

From the Superintendent's Desk
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This is the second of three articles I am writing about technology in the schools. In this article, I would like to share some of the things teachers/staff have been learning about technology.

Back on August 29th, we were joined by Jimmy Casas, a former high school principal at Bettendorf, Iowa and co-author of the book What Connected Educators Do Differently. During this full day of inservice, he spoke to us about "Cultivating a Culture of Excellence", "Leadership Matters", and "Tell Your Story—What Connected Educators Do Differently." By the end of this first in-service day, teachers were excited about creating a school district Twitter account (#RRSDPride). Since that day, a number of teachers have created pages to share about the great things kids are doing in our schools.

On Wednesday, October 12th, we had another full day of in-service. During the morning hours, teachers and staff had an opportunity to attend/participate in three technology sectionals lasting 90-minutes each.

Kristen Galle, the Instructional Technology Coach from CESA #3 in Fennimore, led a session called "Google Apps and Extensions to Improve Workflow." She introduced teachers/staff to such apps as: Tab Glue, Tab Scissors, Awesome Screen Shot, My Scrap Nook, Share to Classroom, Grammarly, Google Dictionary, Cite This For Me: Web Citer, i2Clipart, Omni Drive, Boomerang for Gmail, Google Docs Quick Create, Chromevox, Momentum, Draftback, Black Menu, Screen Castify, InstaGrok, Canva, Google Keep, Animoto Video Maker, and Newsela. Besides loading these apps onto our laptops/chromebooks, Kristen challenged us to try out three of these tools in the next 24 hours.

Tina Dilley (Business Education teacher) and Shawn Chatfield (3rd grade teacher) led a session called "The Connected Educator." They shared ways that Facebook can be used in classrooms (e.g., creating a Facegroup for one's class, sharing videos related to the course one teaches, involving parents, and using questions and polls to educate and get opinions). Some example Facebook pages in the district include: Adventures in 3rd Grade, River Ridge Volleyball, Fuel Up Play 60, and RRHS FBLA. Tina and Shawn also talked about "Connecting on Twitter." We examined 50 examples of how Twitter can be used in the classroom. To get a little hands-on practice, time was provided to participate in a game entitled #RRCE 16 Bingo" (i.e., "Connected Educator Bingo").

Tara Drone (English teacher) led a session titled "Teaching Materials That Engage and Motivate" that had to do with using pictures, graphics, and videos. Tara showed us "Six Styles of Video Creation in Classrooms"—an idea she gleaned from Richard Byrne (Dubuque, IA). She showed us examples of:

1. One-Take Videos
2. Audio Slide Shows
3. Whiteboard/Screencast Instructional Videos

4. Animated Videos
5. Stopmotion and Timelapse Videos
6. The Documentary/Feature Film

Our “exit ticket” before leaving this session was to create a short video project using one of these techniques and forwarding it to Tara. We had fun with this creative project!

Five members of the district’s Technology Committee (e.g., Shawn Chatfield, Tina Dilley, Tara Drone, Sue Kuenster, and Deb Martin) will be attending the SLATE Conference at The Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells December 5th-7th. They will come back with more new things that can be shared with the rest of us on the Technology Committee and be incorporated into technology learning for the rest of the staff.

With ever-changing technology, it is imperative that educators keep up and learn how to use it/incorporate it in what we’re doing in classrooms. Next time, I will share what students in our school district are doing with technology in classrooms.