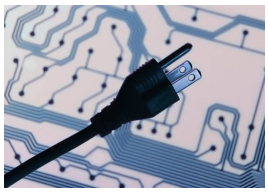
The Plug



Café Moodle mural by GHS Mural Arts Project

In This Issue:

"don't forget, Zero is our Hero!"

Coming Next Month –

Mind Maps

Personal Learning Networks

Online Learning

GNU Cash

And more

More Moodle News

Moodle has expanded the list of supported activities to include games designed to allow students to practice skills in a fun and engaging format. The list includes such favorites as hangman, crossword puzzles, cryptex puzzles, sudoku, millionaire, snakes and ladders and hidden picture games.
The game activities easily integrate any vocabulary list created using the glossary activity. Once the glossary is in place, a few clicks of the mouse on the games menu and you are ready to go.

The games can be set-up as practice activities or as graded assignments. They can be used as part of the lesson, for skills practice or for extra credit assignments. The use of games in education is not new – Moodle has just taken it to another level where you can create a unit that contains a game right in your Moodle room for students to complete using the online, technology driven, interactive format that helps keep them connected to your content.

Spring Cleaning – Don't forget your technology!

Spring is here and so is the urge to dust off the cobwebs of winter - to do some spring cleaning. Don't forget to pay a little attention to your technology tools – a few simple spring cleaning chores can help prolong the life of your equipment and make your computer run a little faster. Some of the following tips are quick and easy even for the novice computer user. Others might involve a trip to the internet for instructions or software downloads. All of them will help make your technology experience a little less stressful.
While you are cleaning up the intelligent part of your computer, take some time to bundle cords, wipe down the box, monitor and attachments, turn the keyboard upside down and give it a good shake and wipe down that mouse.

Top Ten Easy Spring Cleaning Tips
We do all of these for you here, try them yourself at home

1. Empty your trash
2. Clean up your desktop – remove old or unused files
3. Clean up your hard drive – remove old or unused files, organize the rest
4. Run disk clean-up to remove cookies and temporary files
5. Update your operating system – Windows or MAC
6. Update other software
7. Update your anti-virus software (you should be doing this all the time and automatically)
8. Update malware software
9. Run scans for viruses, malware and other buggies
10. Scan and defrag your computer

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www.opensource.org

Open Source Kit and Kaboodle

Open Source software has great potential on many levels. As we look for ways to do more with less and practice fiscal responsibility, Open Source may provide some of the answers.

We are developing a list of tools called the Open Source Kit and Kaboodle. As we investigate new programs, we will add them to the Kit and roll them out to staff.

Currently, we have 15 programs in our Kit – some of them are programs that run in the background to keep the gears moving. Others are programs that allow us to provide instructional opportunities to all students. Each month we will highlight one of the programs that can be used in the classroom.

Highlight program of the month –

Dia - Diagramming Software

Dia is a full featured diagramming software program that allows users to create flowcharts, network diagrams, structured diagrams, models, illustrations, floor plans and timelines.

Dia also allows more advanced users to create free hand drawings and then convert them to plans and prints.

Dia has been receiving a lot of press in educational technology publications of late as it provides a free platform for teachers and students to produce mind maps and interactive timelines. Both important features for visual learners that help students hone problem solving skills using real world examples and artifacts. It has also been gaining momentum in math and engineering classes to allow students to create visual representations of products and problems. Check out the newest version at http://live.gnome.org/Dia

Spotlight on - Gwen Herman and Anna Peeke

Junior High Math teachers Gwen Herman and Anna Peeke brought a combination of math, language arts, technology and fine and cultural arts skills to the March Read Across the Planet program sponsored by Two Way Interactive Connections in Education. (TWICE).

Students in grades 7 and 8 performed six interactive video conference programs for students at Cold Springs School to help celebrate the birthday of Dr. Seuss - Theodor Geisel. Prior to show day, Gwen Herman's students wrote an original math book to read to the younger students. Anna Peeke's classes created an original script from a book, also about math and our Hero Zero. Both classes created back drops for the production and made and wore costumes reflecting key features of their presentations. The students at Cold Springs School were given manipulatives and were encouraged to participate in the programs by shouting answers and hanging counters on a tree. Several characters were on hand for the event including a giant banana and a very large calculator that walked and talked.

All of the students were actively engaged in the program and the energy during the presentations was electric.

Digital Imaging Projects

The ability to evaluate and understand the daily deluge of images is at the core of visual literacy. In an era dominated by the internet, television and inexpensive digital imaging equipment, students need to be able to analyze images and make intelligent decisions.

The evolution of imaging equipment from the old days of cameras requiring expensive film and developing costs to renewable, inexpensive digital cameras that are part of everyday life and even embedded in most cell phones, has changed the way cameras can be used in the classroom. Teachers can be creative with assignments and ask students to demonstrate proficiency with a variety of media. Digital images can be combined with programs like Dia where students can present historical information by embedding pictures along a timeline or inserting images into floor plans or models. Students can create documentaries, commercials or digital storybooks. The possibilities are endless. Digital imaging technology can be used to engage and excite.

Along with these expanded possibilities comes the opportunity for educators to provide guidance regarding issues of privacy and copyrights and fair play – to teach students the digital citizenship skills that will be necessary to navigate successfully in an increasing media rich world.