

## DID YOU KNOW

### **TELEVISION IS NO LONGER GETTING**

the undivided attention of kids, according to a study released on social networking by Grunwald Associates LLC, an independent research firm that specializes in new media market intelligence.

About 64% of kids go online while watching television, and nearly half of U.S. teens (49%) report that they do so frequently--anywhere from three times a week to several times a day. Multitasking on the Internet, cell phones and MP3 players suggests that companies must respond with much more creative, multimedia marketing campaigns for their messages to penetrate.

To view the full article (hold down the CTRL key and click on link):

[http://publications.mediapost.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Articles.showArticleHomePage&art\\_aid=78118](http://publications.mediapost.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Articles.showArticleHomePage&art_aid=78118)

## SPRING BREAK UPDATES

Please remember to turn off all of your technology (computers, printers, TV's, etc.) on Thursday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008

We will be doing some updates to our **Spam Filter** during Spring Break. We are hoping that this will decrease the amount of spam that is coming outside of the GWAVA digests. There should be no interference at this time to your incoming e-mail; however you may see other oddities, including increased digests. Typically during a lengthy break we reduce the digests that are sent out from 2 to 1 a day and will do this during this week, also. However with the updates, we may have to automatically integrate an additional one during that time to test our upgrades.

We will also be doing some server updates during this time and again, you should not experience any difficulties accessing any

information, but if you do, it may be because of this updating.

At this time, we are planning on doing all of the updating on Wednesday, April 9, 2008.

## REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY

The Regional Technology Academy will be offered once again this year through REMC and the ISD's. One change in this year's program is that the offerings will only be one week – July 28-August 1. Once schedules are developed, we will make sure to communicate this to staff as it is a great way to earn Professional Development hours during the summer.

## BLACKBOARD UPGRADES FOR 2008-09 SCHOOL YEAR

Release 8.0 for the Blackboard Academic Suite™ -Enterprise License and Basic License was developed in close collaboration with our clients and is centered on maximizing teacher productivity and empowering teachers to focus on critical thinking skills. Teachers will be delighted by the new Blackboard Grade Center™—a completely redesigned Gradebook—that dramatically simplifies the grading process while simultaneously making it a more powerful instructional tool. A new Self and Peer Assessment capability enables multiple measures of student progress while putting students in control of their own learning. Integrated plagiarism deterrence software and social bookmarking tools increase student engagement while decreasing a teacher's workload. Finally, this release provides districts with new ways to collaboratively create, manage and share digital content in a district-wide curriculum management system ensuring all teachers have access to exemplary content.

### **Blackboard Grade Center™: An Intelligent Gradebook**

The Blackboard Grade Center™ – a completely redesigned Gradebook -- is a new and easy-to-use smart grading tool that saves teachers time, offers flexibility and provides easy but powerful analysis. Based on significant client involvement, the new Blackboard Grade Center™ simplifies the grading process while making it a more powerful instructional tool for K-12 teaching and learning.

### **Spend Less Time Grading**

A newly designed grid-view enables teachers to accomplish most grading activities – such as entering and changing grades or adding comments -- without ever clicking to a new page. Teachers will never lose track of which student they are grading by choosing which columns they want frozen. This way, they can scroll to over to an assignment but prominently see student names.

### **Grade Your Way**

Since not all classrooms and districts are alike, the Blackboard Grade Center™ offers flexibility so each teacher can set up their gradebook as they prefer or as their district requires. By creating date-specific grading periods, teachers can view and grade according to their instructional plan. To meet the needs of a diverse and transient student population, teachers can exempt students from assignments and assessments and set up categories to automatically drop the highest or lowest grades.

### **Harness the Power of Your Grades**

Increase parental involvement by communicating student progress quickly and easily. Teachers can now email students and parents directly from the Blackboard Grade Center™ and create and share printable progress reports. Student grades are an important instructional and planning tool. Using enhanced grade statistics, teachers gain greater knowledge about student progress and particular assignments making it easier to adapt and refine instruction. New Smart Views empower teachers to easily monitor student

progress and individualize instruction by viewing the grades that meet certain criteria such as course groups, performance levels, and specific students.

### **Empower Students with Self and Peer Assessments**

A new Self and Peer Assessment tool, created by a Blackboard client, puts students in control of their learning, builds critical thinking skills, and saves teacher's time. Self Assessment enables students to review and grade their own work by following key criteria set by their teacher, which encourages students to reflect and monitor their own progress. With Peer Assessments students can anonymously review and grade work submitted by their classmates following teacher-set criteria, encouraging them to better understand the assignment objectives and learn the perspectives of others. Self and Peer Assessment empowers students to understand their own strengths and weaknesses, learn how to collaborate, and provides opportunities to offer constructive criticism—all important 21st Century skills.

### **Prevent Plagiarism**

Plagiarism has always been challenging for educators. With the wealth of resources available on the Internet, plagiarism is often difficult and time-consuming to detect. And without knowing proper citation rules, students may be plagiarizing without even being aware. SafeAssign™ by Blackboard is a plagiarism prevention service that not only helps students learn crucial citation and plagiarism rules, but it also helps teachers ensure originality without a time-consuming investigation. For clients with a Blackboard Learning System - Enterprise License, SafeAssign is integrated into Release 8.0 at no extra cost.

### **Reflect Your Identity...Automatically**

With Release 8.0, you can extend your K-12 terminology to your Blackboard application, use newer and fresher K-12 imagery, and eliminate steps in customizing your application because the K-12 Language Pack and Icon Set are turned on, by default, for K-12 clients.

### **Social Learning Network Expands Even Further**

In Release 8.0, Blackboard Scholar is integrated into the Blackboard Learning System – Basic License, extending the Scholar community. This innovative social bookmarking feature, available at no additional cost, enables students and teachers to find and share education-related resources. Rather than saving—or “bookmarking”—favorite Web sites in a browser or course, they can be stored and easily accessed from any Internet-enabled computer by using Scholar. Users can also search through and quickly sort bookmarks from specific districts, subjects, people or roles. This capability helps Scholars create more effective networks, collaborate easily, and leverage expertise from across districts and around the globe. With a Scholar account for life, teachers will graduate from college and go to your district with an arsenal of teaching assets and students will go to college with crucial foundational resources.

### **Collaboratively Develop District-Wide Curriculum**

Quality curriculum is core to good teaching and learning. But it's hard to ensure that all teachers have access to exemplary content. With the Blackboard Content System™, a collaborative curriculum management solution, districts can facilitate lesson planning and cooperatively create a district-wide curriculum. At the same time, teachers can share, discover and reuse class materials. Enhancements in Release 8.0 enable users to:

### **Facilitate Lesson Plan and Curriculum Reviews with Improved Workflows**

Whether teachers are submitting lesson plans for a formal review or a team is collaboratively developing curriculum, enhanced workflows provide a more defined and repeatable process that can be customized to a district's needs.

### **Create Courses Quickly**

Create it once, use it again. With deep integration throughout the Blackboard Academic Suite, teachers can discover and share Reusable Objects enabling teachers and content creators to create courses quickly.

### **Classify Content Your Way**

Classification of content (via metadata) has been enhanced throughout the Blackboard Academic Suite. Add custom metadata during the content creation process and display it in the Blackboard Learning System – Enterprise.

### **Glean Insight From the 360° View**

Know how the district content is being used with the new 360° view. This tool helps administrators make informed decisions about deleting old files and dedicating resources to updating content.

The 360° view provides statistics, tracking, permissions and other information about specific content.

Trainings will be provided this summer at the Regional Technology Academy, July 28-August 1. Dates and locations have not yet been determined for trainings, but look for this information to be provided as soon as it is available.

### **MARCH IS READING MONTH**

Iris Salters

### **Reading skills remain basis of success**

When I started teaching, I never dreamed that I'd have to remind students not to use shorthand like that to write, "Learn to read today." But technology such as text messaging and chatting online has created new challenges for teachers and parents, especially when it comes to encouraging children's reading and writing skills and preparing them for future jobs.

New technology will keep coming. But regardless of how we communicate today -- or 10 years from now -- basic reading skills will continue to be the foundation for student success in school and in the workplace.

Books are still the key to developing reading proficiency. The teacher is the most valuable resource in the classroom, and when you equip that teacher with up-to-date textbooks, the combination is unbeatable.

Yet we have situations, such as in the Pontiac schools, where some students don't

even have textbooks in their elementary science classes. Students without solid reading skills or the necessary textbooks to develop those skills and knowledge base will be at a serious disadvantage -- not only in school but also in the workplace, limiting their choices of jobs and income.

### Use technology to reach kids

In our classrooms, it's clear that we need to continue to foster both a love of and a talent for reading. But we also need to meet students where they are; and while many of us may find new technology the explosion of information available online has heightened the need for students to develop high-level reading skills. Just do a Google search. Sorting through the thousands of results, you realize the value of having strong reading skills that allow you to draw connections between pieces of information or to apply meaning to words or to make judgments about accuracy and importance.

Organizations like the Michigan Virtual University and the Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning are striving to help educators use technology and integrate it into the curriculum. School districts and the state should do everything they can to assist teachers in incorporating new technology as classroom tools that help build proficiency.

Outside the classroom, parents who make reading an important part of a child's daily life are having a huge impact. I encourage parents to keep a variety of books and reading material around the house. Make it a point to have your children see you reading. And spend at least 20 minutes each day reading to your children or having them read to you. Working together, parents and teachers can help Michigan's children be great readers and great future workers.

While reading is a yearlong priority, with the National Education Association's Read Across America on March 3 and March being "Reading Month," now is a great time to renew the focus to promote this critical skill. Nothing sparks the imagination more than reading.

Not only will reading set the groundwork for a child's academic and future economic success, it will unlock the creativity needed to imagine the new technologies, the possibilities and the careers that we can only dream -- or read -- about today.

**FREE RESOURCES** (point on the url and click while holding down the CTRL key on your keyboard to access link)

### **Math/Science Interactive**

[www.shodor.org/interactivate](http://www.shodor.org/interactivate)

### **Coolmaps 7 Wonders**

<http://coolmaps.7wonders.googlepages.com>

### **Implement Technology in Education**

The **Moving Forward with Technology Webinar** series offers key information about implementing technology in education. Sessions are presented live and online by national leaders in the field. This free Webinar series is an outreach collaboration between **Don Johnston Incorporated** and the **Center for Implementing Technology in Education (CITEd)**. Also find archives of previous sessions and feedback from last year's series.

[http://www.cited.org/index.aspx?page\\_id=126](http://www.cited.org/index.aspx?page_id=126)



