



USD 487 Tech Bytes

Technology for Learning

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TO SKYPE OR NOT TO SKYPE....

One of the concerns discussed during the laptop orientation meetings with students and parents was social networking. The use of chat rooms, blogs and Skype pose several challenges in a school setting. Staff noted this past week several incidences of Skype use. In one case, no less than six conversations were active at the time I looked at the laptop. A few brief reminders are bulleted below.

- Our network capacity is limited and the use of these tools can interfere with educational activities. Even if a class is not doing anything at that moment, you could negatively affect others ability to complete classroom assigned activities.
- Students are not to install unapproved software on the laptops. The addition of the Skype software is a violation of this guideline. Currently the student laptops are open to customizations. It would unfortunate that stricter limits would have to be put in place to control these activities.
- Laptops are to be used for educational purposes... the use of chat rooms and video chats detracts from the educational activities in the classroom. Teachers currently are allowing use of laptops for most classes. If they become a greater distraction to the class than they are an advantage, we will see teachers not allowing their use in the classes.

If you wish to discuss these limits with me, please feel free to stop by when you are not in class. Our goal is for technology to support student learning and I am always will eager to listen to ideas that will promote that effort.

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MAKING USE OF THE TOOLS WE HAVE!

The student laptops are receiving a great workout as the year starts. Having the technology available when needed is allowing classroom activities and student learning to move ahead into many areas that have been limited in the past. These are tools that will be an ongoing part of all our lives and the greatest challenge is to make the best use of them.

Concern has been voiced over students being off task in classrooms, surfing the Internet or writing emails. While these activities may have a valid purpose, it is important to stay on task in the classrooms. Concentrate on what is being presented in the class and on completing assigned work in a timely fashion. There is little or no reason for students to be failing classes at this time of the year, yet there are several on the "list."

Stay on task in classes and keep the technology part of the learning and not a distraction!

Key Websites:

Herington Schools

<http://www.heringtonschools.org>

School Library

<http://books.usd487.org>

Safe Videos

<http://ttc.usd487.org/safevideos>

E-mail

<http://mail.usd487.org>

