing the video and the guide, staff members who need hands-on training can sign up to attend a session on 12/8 or 12/15.

Hour of Code

December 5-11, 2016 is Computer Science Education Week. The major event for the week is the "Hour of Code", "a one-hour introduction to computer science, designed to demystify code." There are many great resources on the Hour of Code page. A great place to start is this video on how to run the hour of code. There are lessons available for all grade levels and subjects, student and teacher experience, etc. at https://code.org/learn including a new Moana themed lesson from Disney. There are even Hour of Code lessons that don't require a Chromebook or other device. Take a look for yourself.

21st Century Pen Pals?

I'm old enough to remember when students had "pen pals" using real pens and paper. This article from Edutopia provides a great overview of how technology can bring an entirely new dimension to the idea. In the examples, students communicate regularly through email, images, audio, exchange of presentations and live videoconferences. The article points out several organizations that help facilitate the connections and examples of how it has impacted students. Imagine how your students would react to exchanging presentations with students in another part of the world.

The "In-Class Flip"

Flipping your Classroom is a huge investment in time and requires a large amount of faith on the teacher's part. I thought this post from Jennifer Gonzalez in Edutopia provided a great way to get your feet in the flipped classroom pool without a dramatic change in your classroom. She suggests the "In-Class Flip" where you record the lecture, but instead of students watching it at home, they watch it in class and the video becomes a "station" in a class rotation. By using the video for the direct instruction, the teacher has more time to work with the other groups or individual students. Watch the video to see how it is done.

Need Some Lesson Plans?

Most of us have heard of Common Sense Media in relation to digital citizenship, but did you know that they also have a part of their website where teachers share lesson plans? You can search the lesson plans by grade and subject to find ideas you might be able to use in your classroom. Examples from the front page include "Stop Motion Summaries," "American Symbols Come to Life," "Projectile Motion," and "Evaluating Legitimate Sources."

Berryessa Ed-Tech Professional Development

Martha Campos is doing afternoon (3:30pm-5:00pm) Ed-Tech professional development sessions in the Mac lab at Piedmont (Rm 33). Martha is excited about having a dedicated, well equipped space for these hands-on sessions. The list of classes is available. Classes include Google Apps, Hapara Workspace, Blogger, Edmodo, EDPuzzle, Google Classroom, Chromebook Overview and much more! Register today!

Students Need Help Detecting "Fake News"

With all the recent press coverage about "fake news" related to the election campaign, this post from Frank M. Baker in MiddleWeb.com is very timely. It is a great opportunity to have a conversation with students about information or media literacy addressing the critical questions such as "Who created the message?" or "What details might be omitted and why?" The post provides several strategies and resources that can be used to help students be more informed consumers of the vast pool of information available to them.

Sharing Technology Resources

Please visit the Technology Services department blog. New instructional resources and tips are added there daily. If you have something you want to share, let us know! You can also see the blog posts by following us on Twitter! The archives of this newsletter are available on our web site. Follow BUSD on Facebook and Twitter!