

Wednesday, April 30, 2008

## News Nuggets

Districts "Cutting Down" on Teacher Absences: Will they use an Axe, Weed Trimmer or Bulldozer?

May is the time to maximize student learning. But, May follows a period of maximum, high-stakes-test-related stress and fatigue.

In addition, teachers put off (often under principal-induced duress) appointments with physician, dentists, gynecologists and psychiatrists.

So, immediately following the high-stakes ordeal, teachers begin cashing in their "Sick Days" and "Personal Days" as if these were a "Thanksgiving" bonus. District Cross Currents At the same time that teachers grab their moments of relief, school districts face: Budgets that are running short

"Use it or Lose it" restraints that force squandering money now

The problem of keeping substitute money in reserve, or worse, exceeding the budget allotment for paying substitutes. Of course, school district under book and under budget the funds required for paying substitutes. This makes the school district's executive leaderships appear to be incompetent. School district leaders become squeamish about this under budgeting when the "budget deviance" becomes apparent.

So, district executives institute a "program to remedy" the situation. Blame Teachers? Of Course! An initiative to resolve a "problem" must address what the problem is. In this case the argument goes like this:

Students learn better when their teachers are teaching them. Teachers are not teaching their students when they are at a doctor's or dentist's office or recuperating from triple by-pass surgery Therefore: Teachers are the problem.

Solution: Clamp down on teachers that leave the classroom for any reason. Research & Research; Researchers who should know more about the "real world of teaching" come down on the side of school district administrators in seeing teacher absence as a "problem to be addressed." In the past year, research papers from economists at Harvard University's graduate school of education and Duke University in Durham, N.C., have argued that teacher absences have a small but significant negative effect on student achievement as shown by test results. Both groups point to previous research that suggests ways of reducing such absences. The researchers note, for instance, that the more generous leave provisions are, the more days on average are taken. They also say it is worth considering incentive plans that, typically, reward exceptional attendance or pay teachers for earned leave they don't take. Another promising approach, according to the researchers, is to require teachers to report time off to their principal directly, rather than to the central office or an answering machine. Source: Education Week Published Online: April 28, 2008

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And there are proposed remedies: Some positive, some punitive, some draconian &

And, there is an attempt to twist research to show that students learn more from their teacher than they learn from a substitute. (What else is new?)

But what researchers fail to understand is that much more money was wasted when teachers were paid to be in class and focus upon high-stakes test practice. Bailing out on the curriculum to teach-to-the-test subtracts more student learning than what learning is lost when the teacher is absent because of a sick day or personal day.

And the number of days that students learning is "hijacked" because of test practice (or benchmark testing) exceeds the number of days that most teachers are away from the class for personal reasons.

And, those school districts that run a rigorous "teacher training program" pull teachers out of the classroom far more days than the sick-day, personal-day total time that teachers "enjoy."

Other bits of "real world wisdom" that are missing from the "research equation" include: The number of hours that Special Education and Regular teachers are removed from class to conduct Special Education Planning Meetings

The amount of uncompensated (unpaid) time that teachers spend each day outside the ordinary work day

The fact that teachers initiate contact with sick and unhygienic children places teachers at a higher risk illness

The tendency of school districts to hire younger, inexperienced teachers in lieu of hiring veteran teachers (who earn much more). These teachers will tend to have children, and need to be away from the classroom to take care of family needs.

Perhaps these up-tight, penny-clutching experts would like to see a return to the "one room schoolhouse" days where teachers were unmarried, lived with a local family, and were fired if they became pregnant (or even if they married).

Why, they became more expensive and the community didn't want to pay. Entitlement: The Warped View of Twisted Minds The folks that argue that teachers see sick days and personal days as an "entitlement" are clueless about education.

These pundits view substitute teachers as a budget drain and a cost center lack an understanding of the important role that substitutes play on a campus team. With the tiny amount of money that most substitutes make, school districts are lucky to have any names on the substitute roster. Campus manager that form a supportive mutual relationship with

great substitutes know that they have to keep these folks employed, or they are lost. Community Responsibility Sure, our communities do not want to pay the cost of educating our children, and prefer to operate our school systems "on-the-cheap." But, this is the fault of a "wrong-headed mentality" and bad advice; not the fault of teachers. But, many folks are jealous of teachers because teachers enjoy one of the most personally rewarding (although not financially so) professions in the world. Teachers receive love and "warm fuzzies" from children, and teachers watch children improve, grow, learn, blossom before their eyes.

So, why begrudge teachers a deserved (earned, needed) sick and personal day benefit when teachers' salaries remain artificially low?

It is time to send the mean-spirited, clueless "researchers" to work at teachers' pay, give them extra work to do at night and demonstrate just how much that teachers work for the meager salary and benefits that they receive.

"Bean counter-experts" (pun intended) produce educational improvement plans that are not "worth a hill of beans." The Real Solution The real solution for these substitute woes is to hire full-time, highly trained substitutes and integrate them into the campus staff. This strategy would ensure that enough substitutes are available

Ensure that the substitutes kept instruction moving at the same, high level that the regular teacher maintains

Ensure continuity in daily classroom routines since the substitutes would be familiar with each classroom and each teacher's classroom management

Ensure high behavior standards because the substitutes would know the children, and know of individual, special needs.

Allow school budgets to reflect real budget needs, instead of the under budgeting management that causes difficulties at this time in the school year

If we want a quality education for our students, we have to be willing to pay for the components of that education. And, paying for substitute teachers is just one of those costs.

School district executive managers should just get used to the fact that quality education is an investment, not a money drain.

We can invest our money in many ways that produce little payoff, or we can invest in education and harvest long-term social and societal rewards.

If our children and our families benefit from our investment in education, so be it.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in News Nuggets at 10:00

## Short Article

Teaching the "Right Kind" of Competition

We can teach children the "right kind" of competition. But modern educators seldom do so. Competition can be subverted and distorted. Or, it can be downplayed and drained of the educational value that our students can derive.

So, what is this "competition done right?" The Purpose of Competition The purpose of competition is self-improvement, skill improvement, self-mastery.

The subversion of this learning process is "winning."

The subversion process might include any the following: Winning at all cost

Winning through any means

Winning without caring about others

Building "super stars" instead of everyone's "personal best"

Focusing upon outcomes instead of processes

Focusing so much on winning that self-improvement is neglected

Of course, sports come to mind when we study this catalog of "mis-aligned" competition. But, competition for grades, competition on projects, and competition for girlfriends/ boyfriends also fit the definition of "competition gone wrong."

On a less personal level, there is the competition between corporations where one tries to win by putting the other out of business. Or, in the software business, there is the competition of Open Source software in trying to put

Microsoft out of business by giving their product away for free.

Another example is the competition of countries, with spying, market domination, foreign aid, colonization; and in the worst case scenario; war.

Religions also practice subverted competition with missionary zeal, proselytizing, domination of governments, swinging the election process "their way," jihad, and smug, "one-up" arrogance.

All these examples are called "Zero Sum Games." That is winners and losers.

Positive competition makes "winners" out of everyone. Who Should We Compete Against? The Problem is in the Question We should ask "How we can improve everyone" instead of asking "Who we should compete against."

The answers show competition as a noble quality, or as a degrading enterprise.

For example, two siblings can vie for their parents' attention, praise and reward

Their efforts can be positive; Support the efforts of one another

Teach skills and tactics to one another

Share resources

Encourage and praise one another

Learn from their shortcomings

Celebrate each other's successes

Or negative&hellip;Out do the other

Sabotage

Undercut, spread lies, distort accomplishments

Create positive spin about themselves and negative spin about their sibling

Moving into the other sibling field of endeavor (game) instead of sticking to their own

Utilizing each opportunity to "beat" the other with higher scores, more winnings, better friends, more money; or any number of other subversions  
A Level Playing Field: "No Such Animal"  
Nature invents people with unique skills, talents and abilities. And if nature invents people this way, perhaps there is wisdom in coming into harmony with nature's process.

What would this harmony be? Developing, improving, elaborating, expressing those unique gifts?

And education should focus upon helping each student to grow and blossom in their own way, rather than funneling skills and talents into rigid, "pretend" challenges.  
Idealism Under the Radar Screen  
Of course you cannot keep your job with such educational idealism, even if the learning principles behind the approach are sound.

Your career survival depends upon "playing the part" of "test-prep-extrordinaire" for all to see.

But, behind the scenes, you can foster the ideals of cooperation and mutual support; and you can let these ideals leak out at times when everyone is distracted by high-stakes testing and bureaucratic "hullabaloo"  
Become a Remembered, High-Impact Teacher  
Surveys of the teacher that adults remember and appreciate most often turn up memories of that certain special teacher that demanded that every student lived up to their personal best.

What this trip down memory lane fails to place in perspective is that the right kind of competition, the competition of bettering your skills and abilities and reaching your personal best is the innate, correct competition.

Rather than besting someone else, the student does better than their previous best. And a few iterations of this competition with past personal best increases self-concept and self-esteem. This "correct competition" also anchors the memory of the teacher who "broke the mold" and helped students "break free" of the herd.

Help each of your students focus upon "besting their personal best" and become that most influential someone in many of your students' lives.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Short Article at 09:00

## Feature Article

Delivering Lessons that get Heard, get Remembered, and get Acted Upon

You already know that serving up memorable lessons is in your job description. So, delivering lessons that are heard and remembered is your target.

Creating memorable lessons helps your teaching, establishes you as an expert in your content area and demonstrates your intellectual authority.

These high-impact lessons also create a deep connection and a solid trust with your students.

Your students are begging (hoping, wishing) to trust your knowledge and skill level, but dry, dispassionate, academic lecturing fails to resonate with them.

How do you "Pull Off" a Memorable Lesson?

The question is, "How do you build and deliver a great lesson? (A great lesson is one that your students actually take interest in, connect with and remember.)

But, maybe you still wonder how much work and effort it will take to fabricate such a lesson.

Well, creating and delivering a memorable lesson is a huge subject. There are countless ways to pull off such a feat.

But, this article will focus upon a simple formula for you to practice with. The formula involves three imaginary props&hellip;images to help you remember the creative pattern. These are:  
A knot hole in a fence

The district championship game

and a Celebration (or Consolidation) Pep Rally  
The Knot Hole in the Fence  
Old-time movies show kids with no money watching a baseball game by peering through a know hole in the fence.

By watching the game through a knot hole, you only get to see a small piece of what is happening in the game at any one time.

The "knot-hole-view" is far less reveling than the panorama that folks who paid for tickets got to see.

And, there is always a danger that the either a policeman or bigger kids might come by and drive our heroes away.

In the same way, the issue you face in developing a memorable lesson is that you know a lot about the lesson contents.

You know what is happening in the whole stadium&hellip;as if watching from box seats or the radio announcers' booth.

You want your students to know as much as you do about the lesson's content. And, it probably pains you that you must leave many aspects and nuances of the information out of view.

But, consider how long it took for you to learn all that you know about the subject. Months, multiple college classes if the subject was in your major, years of outside-of-class study, seminars and workshops.  
So how could you compress your months, years, or decades of experience and knowledge into a single lesson, or even a unit?

Your approach: Pick a single student and pretend to be giving them the kind of description that one friend would be giving of the game when several of them are vying for a glimpse through the knot hole. Focus upon the essential action. Describe as if it were a "play-by-play" of what is happening.

For example, as you introduce the lesson, entice your students with crucial information...but only as much as you can see through the knot hole in the fence.

The introduction should be an appetizer, not a buffet. Dramatize Next: Engage your students' imagination and sensory processing (learning styles, learning modalities) with drama. This means the kind of drama that tells a story, but with the importance and energy of the championship game, not the boring practices and team drills that got the team into the playoffs, finals, tournament, etc.

But, take a tip from broadcast television, keep the plot simple and uncomplicated.

The drama can be an engaging story, with just the essential details as if watching the game through a knot hole. Use the drama of the story to communicate immediate understanding, and communicate your main points with the kind of interest that comes from sensory processing.

Take an experience that is common to your students, and map a concept to that experience.

For example...

Students understand the conflicts that teenagers experience in wanting to be independent, while their parents want to keep them safely under control. Describing this conflict

Or, students may be familiar with parents arguing about money. Describing a family drama when discussing how our political parties decide on a budget fits right in and connects with their personal experience.

Or, students may have seen their parents fuming and fomenting about being stuck in a traffic gridlock. So, connecting this experience to the drama and frustrations of African-American and Hispanic Americans who yearn to make progress with the American dream is a natural. (So is describing how our government fails to create opportunities for all Americans, but enabling the rich to "speed along on toll roads and with their cronies in the car-pool, fast-lane.")

When you relate a lesson-metaphor-drama, you take an intellectual concept and craft it into an engaging, unique, and personal experience.

And, a visceral drama is real enough to burn itself into your students' memories.

A great lesson engages your students' senses. Reliving and replaying personal experience is more real than "thinking about" concepts. The Celebration (or Consolidation) Pep Rally Finally, help your students face the aftermath of the drama.

With a game, the home-team-favorites either win or lose. So it is with the content-area lessons of life that a personal drama engages.

Win or lose, the important thing is what we do next, what we apply in our lives to keep our winning streak alive, or to come back stronger, more fit, more ready to compete.

Your students may "understand the point of the drama, but they need a way to apply the principles in their studies and their lives.

For the lesson to really "sink in," your students need a way to take action on the lesson.

The results of your students' action-taking do not have to be successful, but trying and failing often produces more substantial learning than doing and succeeding.

So, avoid "fairy-tale, happy-ever-after" endings that "pitch a simple, one-size-one-off-solution" to all issues.

The follow-up to your drama must have a "do-able" learning task.

You are targeting more than a "That was an interesting story" kind of response from your students.

You want to launch them into a project, task, mission...an application that teaches something more profound.

The "application assignment" should build your students' desire to learn more from you, create trust in your knowledge and content-based authority, and strengthen your students' connections with real learning.

The follow-up should: Break down into a step-by-step process

Identify two or three key activities

Provide examples of success initiatives

Be doable You want to give away all your knowledge. Don't hold anything back.

The more you give your students, the more that they will want.

The more you teach your students, the more learning they will crave. When students engage real learning, their interest is insatiable.

Unfortunately, real learning is often a scarce commodity in our students' lives. And, with the focus upon high-stakes testing; superficial knowledge holds sway over application learning, service learning, project-based learning and learning-by-doing.

Remember, you didn't acquire your content-area "expert status" by reading a single article or book.

So, encourage any progress that your students make, and show that profound and broad knowledge takes months or years to master.

But, rather than feel frustrated by the complexity and the saga of really learning by doing, your students will be grateful. Your students will want to know more, learn more, do more.

Everyone you teach in this memorable lesson way activates their inborn, innate desire for mastery and achievement.

This launches a process that we call "life-long learning," a "personal quest based upon real-world skills."

Of course, there are other ways to create memorable lessons. But, this method succeeds with minimal stress and maximum student involvement and engagement. So, create a lesson that opens as if watching a game through a knothole in a fence, then build the drama of a district championship game, and provide an action-taking follow-up task such as a celebration (or consolidation) pep rally. Let the drama of learning launch your students into hands-on, project-based or service learning experiences that cement concepts and life-experiences together. Creating these kinds of lessons is easy, but you may have to work hard to keep up with your students when their active follow-up branches into so many creative and inventive paths to mastery and achievement. And check back with your students in 20 or 40 years to see how a lesson of this kind launched them on a path toward life-long learning.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Featured Article at 08:00

## Quick Tips

### Tips for Parent-Teacher Conferences

The year-end drama of conducting Parent-Teacher Conferences heightens about this time of year. This is when campus leaders begin collecting the names of students that you may not promote to the next grade level.

And, all sorts of recriminations, anger, blame-leveling and unpleasantness ensue unless a teacher prepared for this eventuality with the proper groundwork.

If you didn't prepare, and if you insist on "holding back" a student; prepare for stormy seas. You might have to weather anything from a tidal wave, gale-force chop or the "Perfect Storm."

And, even with the full support of every campus administrator, you need to "batten down the hatches" and be prepared to ride out the rough seas.

And while you are tossing and turning in the churn of emotion and hard feelings, "pray" (The supreme Court doesn't have to know what you are up to in the privacy of your own thoughts) that you will do better to prepare (and protect) yourself next year. Sidebar For a short list of tricks and tactics that you can use to make Parent-Teacher Conferences more enjoyable (bearable), visit A to Z Teacher Stuff Teaching Heart Scholastic Parent-Teacher Interviews/Conferences from About.Com There are a lot of resources that can help you, but proactive planning and common sense management are your best bets.

Think: "What can go wrong?" Expect: "Whatever can go wrong probably will." Be Ready: "You can weather the storm if you calk the leaks, close the port holes, and seal the hatches." Otherwise, you are left to flounder "like a cork on the waves." The "Indirect Approaches" The most effective strategy, if you start early enough in the school year, is to keep in constant, positive contact with all student's parents. Then, begin laying the groundwork for retaining the student early on. But, don't make a direct suggestion to the parents because, maybe rightly, the parents will conclude that you have given up on their child, and that the "kid's fate is doomed."

Instead, problem-solve with the parents and invite them "on board" as active partners.

Then, they will see (and experience for themselves) the challenges that their child faces when wading into the dangerous waters of high-stakes testing tide in a grade that the child will be frustrated in.

In a "fairy tale scenario," the parents might enlist your help in getting the school to retain their student. Of course, you labor intently to provide all the extra help that the "not-on-the-high-stakes-pace student" might need.

In the real world, other scenarios play out. For example; The parents refuse to sign the papers for Special Education referral and testing

The parents do not speak English, and you don't speak their language

The parents are in jail, and you can't talk to them

The child is gifted, bored and making trouble

The child misses part of the school year because the family is picking crops in other states

The family does not want any notice or publicity, possibly because they do not have the requisite passports, visas, work permits or other residency documentation

Endless combinations of the above; Indirect Suggestion There are a number of indirect approaches to getting parents to believe that the idea to retain their child came from them. Some of these include: Telling success stories about students who were retained in the past (while maintaining confidentiality, of course)

"Salting" an Internet resources list of links with "pro-retention" sites. Note: Keep this resource list balanced with about 40% of the "experts" favoring the "retention option" while 60% favor other strategies, such as Special Education, one-on-one tutoring, parent training, etc.

Describing the upcoming year of struggle in slightly unfavorable terms while describing the upcoming year as a "retainee" in slightly favorable terms. (Again, keep this subtle. You don't want to be found out, exposed, or retaliated against)

Note: Avoid any mention of sanctions the school will receive if the student is "placed" in the next grade level and flounders on the high-stakes test You can lay the groundwork for the retention decision with planning, communication with parents, and with plenty of effort on behalf of their child.

You work for the welfare of each student&hellip;show it.

Parents respond to teachers that demonstrate that the interests of their child predominate in the school's decision-making process.

In the end, you want parents to come aboard as loyal crew members instead of unhappy, disaffected, belligerent passengers that wish to foment a mutiny.

Working to keep parents as your strongest allies ensure smooth sailing in choppy seas. Treat the parents of your students as if they are traveling with "First Class" tickets.

If you are the master teacher that you should be, the parents already know how fortunate their child is to be in your classroom. This is your "upgrade" to the joys of teaching. Consider yourself fortunate.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Quick Tips at 07:00

## **Top Tips**

### **Family Education Network Resources**

Pearson Education offers plenty of resources on its Family Education Network site.

Visit the Family Education Network site&hellip;These resources include:

TeacherVision.com

A one-stop teacher resource for grade-specific lesson plans, classroom-management advice, student activities educational printables graphic organizers and more!

MyGradeBook.com is a fast and effective way to track grades online and enhance communication between teachers, students, and parents&mdash;while keeping teachers organized.

QuizLab.com is an online assessment tool that allows teachers to give students quizzes online and have them graded automatically. Teachers will save time with automatic scoring and recording.

Funbrain.com is a popular online destination for interactive, educational games for children of all ages. Engaging arcade-style and Flash games help kids build skills while making learning fun.

Infoplease.com provides an online encyclopedia dictionary

atlas

almanac

country

state profiles

biographies

Factmonster.com combines reference materials, facts

trivia quizzes for kids on all subjects

Parents, educators, and kids can get homework help

almanacs, an encyclopedia

dictionary

atlas

The Family Education Network also offers "educational" games&hellip;Poptropica

A virtual world for kids to travel, play games, compete in head-to-head competition, and communicate safely. Kids can also read books, comics, and see movie clips while they play.Visit the Family Education Network for these (and more resources).

And, save the source of this Classroom Toolkit Newsletter link, save to your desktop, and the HTML file as a launchpad to these Family Education Network resources.Right click and save source to download the Launchpad.HTML file&hellip;

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Top Tips at 06:00

## **Teacher Resources**

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• Sidebar Classroom Toolkit cites an Education Week article in our News Nuggets article, Districts "Cutting Down" on Teacher Absences: Will they use an Axe, Weed Trimmer or Bulldozer? this month.

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Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 05:00

## **Teacher Survival Strategies**

Web 2.0: Do Teachers Dare Indulge?

Subtitle: Prepare for Web 3.0!

There is a lot of hype about Web 2.0. And, teachers encounter the gamut. Beliefs range from

• Web 2.0 is the missing key that will allow technology to revitalize education

• Web 2.0 is what students are already doing, and teachers will be left in the dust if they fail to capitalize on the resource

• Web 2.0 is the key technology that will finally allow computers and software to replace teachers

• Web 2.0 can "bring up test scores" when those lazy, shiftless, check-swiping teachers can't be trusted to deliver

accountable learning outcomes for all students

Or, Web 2.0 is hype and a waste of time, just like the failed "Technology Integration" movement

In fact, Web 2.0 hype is just another attempt by folks who don't understand education to bring back the blighted

technology integration world under new clothes

• On and on

Whatever your take on Web 2.0, is it here to stay? Flip Answer: Web 2.0 will soon be Replaced with Web 3.0

First question: What does "Web 2.0" mean?

Answer: Who knows?

But, what the term Web 2.0 refers to is the ability of software that is run on some "Social Network" sites to attract visitors. Even more, these sites motivate visitors to connect, reveal personal and private details about themselves, upload pictures, leave comments, rate and evaluate materials, share links, and a bunch of other stuff that hasn't been invented or perfected yet.

Of course, the downside is that today's social site oasis dries up, and the hordes of thirsty caravans converge on the next fad focus-of-the-day.

The questions that teachers need to ask are: What measurable curricular outcomes have been tested and have been shown to increase with the use of these technologies?

What instructional targets and student learning are produced by these strategies that cannot be done better, faster, easier, more economically with other strategies?

How does this technology save time and effort for students and teachers?

If this technology is adopted, what technology and non-technology has to be given up?

What infrastructure is needed, and what infrastructure support is required to fully utilize this technology?

What could go wrong if these technology tools are adopted, and what plans are in place to ensure that adaptive and replacement strategies can be deployed before adverse outcomes are realized?

In short: What are the benefits and costs of hopping on the Web 2.0 "bandwagon?"

In fact, these are the exact, same questions that teachers need to ask about any instructional resource, even "dark-age tools" such as chalk, paper, notebooks and crayons.

Unfortunately, these are the questions that Web 2.0 advocates seldom answer. Instead, they talk a technology, rather than an instructional agenda. Prepare for the Hype Advocates of Web 2.0 technologies will tell you that these new generation tools...

Are so easy to use that they require no training

Are more engaging to students'

Make a greater impact upon collaboration

Enhance classroom communication

Are already in use in classrooms across the country, and

You should make haste to adopt before you are left behind

Sound important. But, these reasons failed to target and document solutions to the important questions about instruction (above) that you should ask.

This is called, putting the advocate's "feet to the fire." What are these Tools? Web 2.0 Tools include:

Blogs

Wikis

Social Network Software

Streaming Video

Any online service with a "Widget"

These tools seem common place. But, are they worth the investment in time and money?

The Downside of the Tools and Technology

All is not bliss and delight in the "Web 2.0 Paradise."

Dangers lurk, and high profile issues emerge in relation to student safety, learning focus (instead of wasting students time) and teacher job security. (When things go wrong with anything educational, the teacher is the first to be blamed.

Possible dangers include:

Students are identified, lured into dangerous relationships on social network sites

Social network sites fail to control the "xxx" rated content and provide access to materials that students should avoid

Collaboration (with software such as Wikis) allows everyone to edit text. This is great for editing fiction, but not great when the accuracy and quality of ideas must be evaluated by everyone, then read, studied and reevaluated when multiple users make changes. These changes in the integrity and relevance of the information have to undergo constant scrutiny

Threats, bullying, intimidation can be conducted in an anonymous manner

Heightened expectations that this hyped technology will directly lead to enhanced, measurable and accountable student achievement and increased test scores when there is no direct relationship between the Web 2.0 technology and measurable student achievement

Increased expenditure on the technology infrastructure that is required to operate this technology, and a corresponding decrease in funding for other curriculum support expenditures

Increased pressure on teacher to undertake Web 2.0 activities because district decision-makers believed the hype about increased ease of use and student motivation, prompting them to invest money in the required infrastructure

Why Web 3.0 is Inevitable

Web 2.0 is hype and fantasy, but technology is real.

Just as E-mail systems replaced letters, phone calls, and take-home notes; so will usable technologies replace current systems.

But, time is not saved by E-mail, and the ease and speed promote stress and hurry.

But, no one wants to quit using E-mail and go back to stamped notes and postal worker intermediaries.

What Web 3.0 needs to go to is towards the gathering of "institutional knowledge" and the sharing of "best practices."

The problems with current models of classroom management and instructional delivery are that teaching remains an occupation of isolation from peers.

What Web 3.0 will do is open collaboration between competent and effective (master) teachers, and enable those with less developed skills and less elegant work habits to learn from and model effective best practices.

The problem now is that only students see what subtle changes in tactic and technique that master teachers implement. And, there is no avenue for the novice teacher to learn the nuances, except "trial and flop."

Web 3.0 will place expert knowledge and model-best-practice skills in front of those who "need to know, practice and do."

The potential for Web 2.0 is unmet and advocates are focused upon ideas and issues that are not related to education. Web 3.0 will be different. The technology will be mature enough to be both easy to use and useful. And, teachers who want to take the fast train to master teacher proficiency will hop aboard.

The Web 3.0 Train is on the horizon. Miss the Web 2.0 Train, and you will be well positioned for real benefit in a year or two.

## **Professional Self-Development**

"Do's" and "Do Not's" to Wind Down the School Year

May is the "home stretch," the "last inning," the "two minute warning time" of the school year. May is the time when you "make or break" all your efforts for the entire year. And this does not have anything to do with the high-stakes test that interfered (to a lesser or greater extent) with your instruction during the last month or so.

Every minute that you spend with your class in May is a "Midas Touch" golden opportunity for learning. (But, like Midas, you have to be careful!)

The items that you have to attend to as school closes down are urgent. Make sure that these chores and distractions don't interfere with teaching and learning. Final Checkout Leave final checkout tasks until it is time, but, prepare a checklist ahead of time, and in spare moments (you should be so lucky) take care of them with your students' help. For example: The librarian or media specialist may collect A/V equipment. Tag equipment as you use it this month, and send any broken equipment in early.

Textbooks may be collected early. Find out how many days that you will be without textbooks, and schedule lessons and assignments for each of those days. Copy text materials, Internet resources and worksheets as though you were developing a separate lesson plan. (In fact, that is what you are doing. You don't want to be stressed in preparing lessons without resources those last days. Take care of this, a little at a time at the beginning of the month.)

Get all assignments and papers graded. Even bring in papers and have students check work as part of a math class. (A social studies class can vote on answers as students correct the papers, a science can discuss the "scientific method" as it applies to each answer that they correct, etc.) Take the first week of the month to ensure that your paper grading is up to date. If one or two peripheral assignments end up "lost in the trash at home (not school)" who can complain? If any student notices, give them an "A" for observation and diligence.

Save copies of lessons that were creative, functional and productive. Throw away any marginal materials. You will never have time to correct the flaws of figure out how to salvage those materials next year. (Of course this does not apply to materials that you have written or created yourself. You can always fix and improve those.)

Prepare your purge files early, maybe a few students or a class per day. No student work should remain anywhere except official files. Everything else should evaporate by the first day of the Summer Break

Schedule a culminating activity for every class. And, build preparation and participation for each of these. Allow students to manage and produce as much of the proceeding as possible. And, assign students with the lowest social rank to take key roles

Ensure that the district's Central Office has summer pay information if anything is changing. You want to get paid during the summer, and you don't want to wait until the "last day's rush" and hope that your information makes it through with the flood of other papers that the personnel clerks receive. Send your information early when those clerks have nothing else to do

Prepare a "take home folder, or folders" for yourself. This is everything that you will need for the start of the upcoming school year. Otherwise, you will find yourself returning to school two weeks early (unpaid) to get ready. Your goal is to prepare a package so that you have a cushion of at least one week (maybe two weeks) of assignments and lessons.

Your goal, at the start of the next year: walk in, spend four hours decorating and be ready to teach your first class  
Sidebar Classroom Toolkit provides a strategy of classroom project planning and modular materials that make this possible. The idea is to build a library of generic materials that can be used with any assignment. In this way, you create a few generic assessments, build lessons with materials (such as Graphic Organizers) that you can use with multiple assignments, and you teach students procedures for projects and assignment that will be in play for the entire year. The start of school the following year will be relaxed and stress-free if you lay the groundwork ahead of time. Spending a few minutes here and there from the start of the month will pay huge dividends in days retrieved during the days that you might ordinarily have to waste coming back to clean up once school is out. Maximize Learning At the same (parallel) time that you are gearing down with all the non-essential, but urgent trivia, you can maximize student learning

The last month of school is the most productive time of the year. Use it to your students' advantage.

Schedule higher-order thinking skills projects, assignments that you were not free to pursue earlier because the "limited-thinking, high-stakes tests" were in the way. Be creative, reward student thinking and creativity. Allow art and artistic expression, integrate knowledge with lots of journal writing assignments and "reflection-response" time.

May is the time when you can revisit your own ideals, especially the ones concerning the reasons that prompted you to migrate into teaching. Recapture your idealism, and put some of that energy into practice during instruction. Take Cues from your Students And, May is the perfect time to engage students in decision-making, in democratic choice-making, and in collaborative assignment development.

Trust your students to know what they need to study. Connect curriculum goals with students' interests and watch meaning and relevance blossom among the facts and figures of the content-area curriculum.

And, pay attention because you can start the next school year on the same note (conduct a symphony of collaborative, cooperative learning, enjoy the melody of engaged learning), before the high-stakes threat pressurized your learning environment and you are shoved back into the rut of "teaching to the test."

Follow just a few of these suggestions, and you will be at the mall or on the beach days before your colleagues, and they will be back in school days ahead of you while you soak up a bit more sun and lounge next to the pool.

May is the culminating month of a school year of success and achievement. A little focus in the right areas can magnify the benefits of this month for you and your students.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Professional Self- Development at 02:00

## Open Source for Education

Literary Machine: What can Open Source learn from a Failed Commercial Program?

The literary Machine advertises itself as a tool for:

anyone who writes, anyone who must think critically and creatively, anyone who composes and produces documents, anyone who sorts and analyzes information... Source: <http://www.sommestad.com/lm.htm> The Literary Machine; developers believe that... Teachers and Students

Scientists and Researchers

Lawyers

Writers and Novelists

Business Executives and Personnel Manager

Just about any Thinker... needs their software.

Well, maybe they do, or maybe they don't.

So, why don't teachers everywhere refer this program to their district's IT department for testing? Why don't teachers

test this program themselves?

Answer: This program is not ready for prime time. And, Open Source advocates need to take a look at the lessons that this program teaches about the "fitness of software for the educational arena." First, the Reviews! First impressions of the software are damaged because the Literary Machine Website uses arcane and obsolete frames. Besides the Website contains broken links. Worse, the software sales site does not even have its own domain name. And anyone can get a domain name for less than \$10.00 USD. Sidebar If you want to know just how easy and inexpensive it is to acquire a domain name, check out Go-Daddy.Com Domain Names... "LiteraryMachine.com is already taken, but LiteraryMachine.Info is available for only \$0.99 USD for the first year. Not having a Website to look professional is an unconscionable business faux pas.

And having a sloppy Website is inexcusable, particularly when you can automatically install an Open Source Web site without cost at any Web host. For example:

Go-daddy.Com and HostGator.Com offer Website hosting for under \$4.00 per month (Go-daddy) and under \$8.00 per month (HostGator)

And Both of these hosting sites offer free Open Source Web Software and "one-click" installation. This means that their is no excuse for offering a sub-standard presence like Literary Machine does. But, here are reviewer comments:

"Difficult to say whether LM is worthwhile - Difficult is the word" "The website this comes from gave me a trojan.

Download3, or something, OR perhaps it was that I just downloaded this? I'm blaming the website. Still, I don't trust it now. "Pros: Couldn't figure out how to even begin using this program. Since trying out menu selections doesn't really provide any enlightenment and it didn't play nice hooking with Internet Explorer when trying to go to view the tutorials, I still have no clue how to use it. I guess all this should have been in the cons section.

Cons: I hate to rip on a free program, but this sure looked like it was quite the effort so I hope my criticism is constructive - it is meant to be. There has to be some set of relatively easy to find programming standards that tell what a user expects when selecting a text box menu item, etc. so if the programmer(s) can make it more consistent and intuitive to the average user, its supposed power and value might come shining through. Until that happens, I suspect most will try and give up on this program as I have. "Difficult to use. Application needed is hard to uninstall..." "I am reasonably computer literate but I found this program impossible to figure out. I played with it for over an hour and finally decided that I could not fine any use for it at all. While I hate to knock freeware I suggest that you save your time on this one and don't download. "During installation, the program requires you to install an application called Borland Database Engine. This application is not the greatest because it 'difficult' to remove. I managed to remove it thank to this site:

"[worldwideweb.stsi.com/lurk20005.htm](http://worldwideweb.stsi.com/lurk20005.htm)". Unless you must; it would be best to pass on this program... (Unless you don't mind 'things' being installed on your computer!)" "Non-intuitive software makes work a nightmare" "Pros: Well, it would have been free, if I could've gotten it to work. Cons: I am very much disappointed with the handling of this product. While it promises much (and may even deliver at some point), it's next to impossible to figure out how the thing even works. While it's far from intuitive, I had hope in the mention of tutorials, but even these were not well handled. The very first link returned a 404 error (page does not exist). Not an auspicious beginning. In the help file is a link for an 'introductory animated tutorial.' This loads a browser window showing 'Error loading viewlet' and a pretty blank screen. When I finally found a link that worked, I was greeted with the message that this version is no longer supported, and that the tutorial and help pages had been taken offline. However, tutorials are still promised, in the form of Flash and PDF file downloads, at a cost of \$8 or \$20 (At this point I'm no longer interested in finding out what the difference is.) I have it open on my desktop, to check facts as I type, but as soon as I post this review, the Literary Machine is coming OFF of my machine."

Source:Download.ComLike other reviewers, Classroom Toolkit regrets publishing negative reviews. But, our purpose in reviewing the Literary Machine is to show exactly what issues affect Open Source software when teachers or students (or both) ask the district's IT Department to load the "free software."  
"No Free Lunch:" Corollary - Nothing is "Free!"Take notice of every one of the issues presented by the Literary Machine reviewers&hellip; Incompatibility

Non-standard installation

Uninstall difficulty

Support

Inadequate tutorials

Obscure database engine

Etc.Notice that price is not on the list of issues. But, wasting time with a "free program" is on the list.

But, look at what the Literary Machine developers provide as "fixes and problem solving solutions for installing the "free"software&hellip;

Note: Classroom Toolkit was not able to provide a direct link to this information because of the "frames" design of the Literary Machine Website. We have included a link that allows you to skip over these error messages. Select this link to skip this section of the review...

"Errors and FixesImportant Notice: Windows XP with Servicepack 2Some older LM2000 and LM Professional installer programs will not function on Windows XP machines with Servicepack 2 installed. Replacements exist since Dec 2004. Link to the Win XP SP2-adapted package:Win XP SP2 LM2000 installation file for Windows XP Servicepack 2-----

This page has three parts.At the top you'll find an opening summary of the most important information. We recommend that all users read it, especially if you do not have the latest version of LM 2000.

The second part is a detailed account of all the important fixes made since the initial release of LM 2000 version 1.0

(1.051) on 22 October 2000. The latest version of the text document this section comes from is available at

[http://www.sommestad.com/dnl/LM\\_Program\\_Fixes.txt](http://www.sommestad.com/dnl/LM_Program_Fixes.txt). It closes with a summary of LM's limits (e.g., size limits of items, projects, and so forth).-----Summary"Portable folder installations":

The problem: If you have another BDE program running, the "portable folder" LM installation will report "Borland Database Engine (BDE) not found". Solution: Execute the file `uninstall_local_BDE.bat` to remove the BDE files in the LM program folder . (A

requirement is that you already have a BDE installation (notified in the Windows Registry) in the machine.)Outlines:

Double clicking a line (project) in an outline saves the outline and opens a new outline build with the clicked project as name. This is a potent command, but it might be executed by mistake. Reload the previous outline if needed. (This

function has been made optional in LM Pro).Important installation issue: The Paradox database system (version 5) will

not allow filenames with path included to be longer than 79 characters. Example: `D:\Program Files\Sommestad\The`

`Literary Machine 2000\project.db` If you install somewhere else than in the suggested `D:\Program Files\Sommestad\`, keep it short. Warning message in version 1.128B and upwards.Merge Words: Merge Words in the Concept Window will

only function for a pair of words, not for three or more.Windows 95 problems with late 1.1 versions: Windows 95

installations may have general resource problems with version 1.1, probably due to the increased complexity in the

program. In the final 1.1 version it will be possible to set the maximum number of text items on screen to 30 - 200. The

lower limit could be necessary for Windows-95.Return from external sessions, like editing files, sometimes requires a

click on taskbar.DOS-jobs (backup and restore) must be manually deleted from taskbar (Windows 95/98).DOS jobs

time-scheduled and may take a long time to complete. Workaround: Let the timeout message stay on screen until you

can see that all work in the command window is done.Desktop map repaints with delay only. (Intentional to save

resources, pls click update.)WordPerfect will not work as standard word processor (as helper text editor) within LM. Two

things can cause problems with invoking other programs from LM: Long file names. May cause troubles with system

modules that have been migrated to the system from 16-bit systems. This is solved here (like in other systems) with the

"8.3" short filename convention. (= Short names with " ~ " in them).

The application will not conform to the scheme: Run: EXEAPPNAME filename. That is, it will not take upstart file name

as 1st parameter on the command line. This is the WordPerfect case. WP starts a dialogue which disturbs LM. (This is a

"shell"-type and not an OLE-connection).Tips: To find out if a word processor will work within LM, do this test: Make a

shortcut to the word processor exe file. Drag and drop a text file on it (Like ReadMe.txt). If it works, and works without

any upcoming "Do you really want to.." dialog box, LM will take it. Copy the path and filename from "Properties" of the

shortcut and insert into the LM.ini file. Example: `TextEditor = C:\Program Files\Microsoft`

`Office\Office\WINWORD.EXE`Advanced auto start options with LM (auto start in minimized position) or (accidentally)

double-clicking the start icon one extra time may case errors (like "referenced memory at...") Escape via "Cancel" or

"Ok" and start again.

Reinstalling (or version refresh of) Corel products (WordPerfect) may require reinstall of LM. (1 reported case).The

`PdxRbld` freeware for packing tables may require a BDE-version setting in the ini-file. See `PdxRbld` documentation in

`Readme.rtf`The sub-application "Wordboiler" displays its window in the "always on top manner". However, this may be

disturbed if other applications also use "on-top". If the Wordboiler disappears, look for it behind the LM main window.

(You can place it alongside the main application window.)Help file generally not accepted by users. Minor revision with

version 1.112 `lm.exe` package and with 1.117 (Separate download file). See Release notes for any extra info

needed.Repaint of text item corners (color) may temporarily fail.XML-import comparatively slow.No pack of database

within system. (See "Database maintenance" page).URL capture insufficient as to length and unusual characters

used. Bugs in project handling and start-up of documents/web-pages were corrected in version 1.118D. Character set adaptations (See "Adapt to other language" page). Paradox database system (BDEADMIN.exe) must not be configured for multi-user access. If you get growing \*.lck files somewhere on your disks during execution run the BDEADMIN.exe database setup program and set LOCAL SHARE to false. (Select Configuration/System/Init). The warning for .lck files and the suggestion to set LOCAL SHARE = FALSE in BDEADMIN.exe may reappear too often. Fixed in 1.121B. SHAREMODEWARNING=0 suppresses the warning. (However, it is not recommended to allow LOCAL Share = TRUE) The "Large Font" setting in Windows is not recommended - some dialog windows become distorted. There are irregularities in the automatic saving of "excluded words" in the Wordboiler. Users should manually load and save "exclude words" if they are used.-----Program Fixes (Details)GUNNAR SOMMESTADTHE LITERARY MACHINEDec 14, 2001-----IMPORTANT FIXES in versions later than 1.051 (= Oct 22, 2000)-----Unhooking a project from a new item can remove a keyword also: FIXED (1.129) Find command: (FIXED 1.127) When using a search string with a blank (=several words), the command misses some occurrences. The search is performed on one line at a time in the text window - missing those items where the two words were split on two lines. 1) URL:s stored in the project "box" may fail if they contain arguments separated by commas or other unusual constructs. FIX: Comma separation case fixed; else the problem remains. Length = 80 chars; will not be changed, since it is defined in the database. Same applies to title length (38 chars) 2) FIXED: Book Width in .ini-file not in effect. 3) FIXED: Project box; "Execute on file extension" could fail if the filename contains blanks. 4) Behavior of "flyword" dropped on item changed: No longer supports direct keyword update. WORKAROUND: Drop Flyword in dictionary, then drop the selected word directly onto the item. 5) FlyWord by DoubleClick option in .ini-file not ok. FIXED. 6) FIXED: New items did not have correct "text side-up" mode set; the new right button menu on single words would not function. 7) Insert new word with testing; must find both Dict and Inflec entries. FIXED. Menu selection Edit/Copy (to get word in table); apply also to inflection window. FIXED. 9) Concatenation of very long texts unchecked in memory. FIXED, concatenated texts limited to 250 000 characters. 10) Minor memory leakage (connected to big clipboard copies). FIXED. 11) Inflection" data that was saved to a zip-file was not included in a subsequent restore operation. FIXED. [1.113E] 12) The Paradox database system (version 5) will not allow filenames with path included to be longer than 79 characters. Example: D:\Program Files\Sommestad\The Literary Machine 2000\project.db If you install somewhere else than in the suggested D:\Program Files\Sommestad\, keep it short. Warning message inserted in version 1.128 E DATABASE - comments and hints: a) Utility menu: See new entry "Find damaged items" b) Compress the data base: Use a freeware like Roman Krejcis program Pdxrblid: <http://www.betbyte.com/PDX.HTM> (Information in help file about rebuild on restore not correct.) c) Change character set: The instructions found in Online Help/Help Center still applies. Complicated, but reported to work (Hungary, Norway, etc) KNOWN PROBLEMS:- Outline subsystem: (1) When deleting a project, the corresponding tree node in an outline tree showing will not disappear automatically. Workaround: Save this outline and reload it. (2) When using the Unhook command to delete a tree node, this node will be placed at bottom. However, if the node is a branch in the tree, the subnodes will not show up. Workaround: Save this outline and reload it. 2) fixed in 1.127.- Windows-95 installations will often get problems with resources. Probably the 1.1 version of the program has grown too big for Windows-95. A setting in the INI file can help: Set MachineIndex = 50 for small Windows-95 machines and set it high (max 200) for modern machines. (Equals maximum number of items on screen.) The program has been modified in ways that often will make it exit very quick on serious problems, in order to prevent damage.- Return from external sessions, like editing the ini-file requires click on taskbar.- DOS-jobs (backup) must be manually deleted from taskbar (win95/98).- DOS jobs time-scheduled and may take a long time to complete. WORKAROUND: Let the timeout message stay on screen until you can see that all work in the command window is done.- Wordperfect will not work as standard word processor within LM. The problems with invoking other programs from LM are: Long file names. May cause troubles with system modules that has been migrated to the system from 16-bit systems. This is solved here (like in other systems) with the "8.3" short filename convention. (= Short names with " ~ " in them). The app will not conform to the scheme: Run: EXEAPPNAME filename that is it will not take the upstart file name as 1st parameter on the command line. This is the WP case. WP starts a dialogue which disturbs LM. (This is a "shell"-type and not an OLE-connection). Tips: Make a shortcut to the word processor exe file. Drag and drop a text file on it (Like ReadMe.txt). If it works, and works without any upcoming "Do you really want to.." ,LM will take it. Copy the shortcut path and filename from "Properties" of the shortcut and insert into the LM.ini file. Example: TextEditor = C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\Office\WINWORD.EXE- Desktop map repaints with delay only. (Intentional to save resources, pls click update.)- Advanced auto start options with LM (auto start in minimized position) or (accidentally) double-clicking the start icon one extra time may cause errors (like "referenced memory at..."). Escape via "Cancel" or "Ok" and start again. Also notice that the LM icon is removed a few seconds before it is actually terminated. Do not restart too soon; else you will either gracefully land in the current session or create the abovementioned conflict.

- Reinstalling (or version refresh of) Corel products (WordPerfect) may require reinstall of LM. (1 reported case).- The warning for .lck files and the suggestion to set LOCAL SHARE = FALSE in BDEADMIN.exe may reappear too often. Fixed in 1.121B. Also: SHAREMODEWARNING=0 suppresses the warning.- The PdxRblid freeware for packing tables may require a BDE-version setting in the ini-file. See PdxRblid documentation in Readme.rtf- The sub-application "Wordboiler" displays its window in the "always on top manner". However, this may be disturbed if other applications also use "on-top". If the Wordboiler disappears, look for it behind the LM main window. (You can place it alongside the

main application window.)- Marked/highlighted string in an item in connection with a find text will show first embedded occurrence - even if an exact search was performed. (Look further down if needed.)- Repaint of text item corners (color) may temporarily fail.- XML-import comparatively slow.- No pack of database within system. (See suggestion about software on Help Center page).- URL capture insufficient as to length and unusual characters used.- Bugs in project handling and start-up of documents/web-pages were corrected in version 1.18D.- Character set adaptations - (See discussion on Help Center page).- Paradox database system (BDEADMIN.exe) must not be configured for multi-user access. If you get growing \*.lck files somewhere on your disks during execution - run the BDEADMIN.exe database setup program and set LOCAL SHARE to false. (Select Configuration/System/Init).- The installation menu contains the item "Windows 95"; to be checked for such installations in order to get "drops" on the extended desktop right. However, these functions appear to be somewhat instable, you might have to checkmark "Windows 95" also for Windows 2000 installations.- The "Large Font" setting in Windows is not recommended - some dialog windows become distorted.-----LimitsMaximum size for text displayed in windows is 32000 characters. Generally, the maximum size for text displayed in other types of LM windows is a bit higher — it is a resource question. Anyway, we do not recommend longer texts than 32000 characters anywhere in an editable window.Maximum size of a concatenated text (like a project text stream or a bookmode-stream) is 250,000 characters.There is no limit on the size of text or HTML output from the Outliner, since this data is written to a file.Words (and thus Concepts) must not be longer than 38 characters. The same limit applies to Project names. URL: s (or file paths) in the projects box may be 80 characters long.Some URLs with complicated encoded strings or untypical characters are not supported, however those with commas at the end may work depending on a special fix. It remains that 80 characters will in many cases not suffice for URL capture. Since this is database-bound in LM, improvements will not come soon.When LM encounters a long filename and path, as a first resort it tries to shorten the file reference by using the "8.3" short filename convention. (These are shortened names with tilde [~] in them to replace the omitted characters.)The maximum number of entries in concept boxes or keyword/project lists in an item is set to 24.The maximum number of open windows is determined by your MachineIndex setting. By default it is set to about 80. Depending on your computer's memory situation, this limit may be too low, or in extreme cases, too high. If you get error messages like "cannot open window," they indicate that Windows has been severely strained. Try to avoid opening too many objects. The LM system tries to protect data in all such situations, but texts or keywords may be blanked out at such failures.The program was developed and compiled on a Windows 95 / 32 Mby / 133 MHz machine. Windows 95 machines need a setting Windows-95 in the menu Installation. This fixes a peculiarity in Delphi/Windows treatment of window control positioning. Windows 95/98 does not close DOS jobs (such as zipping and unzipping backups during back-up and restore operations). Sooner or later, you must close them on the Windows Task Bar. Other differences between Windows 95/98, NT, 2000 or ME have not been reported. (Windows 2000 is by far the best choice of system.)There is no rollback facility (i.e., the ability to undo changes step by step or to restore the state of a previous point in time). Even if you know how to handle a Paradox database, it is preferable to rely on back-ups if there are data base damages.Be aware of how great a demand you put on resources when loading big pictures or very long texts into LM. Be cautious by updating the database first and closing unnecessary windows. There are number of checks and limits encoded in the program, but they could fail in some cases. Use the backup function frequently. Your valuable work must be protected against various technical risks not all being inside the LM program itself."A Tale of Obsolete WoeThe software has both a freeware (LM2007) and a commercial version (Literary Machine Pro). However, if you look at the dates on the error messages, you can see that the program was developed sometime over a decade ago.

So, who wants a great idea that was not developed correctly, was difficult to install and use, and more difficult to uninstall.

Who wants to waste time with software, even if it is free. And, what teacher has time to waste?

So, a teacher that refers a free program that is more trouble than it is worth to the district IT Department will lose credibility. And, IT Department staff, if they have time to tinker with the program, will make jokes about that teacher for years to come.

So, do your homework before making requests of the IT Department that will waste their time.

Do your homework, and when great and useful Open Source products that meet the instructional needs of your students become available, you will have a clean reputation with the folks that matter most"your friendly, helpful, hardworking IT Department staff members.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Open Source at 01:00