

# PPS Technology Times

Winter 2012

Volume 1 - Issue 2

## Visiting with our Troops Online

Mary Scott's class at Woodland Elementary had a wonderful opportunity on Thursday, December 22 to use the TEC to Skype with Kyle Baker, who is from Wayland, MI and currently serving in the United States Air Force in Germany. The students had previously written to Kyle and were very excited to see him and talk to him in person, wearing his camo clothes. The experience was much more than a phone call for the students. They were able to enhance their understanding of social studies, geography, writing, and civic awareness all through this wonderful project.

"It was fascinating to the kids that we were talking live; we had looked at the map to see how far away Kyle was. He told the kids about the weather in Germany, his surprise that so many Germans speak fluent English, and how much traveling he's gotten to do. He mentioned snowboarding in the Alps and feeling like he could see forever from the mountaintops. He said he really likes the Czech Republic where they have many castles and things you don't see here in America. The students asked many good questions, including "Do you get

homesick?" and "Why couldn't you tell where you were in the desert (he had been to Afghanistan previously)?" He answered them all honestly but without any gory details. A couple of my really quiet kids became very engaged and asked more questions than I ever would have guessed. All in all, I thought it was a very valuable experience." ~Mary Scott, Teacher



Students in Mary Scott's class at Woodland Elementary Skype-ing with Kyle Baker of the United States Air Force.

## Technology Bond Update

Since the fall we have been busy with several technology projects. Here are a few of the highlights.

- New teacher desktops with Windows 7 have been installed in the classrooms to replace the aging Dell 170s. The new computers should greatly improve teacher productivity and efficiency. A special thanks to our building techs who worked very hard to get the computers in place quickly and with as little disruption as possible for the teachers and students. In total over 450 computers were installed in the classrooms across the district.
- Office 2010 has been installed on the new teacher desktops and TEC computers. This is a welcome update from our old version of Office. Trainings have been and continue to be provided to the staff to aid in the transition from Office 2003 to 2010 and to help them maximize the new features in the updated software.
- The purchase of the Hovercam Data Cameras have been approved by the board for the middle schools, CEC, Northern High School, Woodland Elementary, Lake Center Elementary and 12<sup>th</sup> Street Elementary. Where applicable, these will replace the Logitech cameras installed with the original TECs to increase use and functionality. We will be deploying the document cameras to the middle schools as soon as possible so the teachers can begin using them with their students.
- Laptops have also been purchased to outfit the Technology and Training Center with enough computers to facilitate trainings.
- Plans to install Technology Enhanced Classrooms at the middle schools and CEC this summer are moving along on schedule.

## E-books Available At NMS and WMS

Dramatic narration and illustrations, cool sound-effects, and eye-catching, reader-friendly graphics make our 140 (114 at WMS and 26 at NMS) new interactive e-books exceptionally engaging for struggling readers, students with autism, or any student who enjoys a multi-media reading experience. No more struggling to sound out words or figure out how to pronounce them. Just click on *autoplay*, set the volume, and *listen while you read*. What's more, our new e-books can be accessed online anytime from any computer with internet access by any student who attends North or West Middle Schools. Teachers, such as Kelly Lerdahl from West Middle School, are enjoying using these fabulous resources with their students.

This pilot e-book program was developed by PPS media specialist, Susan Talanda, using a generous donation from the NMS PTO and this year's book fair profits from WMS. It features books from Capstone Interactive Library. Enhancements include narrated quizzes and glossaries, book summaries, reading and interest levels, author/illustrator biographies, and links to Capstone's enrichment activities. Susan hopes to use book fair funds from Haverhill and to 12<sup>th</sup> Street Elementary School to start e-book collections at the elementary level.



## Math Enrichment with Google Docs

The third graders at Amberly elementary are using Google Docs to enrich their learning in math. Students who have already proven proficient on the current unit are placed in an enrichment group. These students work with para-professional Terri Tieche to extend their learning on the topic. Mrs. Tieche does many different types of activities with these students. In December the students used Google Docs to create a comprehensive chapter review which they then invited a partner to view. The partner completes the review activity and the creator checks their work. Also, they created a review presentation through Google Docs.



Google Docs has allowed the enrichment opportunities to carry on even when the para-pro was home sick. Terri Tieche stated "Because of Google docs, I was able to work with my math group from home today, during math time, on the math reviews that they are creating, and then sharing with me and a partner. I could view the reviews they were still working on and leave suggestions. I loved that I could also comment on any errors that were made by those who were taking a review that a partner sent them. I also loved the fact that they could stay in their homeroom for math today, work on a lap top, and share with me at home and their partner in another room, all while the math group in their homeroom continued with their own lesson."

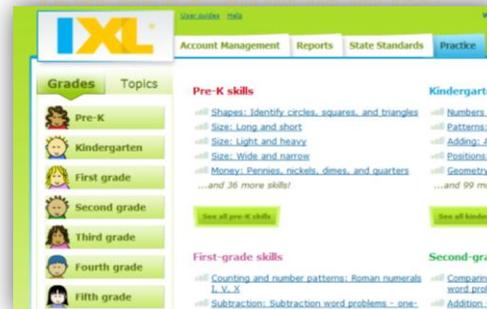
This is just one of the many ways Google Docs has helped extend the learning of our students here at PPS!

## IXL.COM – I Excel at Math

Elementary students in grades 1-5 now have a new way to practice their math skills online both in school and at home, IXL. This online program has been used extensively at Lake Center, 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Angling Road in the past. The program provides online math skills practice which are aligned to the 2010 Common Core State Standards. IXL automatically tracks students' progress and displays proficiency scores in the states standards reports. These reports allow teachers to quickly evaluate students' aptitudes and identify trouble spots.

Portage Public Schools has a special IXL page for teachers and students in first through fifth grade to sign in. Check out IXL at: [www.ixl.com/signin/portage](http://www.ixl.com/signin/portage). When signing in to your school's custom page, you do not need to enter the "@portage" portion of the username. Students can use their unique username and password to login to program from school or from home.

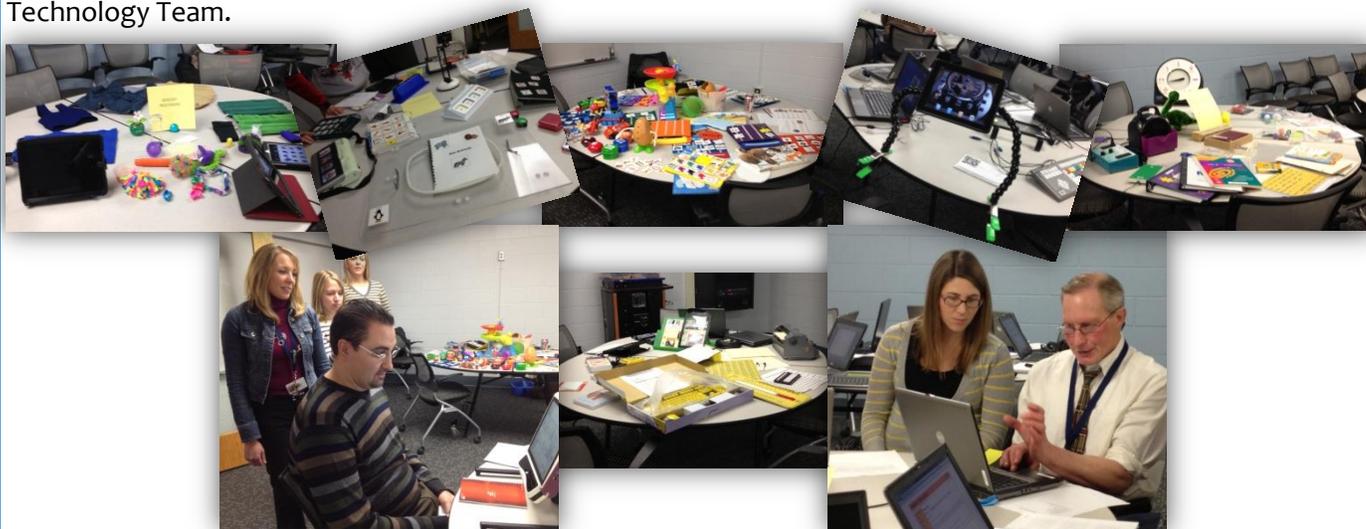
## TEACHERS, SIGN IN NOW!



## Adaptive Technologies: Helping ALL Students Learn

Our very own Doug Wilson has been very busy lately getting the word out about adaptive technologies. This summer he spent a good portion of his time creating a beta version of an interactive form to walk the Special Education staff through evaluating whether adaptive technology is warranted to support a student's particular needs in their IEP. After presenting to the KRESA leadership, he was told that KRESA wishes to adopt it for use countywide.

On Friday February 10, 2012, the Portage Public Schools Technology and Training Center hosted an Assistive Technology (AT) workshop experience. These half day professional development training sessions were attended by special education and administrative staff from Kalamazoo and a surrounding county. Among the topics discussed were relevant special education law, consideration of AT, procedures for writing AT devices and services into a student's IEP and processes related to conducting assistive technology evaluation/assessments. Workshop attendees viewed demonstrations and participated in hands-on experiences using a variety of assistive technologies related to task areas where students might require support. This valuable workshop was made possible through the efforts of a multidisciplinary team of special education professionals serving on the Kalamazoo RESA Assistive Technology Team.



## Meet the Tech Staff: Corey Brasher

Corey Brasher may be a familiar face to many of you at Northern High School and Angling Road Elementary. Corey serves as one of our talented building techs. This year, however, he has taken on added responsibilities in our department as our Audio Visual Technician. He works behind the scenes with Steve Phelps to make sure the hardware in your classroom is running as smoothly as possible. Corey has worked at Portage Public Schools for almost 12 years. He enjoys building new computers, working on old tractors and cars, and having fun with my family. Corey is a valuable member of our technology team here at PPS.

**Corey's Tech Tip:** The windows key is very useful when you are working with your new computers and it can make for quick navigation, especially in Windows 7. Try looking at the list at <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows7/Keyboard-shortcuts>. To learn more about the quick and easy ways to get around your new computers!



## Electronics Recycling for Employees: A Success!

On Thursday, Jan. 19, the Information & Technology Systems Department hosted an electronic recycling event for PPS employees. Employees brought in old computers, VCR's, DVD players, and LCD monitors; pretty much any household electronic equipment was accepted. About 3 ½ pallets worth of material was recycled. We are hoping to host another event for the community in the spring.

## Bodies, Books and Blogs

### PNHS Forensic Science and IB Biology Students Read and Blog about Forensic Mystery Novels.

Autopsies, crime scenes, human physiology, forensic novels, autopsy fact-based books, pig dissections, blogging and more! What is happening at Portage Northern High School? Innovative collaboration between Kathy Mirakovits: Forensic Science II teacher, Donna Hertel: IB Biology HL teacher, and Jeanna Walker: Teacher Media Specialist, to bring the world of forensic science and human physiology alive for their students.

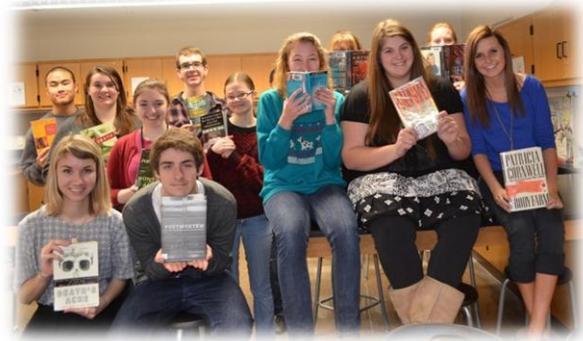
The trio has designed a unit that uses the inquiry process to enrich student appreciation of not only the anatomical content in an autopsy, but additionally infuses the importance of reading for information in the science content area and communicating electronically to evaluate information and share new ideas and understandings with others. Targeting a range of students from those who plan to major in biology to those who are non-science bound, students are developing a deeper understanding of the human body, its functions and frailties, and the role of an autopsy in the determination of the cause of death.

This innovative science-based project exposes students to reading science electronically via research on human organs and diseases. Each student is also reading a trade book themed on human anatomy and autopsy. Using a cross-disciplinary approach, the students from the Forensic Sciences II class are blogging about their books with the students from the IB Biology HL classes, using Google Blogger and the literature circle format. The students will experience the intricacies of performing an autopsy via pig dissection and both classes will culminate the unit by participating in a distance learning live broadcast of an autopsy with a forensic pathologist from The Center of Science and Industry (COSI) in Columbus, Ohio.

The Team was awarded a grant from the Michigan Science Teachers Association to continue their collaborative partnership to bring the best of innovative science teaching and learning to the students.



Students from PNHS show off their forensic novels.



## Technology Training

Trainings are held in the computer lab at the Technology and Training Center (TTC) and last about 45 minutes unless otherwise noted. You will receive Professional Development time for attending.

- **OneNote 2010 for Beginners:** March 14 at 3:15 pm (Secondary) and 4:15 (Elementary)
- **Word 2010:** March 19 at 4:15 pm (Elementary)
- **Word 2010:** March 21 at 3:15 pm (Secondary)

Jessica Winstanley and Kelly Jensenius are always more than happy to schedule individual or small group trainings, as needed, throughout the month. You may email them at [jwinstanley@portageps.org](mailto:jwinstanley@portageps.org) or [kjensenius@portageps.org](mailto:kjensenius@portageps.org). To learn more about the classes, view the training calendar, download how to documents and training handouts and **register for the classes**, go to: <http://techtraining.site.portageps.org>

**WHEN COMING TO THE TTC FOR TRAINING, REMEMBER YOUR KEY FOB. YOU WILL NEED IT TO ENTER THE BUILDING.**