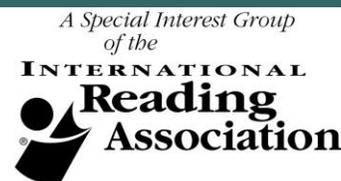


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TILE-SIG



Technology in Literacy Education Special Interest Group



Special Interest Articles In This Issue:

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- **Literature Reviews: *Keepin' It Real* by Brenda Stein Dzaldov, p. 7**
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Welcome message from the Co-Editors of the 2012-2013 TILE-SIG Newsletter



Greetings TILE-SIG Members!

Thanks for reading the Fall issue of our newsletter! First, we'd like to welcome our new columnist, Vicky Zygouris-Coe, who will be sharing information, resources, and ideas about online learning and teaching. Her first article, which is in this issue, provides us with an overview of online learning and helps us reflect about whether this method of teaching/learning is right for our particular wants, needs, and circumstances. One of our regular columnists, Denise Stuart, has provided us with a great summary of *Stixy* in *Using Cool Tools: Voices from the Field* (see p. 2). Columnist Brenda Stein Dzaldov reviews *Keepin' It Real*, which provides us information on integrating digital technology to support our students' literacy and writing development (see p. 7). Finally, in addition to our regular contributors, Katie Stover and Crystal Glover report how they used VoiceThread in a primary classroom to support authentic writing experiences for students.

We know that you've heard us mention this before, but as we look toward another great year in 2013, we encourage all of you to think about how you could become more active in the group. There are still a number of opportunities for our members to contribute in important ways and we welcome your contributions to our group and the International Reading Association. A membership form is available on the last page of this newsletter to share with others (or to remind you to pay your dues). Be sure to check out the offerings at this year's IRA Pre-Conference Technology Institute in San Antonio this May (see p. 8) and our sneak preview of the TILE-SIG's roundtable offerings during the regular conference week (p. 9). Enjoy the issue's resources!

☺ *Mike Putman* and *Julie Coiro*, Co-Editors, TILE-SIG Newsletter

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● ● ● Using Cool Tools: Voices From the Field

By Denise H. Stuart and Elizabeth A. Testa

Denise Stuart is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of Akron. As a literacy educator, her teaching has spanned preschool through adult in school and community settings. Among the courses she teaches are Literacy and Technology, Language Arts and Media and Children's Literature. Her current research focuses on issues of integration of technology in literacy teaching and learning. You can reach Denise at dstuart@uakron.edu



Stixy: The Techno-Bulletin Board of the 21st Century

We have all used the blackboard and then the white board, sometimes the smart board and now in the 21st Century, the [Stixy](#) board, a digital surface to tack up sticky notes, links, photos, documents, calendar reminders and more with a click and a drag of a [widget](#). Founded by Jonas Höglund and Anders Ottoson in 2007, this free online tool is designed to be a digital bulletin board offering ways to collaborate, generate, organize and share information. Access to each Stixyboard is determined by the creator of the board for controlled grouping. Benefits for use include the flexibility in organizing information with free form design and the capability to post text and other media, including links. Challenges experienced parallel those with other bulletin boards: so much information can overcrowd and layer on the board complicating visibility.

As an accessible and user friendly application Stixy offers clear directions on creating a Stixyboard by navigating simple menus, loading widgets, uploading media and adding content. A different drop down menu appears as each widget is selected and dragged to the workspace allowing the user to customize, for example, their sticky notes with familiar options of font size, type and color selections, background color choices or to resize, frame, rotate or add effects to a photo widget. Stixyboards can readily be shared with others by email invitation, creating a unique group of users who all have equal capacity to load and manage content. Each board can be "tagged" and given a title for ease of identification to the group. Users have their list of Stixyboards available on a menu when they sign in using their email and password.

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Stixy: The Techno-Bulletin Board...

(continued from page 2) by Denise H. Stuart & Elizabeth A. Testa



Stixy in the Classroom

How might this cool tool be used in the classroom, specifically for literacy learning? Its ease of use supports learners of all ages and abilities. One educator suggests teacher convenience; she does not teach in the same classroom every period so uses Stixyboard as an interactive communication created with her students, where work is displayed, assignments are discussed and the calendar feature reminds of due dates. A Language Arts teacher suggests loading a photo or image for students to then use descriptive language or expressive writing around it. Another teacher suggests creating a word bank for a unit being studied where vocabulary is written and illustrated, students selecting ways to present key terms. Stixyboard can be used to extend the book club; one teacher describes how her students post their book recommendations for their peers readily accessible at any time. Another begins a unit with students generating prior knowledge on Stixyboards about the topic to be studied. This could be extended into a [K-W-L](#) chart using sticky notes. How about a digital [poetry salon](#)?

Collaboration is key to [21st Century Learning](#) and this cool tool offers a platform for developing these skills (Ballanca & Brandt, 2010). One teacher suggests creating "real world" roles for students as designer, photographer and script writer to collaborate on a project and share ideas managed through Stixy. As groups are working together various group members might select their own color of sticky note to distinguish their ideas posted. Building on the reality of the socially networked generation of learners and the socially networked classroom (Kist, 2010) Stixy is a site where learners can respond to literature, collaborate to construct their meaning of text read or plan creative projects.

Because Stixy is a productivity management application, using the calendar and timeline features are a must for group projects. Using Stixyboards as collaborative work spaces is a wonderful way to address the Common Core Speaking and Listening Standards which emphasize collegial, productive discussions with a balance of questioning and response. Each group could set up a team Stickyboard and invite their teacher to become one of the users. As students post documents for their group to work on and find images for presentations, the teacher can monitor their progress and post feedback and reminders about due dates. Grading the collaboration and group participation would be visually supported by having students color-code their comments by using a consistent color of sticky note throughout the project.

University of Akron teacher candidate, Amanda K. comments on another aspect of this approach to using Stixy that aligns to the Common Core: Scaffolding students in independence. "I think that Stixy would be useful in the classroom as a guide for long-term projects. Using this website allows the teacher to discuss the project and address questions from students without having to disrupt class time." Amanda and other candidates learned about Stixy as they collaborated with middle level learners across time and place in the example described below. A literacy educator teaching a course in Secondary Reading Programs, Elizabeth Testa details her use of Stixyboards as her university students interacted with middle level learners reading paired fiction and non-fiction text.

Elizabeth Testa Shares her Work with Stixy and H.O.T.S

Leaving the sunny warmth of a mid-western July afternoon to come into a very traditional college classroom, students in my content literacy course groaned under the weight of the syllabus and the condensed time frame of a five-week summer session. While I explained the assignments and the course emphases, I nervously assessed the faces of the group and wondered how the secondary social studies, math, and science education majors would accept the idea of leading literature discussions both online and face-to-face with middle level learners. Our class would be working with a summer reading program for the learners of the National Inventors Hall of Fame STEM School near our campus in Akron, Ohio. Directed by the school's media specialist Susan Hall, the summer reading program centered on inquiry into climate change. The learners would read Rebecca Stead's (2007) *First Light*, a young adult novel about global warming.

(continued on page 5)



Digital Resources to Keep You In the Loop



Free Digital Literacy Resources

Free Technology for Teachers (<http://www.freetech4teachers.com/>): This amazing blog, authored by Richard Byrne, shares information about free resources that teachers can use in their classroom. This resource has won an Edublogs Award for four years in a row (2008-2011).. Subscribe to this blog to get fresh and free information on large and small topics, with a brief description of the resource, and several ideas for how it can be applied to educational settings.

Youth Learn (<http://www.youthlearn.org>) is designed to support educators through the planning and implementation of out-of-school youth programs that integrate project-based learning and/or new technologies. The resources section includes lesson plans, practical tips and implementation strategies for topics ranging from storytelling and photography to media literacy and critical thinking.

Read Cube (<http://www.readcube.com/>) is a free online research tool and reference manager for those of you engaged in reviewing the literature on any topic. After downloading the app, you can use it to search for, organize, annotate, and customize your sources and easily import articles so straight into Endnote or your favorite citation software.

TILE-SIG Educational Blog Watch



Literacy Beat

<http://literacybeat.com>



Maintained by five literacy experts (who happen to be active and former TILE-SIG members), Literacy Beat was created to "share ideas, tools, resources, and strategies for integrating technology, media, and Web 2.0 into teaching and learning." Recent posts include methods to use reciprocal roles to support online inquiry, creating multimodal shoe poems, and enhancing opportunities to engage in professional develop through technology. Whether you are looking for practical teaching tips or information about cutting edge literacy tools, this blog is definitely worth checking out!

Stixy: The Techno-Bulletin Board ...

(continued from page 3) by Denise H. Stuart & Elizabeth A. Testa

While I was not concerned about the English/language arts majors, I recognized that for the other content area majors, discussing literature was novel and perhaps a bit intimidating. Reader-response theory and the emphasis on allowing the reader to build a transaction with a text was new territory for these learners (Rosenblatt, 1978). Adding to this unfamiliarity, my partners at the [NIHF STEM School](#) planned to use, Stixy.com, to construct online, interactive bulletin boards that would be the platform for online literature discussions. Susan came to campus the second day of class to demonstrate the website and to help my students set up their own Stixyboards. This "cool tool" possesses a clean, elegant interface, a white background, without "gridlines or a maximum size of the board" (www.stixy.com). Across the bottom of the Stixyboard are widgets, the building blocks of the space. There are four to choose from: sticky notes (hence the name of the site), photos, documents and calendar to-do lists. The university students began to build their boards, first uploading photos of themselves, then documents like the discussion directions and the grading rubric. Finally, the students developed [H.O.T.S. questions](#), higher-order thinking skills questions, composing these on sticky notes. The middle school learners would compose responses to the questions on sticky notes, layering their responses on the Stixyboard, creating a visual display of their discussion (see screen shot below for an example). As Susan finished teaching my students how to build their boards, a collective sigh of relief rang through the room, and an enthusiasm to use these boards for discussion became palpable.

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Stixy: The Techno-Bulletin Board ...

(continued from page 5) by Denise H. Stuart & Elizabeth Testa



Over the next few weeks, the university students and middle school students would meet at the local public library and online through their Stixyboards. The middle school students quickly took to the site, learning to navigate the simple interface and to manage the features. Some of the middle school students even taught the university students a thing or two; Amanda K. quipped, "I was not familiar with using a Stixyboard, and the students showed me how to change the colors of the post-its so I knew who was responding to the questions."

Another of my students struggled to draw out a reserved student who was painfully shy and would not participate in the face-to-face discussion. However, this learner actively engaged on their groups' Stixyboard. In a reflection written after the summer reading program ended, secondary English education major, Darla Wood writes, "My experience with Naomi taught me the importance of finding a way to communicate with someone who is quiet. She had important things to add to [our] Stixy conversation." Naomi felt at ease in sharing when the pressures of real-time, physical presence were eliminated, and the expression of thoughts could be supported in a comfortable environment like the Stixyboard.

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Literature Reviews

***Keepin' It Real* – Lisa Donohue (Foreword: David Booth) (Pembroke Publishers Limited)**



Review written by Brenda Stein Dzaldov. Brenda can be reached at Brenda.steindzaldov@utoronto.ca

Keepin' It Real is a professional resource that supports teachers to engage with instructional technology in the classroom. A forward by Dr. David Booth outlines the incredible contribution of this book to the practical work of integrating technology and literacy education. Donohue shows teachers how to use digital technology to support all areas of reading and writing development. The fact that Donohue is a classroom teacher, using the technologies in real and innovative ways with her own students, makes this book even more engaging with its practical examples of how to get the most out of technology to "engage, challenge and motivate all learners".

The book is divided into chapters on Digital Literacy, Media Literacy, Social Literacy and Critical Literacy. Each chapter includes "digital task cards" that give teachers ideas about how to use digital tools (or "tech tools") in real ways. Some examples include using chatrooms, search engines, digital mixing, wikis, blogs, vlogs and podcasts. The Social Literacy chapter is invaluable, cautioning teachers about real concerns that include streetproofing for the 21st century, cyberbullying and cyber-risks. In each chapter, the examples explain each tool in simple language and then provide goals for the tech tool as well as ideas on how to link each tool and activity to literacy objectives.

In the final chapter, "Putting it all together", Lisa supports teachers by re-assuring them that, even with limited digital resources in their schools, there are so many easy ways to share the texts that engage students in digital environments and also multiple ways to share the learning. As Donohue quotes Elliot Eisner in the chapter on Social Literacy, "The primary aim of education is not to enable students to do well in school, but instead to do well in the lives they lead outside of school". This resource helps teachers to do this important job by making it easy to get started in the world of digital technology that links in-school literacies to the out-of-school literate lives of the students we teach.

Upcoming Technology/Literacy Conferences

Even if you cannot afford to travel to the following conferences, there are often many resources and handouts made available to readers after the conference is held.



- **NCTE Annual Convention.** Nov. 15-18, 2012 in Las Vegas, NV. Register at <http://www.ncte.org/annual/registration>
- **Illinois Education & Technology Conference.** Nov. 29-30 in Springfield, IL. *Encouraging Learning in a Changing World.* Register at <http://www.il-edtech.org/index.php?page=register>
- **Literacy Research Association.** Nov. 28 – Dec. 1, 2012 in San Diego, CA. Register at <http://www.literacyresearchassociation.org/conference/conf12/Attendee.html>



Seeking Nominations for 2012 TILE-SIG Computers in Reading Research Award Winner

We are now seeking nominations for the 2013 TILE-SIG Computers in Reading Research Award. This award is given by the TILE-SIG to honor reading researchers who have made a significant contribution to research related to classroom literacy instruction and technology integration. Award winners are announced at the annual TILE-SIG session at IRA and present their research the following year at the SIG session.

Please send your nominations to Julie Coiro at jcoiro@snet.net no later than Feb. 15, 2013. Your nomination should include the person's name, affiliation, and 1-2 sentences that summarize how this individual's research has contributed to new ideas about technology use as part of literacy instruction at the elementary, middle school, or high school level. All nominations will be considered and TILE-SIG committee members will make the final choice. A list of past award winners can be viewed from our SIG wikispace at <http://tilesig.wikispaces.com/Awards>.

A Sneak Preview of TILE-SIG Roundtable Sessions – IRA May 2013



- Digital storytelling to support learning in the content areas
- Supporting literacy and language learning through iPads and iBooks Author
- Interactive whiteboard use: Changes in Reading instruction in the elementary grades
- Online reading comprehension: 4th and 5th graders' performance in an online reading task
- Using student response systems to collect formative data in the elementary grades
- Articulating a framework for guided e-reading using ebooks and interactive online resources with K-1 students
- Framework for teaching critical internet reading
- Bridging the distance: Blending online and face-to-face tutoring to deliver a summer literacy camp to struggling middle school students
- Teaching Reading in a Virtual School
- Scaffolding literacy learning through collaborative web tools
- Learning word through multimedia annotations in middle school science and English language arts
- Using iPads to enhance literacy coaches' reflective practice
- Literacy learning incorporating graphic novels and other multimodal representations
- Using social networking media to promote adolescent reflection on the impact of media on their lives
- Using digital media in a literacy clinic: The experience of teacher candidates
- Videoposters for Vocabulary: Students as Multimedia Text Producers
- Technology Literacy in Today's Schools: A One-to-One Initiative in Oklahoma





Can You Hear Us? Using Voicethread to Publish Primary Students' Writing



Katie Stover, Furman University

Crystal Glover, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

The use of Web 2.0 applications allows students to express their ideas and understanding in familiar ways. Digital storytelling remains true to the writing process approach but combines multiple modes of literacy including reading, writing, listening, speaking, visual representation, and digital production into a coherent narrative. Multimedia texts can be composed using a variety of modes of communication including word processing, videos, images, and voiceovers. According to Solomon and Schrum (2007), a shift to Web 2.0 tools can have a profound effect on learning and thinking.

Web 2.0 is a conglomerate of digital networking tools designed to promote collaboration among Internet users (Laru, Naykki, & Jarvela, 2012). Web 2.0 applications such as wikis, blogs, social networking websites, podcasts, and Voicethreads are commonly used in today's twenty-first century classrooms. Within these Web 2.0 spaces, internet users can create, collaborate, and communicate. Websites such as www.weebly.com, www.pbworks.com, and www.voicethread.com have a variety of instructional functions in the classroom setting. In this column, we will examine the use of Voicethread as one type of Web 2.0 technology and its specific use with primary level students' writing.

Voicethread (www.voicethread.com) is a type of Web 2.0 technology that can easily be integrated in the classroom for instructional purposes. This interactive web-based learning tool has the potential to boost students' learning skills, promote student engagement, and enhance their motivation (Brunvand, & Byrd, 2011). Multiple types of text including images, video and audio files, pdf files, word documents, and PowerPoint can be used to express ideas, share information, and communicate in an online space. The unrestricted nature of Voicethread fosters an inviting digital environment where students construct and communicate ideas for topics and purposes of their choosing.

The ability to record voices to narrate accompanied text or images provides students with the opportunity to add another layer of meaning to their text. "A VoiceThread allows every student in a class to record audio commentary about the ideas and experiences that are important to them. Whether an event, a project, or a milestone, children can tell their story in their own voice, and then share it with the world" (www.voicethread.com). This is particularly valuable for primary level learners who are not quite proficient with grapheme-phoneme correspondence. The construction of meaning through recording oral language enhances students' success.

The use of Voicethread in the classroom has several instructional benefits. First, the open-ended nature of Voicethread allows all students to participate regardless of ability level. This interactive discussion tool enhances the writing process for young students by providing them with an opportunity to use their oral language skills when perhaps their writing skills remain at an emergent level. Emergent writers can compose and comment orally and through the use of visual images. Secondly, this Web 2.0 application can be used in a whole or small group setting, as well as individually for a wide range of purposes and audiences. Students are motivated to engage in the construction of high quality work with an authentic audience (Smith & Dobson, 2009). It allows for active participation in both the output and input and the collaborative development of knowledge. Additionally, comments can be moderated by the teacher to ensure appropriateness as well as to provide privacy options to allow or restrict the ability to comment by all users or invited guests only.

In traditional educational settings, it is rare for students to have opportunities to communicate with wider audiences beyond the classroom (Merchant, 2005). The use of Voicethreads can change this.

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Can You Hear Us?...

(cont. from p. 10) Katie Stover & Crystal Glover



Voicethreads offer opportunities for student-centered learning and provide a platform for students to communicate, express their ideas, and share their understanding. In this social and collaborative space, students become both active producers and consumers of literacy. Using Web 2.0 tools like Voicethread allows writers to publish information, share with a larger and more public audience, obtain feedback, and participate in discussion and collaboration. Students' work can be read and commented on by a larger audience than in a traditional classroom environment. Voicethread also allows users to leave and receive feedback in the form of verbal comments recorded as audio or video files, written comments typed within each slide, or through the use of a doodle feature which allows the user to highlight specific aspects of the published content. According to Rodesiler (2010), this feedback provides a fresh perspective, challenges students' thinking, and develops a deeper understanding of the information being presented. With web 2.0, authorship reaches wider domains and increases the potential for partnership and creativity. Web 2.0 provides a space where students can write for a larger audience for a variety of purposes.

First Graders Use Voicethread to Advocate for Social Justice

As part of my dissertation research, first graders in one southeastern elementary school used Voicethreads to publish their writing. Students worked collectively with their peers to choose a topic of interest, purpose, and genre. After engaging in a unit focused on collaborative and critical literacy, students chose social justice topics they felt strongly about and used their writing to advocate for change. Examples of topics included writing to raise money for two different non-profit organizations related to building and supporting schools in Guatemala and South Sudan. Other groups wrote plays to bring awareness to the issue of bullying which was a prevalent topic of discussion. With assistance from their teacher, students' collaborative writing was uploaded to Voicethread. After students engaged in the writing process, the teacher uploaded photographs of each page of students' published writing as a separate Voicethread slide. Once each page was uploaded, Judy, the classroom teacher, assisted students with recording their voices while reading the content of their writing. Students had the opportunity to listen to their own reading of the text and rerecord until ultimately satisfied. This feature is particularly useful in developing students' reading fluency and enhancing students' speech and oral language skills. By having the opportunity to engage in repeated readings, students' oral reading skills can be improved. Students in Judy's class were more eager to read and increased their level of participation. One student in particular who struggled with her speech increased her level of confidence as a result of recording her writing on the Voicethread.

In order to reach a wider audience beyond the four walls of the classroom, Judy's students published their writing on the Voicethread to make it available for an unlimited number of viewers. Judy shared, "If I tell them people from the whole world can see their Voice thread, they get excited. This week they asked if they would see it even in the North Pole!" Judy's students were excited about the opportunity to publish their writing on the Internet for a wide audience. According to Cole, "A million people who have computers and iPads can see it." Several students commented about more people being able to see their writing including their immediate families as well as families who live far away. Cory was excited for his grandparents who live in California to be able to see his work. As he stated, "I am going to tell them to look for it on the Internet." Bobby also commented on the ease of sharing with people across the miles through the use of the Internet. "I wish you could do it on my mom's phone. When I go to Tennessee tomorrow all of my cousins are there and my nana and papa are there. You can send it to my dad's phone because it can take videos." Several of the families were excited to hear about students' work being published in digital spaces. Miranda's family lives in Mexico and rarely gets to see her. They were eager to hear her reading her own writing on the published Voicethread.

Another feature of using Voicethread with Judy's students was the ability for readers to respond and leave feedback for the student authors. According to Judy, "The other point is that people can comment on it. I want to make it so people can find us and make it public so people from all around the world can connect to our work." Various people posted a range of comments on students' published Voicethreads.

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Can You Hear Us?...

(continued from p. 11) By Katie Stover & Crystal Glover

Examples of comments included compliments, questions, and statements of inspiration and interest to get involved with their social justice efforts.

"You have motivated me to help Guatemala! I will donate books to the students!"

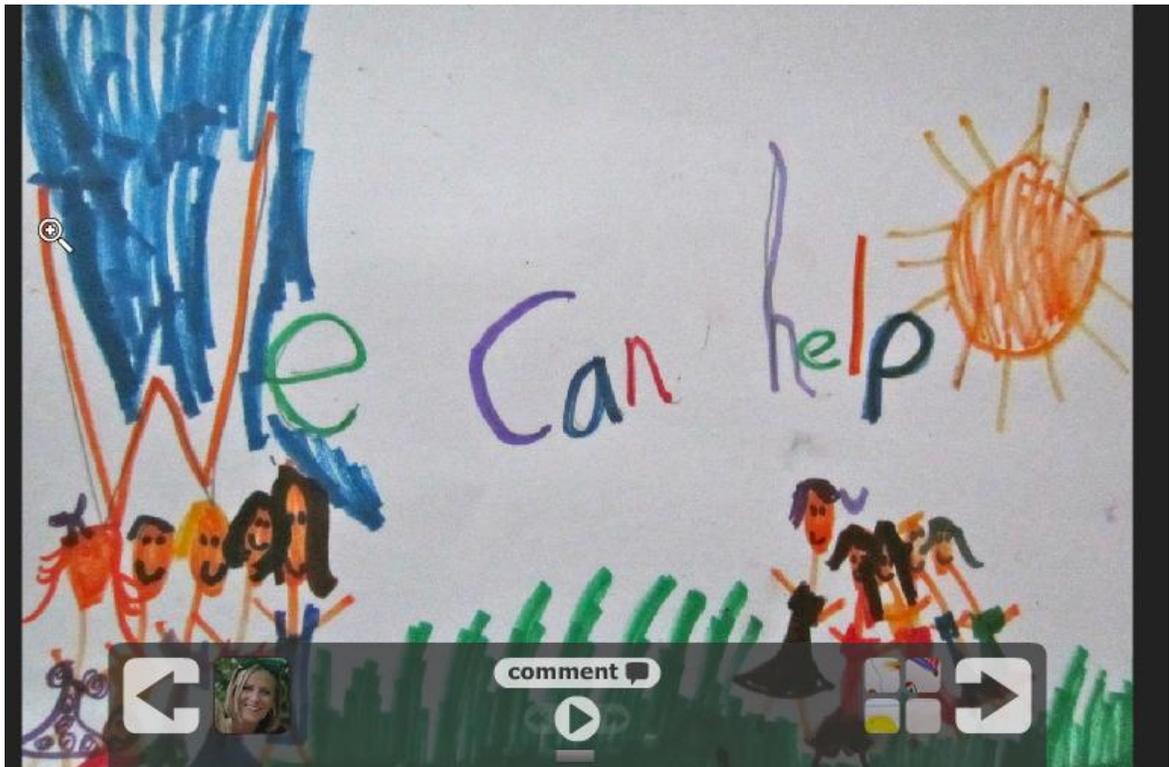
"You have really put a lot of thought into this project! I am inspired!"

"What are some ways you can raise money?"

"I love this idea! Everybody needs good books!"

"I love that you all are making a difference in the world! You have inspired me to help Guatemala!"

Feedback and comments from an authentic audience beyond the teacher showed students that their writing carries meaning and purpose. Judy explained, "It makes a difference to have an audience and a reason to write." This difference is evident when students identified themselves as writers. As Jessica noted, "We are publishing it so people can read it! We're authors!" Engaging in meaningful real-world writing experiences with authentic purposes and wide audiences created opportunities for students to enhance their understanding of the writing process and their view of themselves as writers. Using Voicethread as a space to publish student writing proved to be a motivational factor for student writers. Students successfully worked together in their collaborative writing groups to plan, draft, revise, edit and publish their writing. Their efforts demonstrated their abilities to participate democratically in their own learning process to use their voices and make a difference in the world around them by publishing their writing for an authentic purpose and wide audience using Voicethread.



(continued on p. 15)



● ● ● **NEW FEATURED COLUMN: Keeping Up with Online Learning!**

By Vicky Zygouris-Coe, Ph.D.

Vassiliki (“Vicky”) Zygouris-Coe is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of Central Florida. She has taught in Greece, England, and the US. Her research focuses on reading in secondary grades, online professional development, and integration of technology in literacy teaching and education. Her project, Florida Online Reading Professional Development (FOR-PD), has serviced over 45,000 teachers since 2003 in Florida. You can reach Vicky at Vassiliki.Zygouris-Coe@ucf.edu



Column Description: Online learning and teaching has increased in K-12 and postsecondary educational settings. Online learning has opened many opportunities for educators to continue their education, network with others, and enhance their careers. In addition, several educators are learning how to teach online and become e-learning professionals. In this column I will share information, resources, and ideas about online learning and teaching.

What is Online Learning?

Online learning continues to grow as a learning option for millions of students in US colleges and K-12 schools as well as for teachers who are pursuing certification, graduate education, and continuing their education through online professional development. Teachers need ongoing quality professional development opportunities where they can work in professional learning communities to reflect on their instruction and on student learning. How do states and school districts continue to provide such ongoing professional development opportunities in the midst of major financial restrictions and reduced budgets? Many states, professional organizations, publishing companies, and colleges of teacher education offer online courses and professional development opportunities for educators. As educators we all know how to learn in a traditional classroom environment; we've been doing that all of our lives; it's familiar and comfortable. But what about online learning? How does learning take place in an online medium? What does that type of learning “look and feel” like and can teachers and students actually learn in a virtual environment?

Online learning refers to learning that is facilitated in an online or virtual environment, content is delivered via the Internet, and learning that can be self-paced or instructor-led. Online learning includes multiple forms of media in the form of text, image, animation, streaming video and audio. Learning takes place through electronic discussion forums, assessment tools, external resources, and electronically submitted assignments. Learning activities may include collaborative work, small group work, or other projects. Teachers can also join blogs, wikis, pose questions, and receive feedback from instructor and peers. Online learning can help connect teachers across grades, schools, districts, and states in a cost-effective way.

Do you want to continue to learn about teaching but don't have the time for evening or weekend classes? If yes, online learning might be the answer for you. Here are some of the benefits of online learning:

- Accessibility to knowledge: learn anywhere, anytime.
- Convenience: learn from the convenience of your home and save on travel time.
- Learner-centered approach: subject-matter content, reflection on practice, and focus on learner needs.
- Learning community: interact with others, receive feedback, and exchange ideas and resources.
- Learn from certified e-instructors who can facilitate and monitor your learning.
- Freedom to interact with content, peers, and instructor.
- Feedback on learner progress: receive feedback from instructor and others; have opportunities to access, revisit, and monitor your work.
- Cost: save money on travel, parking, tolls, and traffic.
- Technology: resources in the form of journals, blogs, portfolios, wikis, etc. that are available beyond the completion of the program; improve your technology knowledge and skills; and, enhance your practice with more technology.

(continued on p. 14)

Keeping Up with Online Learning!

(cont. from p. 13) By Vicky Zygouris-Coe

Is Online Learning for You?

Taking an online class requires just as much time and effort as a face-to-face class. To see if online classes are right for you, think about the following questions:

- Do you like to work independently?
- Do you have self-discipline, motivation, and good time management skills?
- Do you have good communication skills and enjoy expressing your thoughts in writing?
- Are you comfortable using computers?
- Are you comfortable working primarily with a long distance medium?
- Do you have basic technology skills? Do you enjoy learning more about technology?
- Do you enjoy being part of a professional learning community?

If you answered "yes" to most of those questions, then you should do well in an online learning environment. If you hesitated you might want to learn more about online learning.

Believe it or Not, Online Learning is Not for Everyone

Taking courses online can be a little like learning a new language or visiting a new country. Although technology is wonderful and exciting, an online environment is not the right learning environment for every learner. It works well for certain learner types and it provides exciting opportunities for people who are constrained by time, place, or other factors.

Online courses require just as much if not more time and commitment than traditional courses. Completing course assignments and other learning activities takes a commitment of time where you can expect at least four or more hours a week dedicated to your online assignments, discussions, and activities. You will need to set aside enough time throughout your schedule to keep up with your daily or weekly assignments.

The personal computer is the primary learning and communication tool in most online courses. Be certain your computer has the basic requirements for accessing this online course. You

don't need to be a computer expert to succeed, but you do need to have some basic technology skills, such as word processing and using a Web browser.

Needless to say, you will also need regular access to a computer with an Internet connection. If you find computers scary or intimidating, you may want to get some computer training before taking an online course. The online learning process requires commitment on the learner's part. Keeping up with the class and completing all work on time is vital. Once a student gets behind, it is extremely difficult to catch up.

Your course instructor's role will be that of a guide or resource for you in exploring an area of knowledge. Reading and studying well are keys to your online learning success. Taking a class online means you will not be sitting quietly in the classroom; participation is essential in online courses! Whether you are planning to take an online course for graduate education or professional development purposes or you plan to teach an online course, you can benefit from others' knowledge and experiences.

Conclusion

Quality online learning can be worthwhile and effective but as a potential learner you need to assess your readiness; think why online learning is the answer for you, how it can meet your professional and learning needs, and how it can also help you meet the needs of your students for 21st century learning.

Resources

Examine any of the following resources to learn more about online learning, technology, and K-12 virtual learning and teaching.

ReadWriteThink and Professional Development at Your Fingertips <http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/>

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Pathways Professional Development Program <http://www.ncte.org/pathways>

EdTech Leaders Online (ETLO) <http://www.etlo.org/>

(continued on p. 15)



Can You Hear Us?...

(continued from p. 12) By Katie Stover & Crystal Glover



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Keeping Up with Online Learning!

(continued from p. 14) By Vicky Zygouris-Coe

Resources (cont.)

PBS Teacher Line: Professional Development for preK-12 Educators
<http://www.pbs.org/teacherline/>

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)
<http://www.inacol.org/>

Michael Barbour's Blog on Virtual School Meanderings
<http://virtualschooling.wordpress.com/>

Clayton Christensen's Blog on Disrupting Class
<http://disruptingclass.mhprofessional.com/apps/ab/>

Cool Cat Teacher Blog on Technology Tools and Uses
<http://coolcatteacher.blogspot.com/>

eSchools News: Technology News and Resources for Today's K-20 Educator
<http://www.eschoolnews.com/>

Will Richardson's Award Winning Blog on Technology and Learning
<http://willrichardson.com/>





TILE-SIG Membership Update and Call for Dues

Now that we have obtained a longer time slot on the conference program with over, we need to maintain our status with at least 100 registered members for the 2013 conference. If you have not already done so, please pay your membership annual dues of \$10 so that the TILE-SIG can maintain our longer time slot and continue to contribute funds that help defray the costs of:

- Co-sponsoring a lunch at the Technology Pre-Conference Institute
- Awarding our annual recipient of the Reading Research Award
- Organizing and distributing the SIG newsletter
- Providing a small honorarium to visiting non-IRA members invited to present at our SIG session
- Supporting classroom teachers and SIG members with new initiatives based on future needs and interests

For your convenience, you can find the SIG membership form on the last page of this newsletter. Please complete the form, detach it from the newsletter, and mail it with your \$10 check to:

Dr. Joan Rhodes
Membership Chair, TILE-SIG
Virginia Commonwealth University
School of Education
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Richmond, VA 23284-2020

Please note:

Only individuals who are members of IRA are eligible to be members of the TILE SIG. Each spring, membership must be renewed and IRA membership numbers and expiration dates must be verified. Be sure to include this information on your membership form. If you have questions, please email Joan Rhodes at jarhodes2@vcu.edu. And of course, feel free to make copies of the registration form and invite your colleagues to join IRA and our Special Interest Group.

About Our Organization...

The Technology in Literacy Education SIG is a special interest group of the International Reading Association (IRA). The purpose of the group is to bring together members of IRA who are interested in literacy and technology. Each year at the IRA Conference, the TILE SIG hosts an annual meeting and presentation session. The length of this session varies from 1½ hours to 3 hours, depending on the number of members we have in the SIG. Various members share information and teaching ideas in the areas of literacy and technology. Also a TILE SIG business meeting is held at IRA. All members, or those interested in joining, are welcome to attend the business meeting. Details from the 2012 SIG sessions are included in this newsletter with more forthcoming.



**PLEASE
PAY
YOUR
DUES!**
😊😊
Thank you!!



**We now have over 175
TILE-SIG members!**



