PEATC Press - February 2014

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Superintendent’s Memo #001-14

January 10, 2014
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: Digital Learning Day – February 5, 2014

The Virginia Department of Education, in cooperation with the Virginia Society for Technology in Education (VSTE) and the Alliance for Excellent Education, is pleased to announce February 5 as Digital Learning Day. This event is part of a national campaign designed to celebrate innovative teaching and highlight practices that make learning more personalized and engaging for students; explore how digital learning can provide all students with the opportunities they deserve; and build the skills students need to succeed in college, career, and life. It also provides an opportunity to highlight the use of digital learning resources such as the e-Learning Backpack Initiative, e-Learning Backpack resources, and Department of Education technology initiatives.

All education stakeholders are invited to register for Digital Learning Day. Participants will have access to toolkits outlining ideas and ways to plan their celebration as well as updates, informational videos, webinars, and other resources.

Several activities will be held on February 5 to highlight and celebrate participants across the nation. VSTE will host webinars that highlight technology innovations being implemented in local school divisions around the state. To view the webinars on Digital Learning Day, go to http://www.vste.org/index/learn/webinar. Schools, libraries, community programs, and classrooms are invited to showcase how they are using digital media to improve teaching and learning.

To learn more about this event go to http://www.digitallearningday.org.

Questions regarding Digital Learning Day should be directed to Mark Saunders, educational technology specialist, at mark.saunders@doe.virginia.gov or (804) 786-0307.

PTW/LN/nos

PEATC Workshops and Events - February 2014 (continued on page 2)

Monday, February 10, 2014 - Fairfax County Council of PTAs (FCCPTA) Special Education Committee Presents: "The Parent Educational/Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) - What We Do and Why", followed by an introduction to "Bullying Prevention - Everyone’s Responsibility", 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m., Location: GMU Enterprise Center, First Floor Conference Room, 4031 University Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. To register or for more information, please contact Helen Minor at specialeducation@fccpta.org or 703-585-4856.

Tuesday, February 11, 2014 – IN SPANISH ONLY - Pláticas con PEATC / PEATC Chats, Topic: “Assistive Technology and the IEP”, 7pm-8:30pm, Location: PEATC Office, 100 N. Washington Street, Suite 234, Falls Church, VA 22046. To register, contact PEATC at 703-923-0010 or ancalle@peatc.org. To participate online, pre-register at: https://cc.readytalk.com/r/xygpqdg3ime&com.

Tuesday, February 11, 2014 – “Understanding Special Education” workshop, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm, sponsored by Arc of Northern Shenandoah Valley, location at the Grace Lutheran Church Outreach Center, 26 W. Boscawen Street, Winchester, VA 22601. Register by contacting Nichole Pangle at (540) 665-0461 or arcnsv@thearcfnsv.net.

Wednesday, February 12, 2014 – “Bullying Prevention” workshop, 5:30-7:00 pm, sponsored by the Fauquier County Public Schools Parent Resource Center, location at the FCPS Parent Resource Center, 430 E. Shirley Ave., Warrenton, VA 22186. Register by contacting Marilyn McCombe at (540) 422-7116 or prc@fcps1.org.

Wednesday, February 12, 2014 – SAVE THE DATE !!!!!! PEATC will have an information session with the Infant and Toddler Connection in Manassas, VA on Wednesday, February 12, 2014. TIME: 2:30 pm, LOCATION: TBA; More details, including how to register, to follow shortly.
I can’t predict the future, but as I wrote back in July, I can say that learning in the future ought to be more personalized. Teachers should have up-to-the-minute information that will help them tailor instruction for each student. They should be able to connect and collaborate with other teachers to tackle common challenges and develop solutions. No matter where they are located, students should have access to world-class resources and experts that can enrich a learning experience that is largely designed just for them. And parents should be able to follow their child’s activities and progress almost in real-time, helping them stay more engaged in their child’s education.

This is an exciting future, and for some districts and schools across the country, that future is now.

Today the Department of Education announced the second round of grantees in the Race to the Top-District (RTT-D) competition. (Five winners, representing 25 districts, won a total of $120 million in grant funds.) These grants will support locally developed plans to personalize and improve student learning, directly increase student achievement and educator effectiveness, close achievement gaps, and prepare every student for success in college and careers. Through these grants, innovative school districts will be able to better support teachers and students by increasing educational opportunities through more personalized learning.

President Obama described the promise of personalized learning when he launched the ConnectED initiative last June.

Technology is a powerful tool that helps create robust personalized learning environments, but unfortunately, too many of our schools cannot support such environments. ConnectED is about establishing the building blocks for nearly every school to achieve this vision—by boosting broadband speeds throughout a modernized E-rate program, working to make learning devices and quality content available to all students, and ensuring that teachers have the support and professional development resources they need as they transition to a digital world.

This year’s RTT-D grantees exemplify the types of opportunities created by personalizing learning environments supported by technology. Indeed, most of the districts that won funding represent rural, remote, or small town communities, and their plans show that technology can be a powerful equalizer for schools in such communities. For example:

**Technology as a tool for teachers and students.** Clarendon County School District Two in South Carolina (leading a consortium of four districts) will make personal learning devices like laptops and tablets available to all students in the Carolina Consortium for Enterprise Learning. Teachers will have digital tools to help them differentiate instruction and share standards-aligned materials and assessments.

**Professional learning communities.** Clarksdale Municipal School District in Mississippi will train teachers to become facilitators of instruction and to learn from and support one another through professional learning communities.

Continuous improvement. Houston Independent School District in Texas will implement a continuous improvement cycle to measure and support teacher effectiveness and will partner with an external evaluator to provide ongoing feedback to the district on program implementation.

Accessible data systems that support instruction. The Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative (a consortium of eighteen rural districts) will create and implement data systems that measure student growth and success and that help teachers improve instruction.

Helping close the digital divide through community access to technology. Springdale School District in Arkansas will expand parent access to technology through school-based and community “hot spots” along with community liaisons with computer access.

It’s clear that much of the innovative work by the districts in this year’s and last year’s RTT-D grantees requires a robust technology infrastructure. And in order for more districts to embrace a future of personalized learning, we must work urgently to meet our ConnectED goals. That future is waiting, but it’s up to us to make it a reality.

Arne Duncan is U.S. Secretary of Education

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**PEATC Workshops and Events - February 2014**

Tuesday, February 18, 2014 – “When the School Says No... How to Get the Yes!” workshop, 7:00 - 8:00 pm, sponsored by PEATC / Educational Learning and Training, LLC., Location: PEATC Office, 100 N. Washington Street, Suite 234, Falls Church, VA 22046. Register by contacting PEATC at 703-923-0010 or partners@peatc.org.

Thursday, February 20, 2014 – “How to Talk So Schools Will Listen and (Listen So Schools Will Talk)” and “Measurable IEP Goals”, sponsored By: King George Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., Location: L.E. Smoot Memorial Library, 9533 Kings Highway, King George, VA 22485. To register or for more information, please contact Jennifer Gaston-Smith at davidjen@va.metrocast.net or (202) 264-0663.

Friday, February 21, 2014 – PEATC Cafecito —Guest Speaker: Mason LIFE Program, 10:30am-12:00pm, location: George Mason Regional Library, 7001 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, VA 22003. Register by contacting PEATC at 703-923-0010 or partners@peatc.org.

Saturday, February 22, 2014 – Exhibitor at "Your Child's Development 2014" sponsored by Arlington Early Intervention Interagency Coordinating Council (AEIICC), 9:00 am - 12:00 pm, Location: Walter Reed Community Center, 2009 16th Street South, Arlington, VA 22204. For more information, please contact Cheryl Fuentes at cfuentes@arlingtonva.us

Tuesday, February 25, 2014 – “Friendship Building” workshop, 6:30pm – 8:00 pm, sponsored by the Stafford Parent Resource Center, location at the Professional Development Center, 37 Stafford Ave., Stafford, VA 22554 Register by calling 540-658-6710

Tuesday, February 25, 2014 – “Puberty and Sexuality” workshop, 5:30-7:00 pm, sponsored by the Fauquier County Public Schools Parent Resource Center, location at the FCPs Parent Resource Center, 430 E. Shirley Ave., Warrenton, VA 2186. Register by contacting Marilyn McCombe at (540) 422-7116 or prc@fcps1.org.
Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright today announced the availability of a new virtual astronomy course on Virginia on iTunes U and the beta release of “EduWidgets,” an online authoring application that teachers and students can use to create interactive digital content for classroom devices, tablets and the web.

Wright unveiled the new resources during a visit to Pulaski Elementary in Pulaski County. The rural Southwestern Virginia school division was among the first in the state to replace traditional textbooks in some classes with tablets and Standards of Learning-aligned content, media and apps.

“Tablets loaded with quality content help lighten backpacks and provide experiences that enhance instruction and student learning,” Wright said. “And with EduWidgets now available, Virginia teachers will be able to create their own interactive content using a platform developed specifically for them.”

The virtual astronomy course is aligned with the commonwealth’s science standards and may be used as a stand-alone minicourse or as a supplement to full-year courses in earth science, physics or astronomy. The course is available at no cost via Virginia on iTunes U and is optimized for delivery on iPad. A companion iBook is under development.

Students taking Astronomy will satisfy a state diploma requirement (effective with this year’s first-time freshmen) that they complete at least one virtual course. The Virginia on iTunes U course does not require constant Internet access, making it an option for students who lack access at home.

EduWidgets, available at www.eduwidgets.org, can be used to create, share and customize apps (self-contained packages of code) to enliven digital content on websites, e-books, interactive whiteboards and other digital classroom devices. Teachers can use EduWidgets to create interactive timelines, sequences, graphs and images.

“Our teachers look forward to using these tools to create learning experiences for their students that will take them beyond minimum standards and prepare them with college- and career-ready skills,” Pulaski County Superintendent Thomas Brewster said.

EduWidgets software was developed using HTML5 to create widgets that work with tablets. For best performance, it requires Chrome, Firefox or Safari. Although Internet Explorer 11 supports many features, it is not fully compliant with HTML5. Earlier versions of Internet Explorer will not support EduWidgets.

Astronomy and EduWidgets were developed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) in support of its eLearning Backpack Initiative. The initiative provides grants to help school divisions purchase tablets and content-creation packages for high schools that are not fully accredited.

Special Resources for SpecialNeeds: Virginia is for Lovers ... of Organizations that Serve Those With Special Needs!


Instructional Accessibility - http://kihd.gmu.edu/aim/

Independent Living - http://www.vasile.org/ and http://www.vhda.com/Renters/Pages/AccessibleRentalHousing.aspx#b

Transportation - http://www.commuterpage.com/pages/transportation-options/paratransit-accessibility/

It's February and the Future is NOW: Innovation in Education

How Can Technology Help in the Classroom?

Teachers who strive to improve their classroom setting often wonder about the addition of technology and how it might help their students. While the debate about whether technology helps or harms students continues, parents and teachers must understand the potential benefits of using technology in the classroom.

Improving Technical Skills:

In this modern world that constantly produces new and improved technological advances, the skills that come with technology are vital to future success. Children need to learn skills like typing, research and communication via technological devices early. By learning the basic skills in school while they are young, students are able to improve their ability to keep up in this ever-changing world.

Increasing Motivation:

New technological devices are ideal when it comes to motivating students. Books, paper and pen are often boring and make it challenging to motivate the students. Bringing in a new gadget that has e-books or interesting learning tools helps draw in students and motivate them to try completing tasks because they are able to also try out the new device. By motivating the students to learn the technology, teachers are also helping them learn vital skills like reading, arithmetic and sciences.

Helping Special Needs:

Technology used in the classroom can also help students who have special needs keep up with their peers. For example, a student who has problems hearing can use a tablet with a record to written feature that allows him or her to record the lecture as the teacher speaks and then see the written form of the lecture. This helps him or her keep up with the activities in class. Technology is useful in a wide range of applications that helps students who have special needs of any type. Depending on the particular disability, students can apply advances in different measures.

Working Together:

Students who are striving to learn the use of a new technological device often end up working together and improving their communication skills through tutoring, discussion and simple inquisitiveness. As students discuss and try new ideas while learning the new technology or software, they are improving their ability to work out problems without the help of adults and become better at communicating.

This ability to work together to solve problems carries forward into adulthood, when students will need the skills to succeed in future careers.

Technology is a useful tool that teachers can add to the classroom setting. It has a wide range of potential benefits that can improve student learning, motivate and help for better life skills. As teachers incorporate more devices and technological items to the classroom, the students will benefit from the improvements to the learning environment and ultimately will see improved success that increases self-confidence.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Lexi Davis is a writer who enjoys writing on a number of different verticals. For more on technology in the classroom, Edu Vel offers readers information on higher education technology clickers in the classroom.


LATINO CORNER

Un memorándum del Superintendente de instrucción pública

Un pasaje corto traducido por PEATC

El Departamento de Educación de Virginia, la Sociedad de Virginia de Tecnología en la Educación (“Virginia Society for Technology in Education (VSTE)”) y la Alianza de Excelente Educación (“Alliance for Excellent Education”) se complacen en anunciar el 5 de febrero del 2014 como el Día del aprendizaje digital. Este evento es parte de una campaña nacional designada para celebrar la enseñanza innovadora y resaltar prácticas que hacen del aprendizaje más personalizado e interesante para los estudiantes; para explorar cómo el aprendizaje digital puede proveer a todos los estudiantes las oportunidades que se merecen; y a desarrollar las destrezas que los estudiantes necesitan para ser exitosos en la universidad, su carrera y la vida. A demás provee una oportunidad para resaltar el uso de recursos del aprendizaje digital tales como la iniciativa “e-Learning Backpack,” los recursos e-Learning Backpack y otras iniciativas del departamento de educación sobre la tecnología.

Todas las personas involucradas en educación están invitadas a inscribirse al Día de aprendizaje digital. Los participantes tendrán acceso a un conjunto de materiales que resumen ideas y maneras para planear su celebración además de actualizaciones, videos informativos, webinars (presentaciones por internet) entre otros recursos.

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<th>SUNDAY</th>
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<td>National Children's Dental Health Month</td>
<td>There is no such thing as a perfect parent. So just be a real one.</td>
<td>National Thank a Mailman Day Show your child how to address an envelope.</td>
<td>National Weatherperson's Day Talk about the weather in two other cities.</td>
<td>Help your child pick a dinner menu for this weekend.</td>
<td>Send a Card to a Friend Day</td>
<td>National Canned Food Month. Pick out some Cans to take to your local Food bank.</td>
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<td>2 GROUNDHOG Day</td>
<td>Next time in the car with your child, play the classical music station. It will calm your child and stimulate his mind!</td>
<td>4 Groundhog Day</td>
<td>Look together to find if he saw his shadow</td>
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