"Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important." – Bill Gates

From the Director: Reflections on 2015

Arriving near the end of the year, I have a unique perspective on what the district accomplished during 2015 related to technology. Given everything that happened, with all the personnel changes, the summer project that lasted until November, new interim assessments, tons of new devices, old phones, not enough time for PD and lots of things I don't even know about, I think everyone, both inside and outside of our department is in remarkably good humor. Everyone has been very kind to me and from what I see, kind to each other.

Kelvin and I just spent a few days at the California Educational Technology Professionals Association (CETPA) conference. We saw a multitude of new products and services, got a chance to talk to our peers about their innovative approaches and shared ideas on how we can better support teaching and learning with technology. We came back energized by what we saw and heard. We'll share some of the things that got our attention in this and future editions of this newsletter.

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.

Thank you for all that you do to help our students! On behalf of our team, we wish you a very happy holiday season with many opportunities to enjoy time with family and friends!

Chromebook Tip

If you have Chromebooks that aren't being used regularly, first shame on you. Second, if you intend to use them for benchmark or state assessments, be sure that you power them up, connect as Guest and let them run for 24 hours at least once a month. In order to receive software updates, they need to be on and connected to our network. If you don't, when your next test window arrives, you'll spend hours waiting for the updates to finish before students can use them to test.

Technology Standards

Technology equipment standards are coming soon. We've been working with Bonny to identify, review and update as necessary the standard technology items we purchase in order to ensure that we're making the best use of our limited funds and are certain our team can support your device once it arrives. In next month's newsletter, we'll have a link to the options and prices.

Professional Development

Having great technology tools and innovative software isn't very helpful without matching professional development. We have great opportunities to learn ahead, but be sure to let us know what you need by filling out a Professional Development Request Form!

Share Your Innovative Uses of Technology

Are you or one of your colleagues using technology in an innovative or effective way? We're looking for examples of how technology is being used in our district that we can share in future newsletters, on our web site and in professional development. We can't promise fortune, but we can promise fame, at least in our district. Please email Dave and let us know about the great uses of technology in our district so we can help share them.

Use a Map to Tell a Story

StoryMap^{JS} is a "free tool to help you tell stories on the web that highlights the locations of a series of events." It creates clickable maps that can incorporate multimedia and text at each step of the story. You can be creating maps within a few minutes of visiting the site. They also have a library of existing example maps that you can use.

Website Refresh

We're working with our web site vendor, Catapult to update our web site with a more modern look and feel. We're currently working on the layout for the district page and a school site template. After we've refined the layouts, we'll be able to roll our existing content into it as a starting point. We're hoping to make the new web site public this spring.

Interested in "Making"?

At the CETPA conference, Dave and Kelvin heard a keynote from Sylvia Libow Martinez about the Maker Movement. Dave also attended a session by Smita Kolhatkar about the Maker Lab at Barron Park Elementary in Palo Alto Unified. The Maker Movement is about a lot more than just 3D printers or cardboard creations. Check out MakeZine.com and their Bay Area Makerfaire in San Mateo on May 20-22nd, 2016. Take a look at these sites for ideas on how you might start incorporating making at your school.

District Technology Committee

The District Technology Committee is starting to meet again with the first meeting scheduled for December 14, 2015 at 3:30pm in the District Office Board Room. Our hope is that it will be a great opportunity to collaborate about effective ways to use technology in our district.

Have a Suggestion?

If you have suggestions for items to be included in our newsletter, please let us know. We'd love to include your ideas!

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter! Have a great holiday season and we look forward to working with you to use technology to improve teaching and learning.