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“This upgrade to our connection has resulted in increased performance for everyone using the Internet for any purpose”

Bandwidth Upgrades Mean Faster Internet for the District!

by Andy Mayes

Last month the district quietly passed through an exciting moment, in a “geeky” sort of way. Bandwidth increased by 50%!

What is bandwidth you say? Bandwidth is the measure of the data-transmitting capacity of a network connection -- in this case, our connection to the Internet. For years the district has operated at a bandwidth of 20 Mb per second, meaning that the wire that connects us up to the rest of the world could support up to 20 Million bits of data passing along it each second. Well, even though that sounds like an astounding number, we were filling it up every single school day!

With all the new technology initiatives we've undertaken in recent years, Internet use had outgrown our capacity. When the bandwidth limit is reached, everyone in the district experiences slower Internet access. It's like getting in line at the movies: the line only goes as fast as the ticket counters can keep up. As we add more computers in the classroom, our ticket counters were not able to manage the pace as effectively as before.

Well, if Megabits were ticket handlers we've just hired 10 more! The district has contracted with the state to provide an additional 10 Mb/s of bandwidth, so our connection is now running at 30 Mb/s. This upgrade to our connection has resulted in increased performance for everyone using the Internet for any purpose, from staff using APSCN or students doing research on the Web! Hopefully that alone makes this bandwidth stuff sound a little less “geeky.”



<http://www.themaclawyer.com/photos/uncategorized/2007/05/21/internet.png>

What is Microsoft Tuesday and how does it affect FPS?

by Andy Mayes

Microsoft Tuesday is the name coined for the day each month that Microsoft releases software updates for its products. Updates are constantly being developed, but due to the impact to the customer (having to wait for downloads to complete, possibly being required to restart the computer) they are typically held up and released all together on the second Tuesday of the month. There have been rare cases where Microsoft has released updates out of cycle, but usually only when a critical flaw leaves the software unsecure. Therefore, on the second Tuesday of every month we can usually anticipate a new load of updates to come our way.



Here at FPS, we do not send updates out to your computers until we have reviewed their content and determined which patches and upgrades apply to our environment. Many major upgrades require extensive testing before implementation before release into our network. Typically we will approve security updates for distribution right away, while other large updates or major product changes may be held up until we can announce it in advance and allow for you to plan around them. So while Microsoft Tuesday can mean you will see software updates soon, you can at least be assured that someone here has reviewed them before allowing them to download to your computer.

Web Resources



ARKive Education (www.arkiveeducation.org/) includes games and resources focusing on endangered species and habitats. Multimedia resources are available for download in the areas of science, geography, and other topics, and are broken down by age range. Lessons on plants and animals are included. (Note: The lessons are zipped, and must be unzipped after download.) Educational games include animal survival and wildlife forensics, among others. The site uses imagery and videos from the free resource

ARKive (www.arkive.org), a "virtual conservation effort" housing video, images, and sounds of plant and animal species currently endangered or threatened.

Exploratorium Online Exhibits (www.exploratorium.edu/exhibits/f_exhibits.html) includes interactive resources based upon exhibits from the Exploratorium Museum of Science, Art, and Human Perception in San Francisco, California. The online exhibits are available in five different categories: seeing exhibits, mind exhibits, life science exhibits, matter/world exhibits, and hearing exhibits. The Exploratorium's general website at www.exploratorium.edu has additional educational resources for exploration and education that are regularly updated. For example, the Explore section has many hands-on activities that can be duplicated in the classroom.

Grant Opportunities

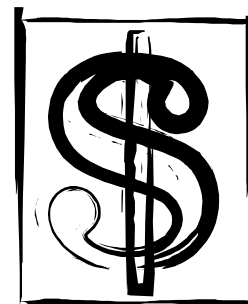
* Thomson Gale TEAMS Award *

The Thomson Gale TEAMS Award is open to all K-12 public and private school teachers in the United States who have collaborated with media specialists during the 2007-2008 school year.

http://www.toolfactory.com/olympus_contest/olympus_podcasting.htm

Application deadline: April 28, 2008

Application process: The nomination may be submitted by a library media specialist(s), teacher(s), principal(s), student(s) or parent(s). Each nomination must include a completed submission form with appropriate attachments and mailed to address provided on form.



* K-12 Podcasting Grants *

K-12 and special education schools in the US are eligible to apply for the Tool Factory Podcasting Grant. To apply, teachers must develop a lesson plan that demonstrates how they would use podcasting in their curriculum. Grants will be awarded based on: effective integration of podcasting in the curriculum, effective use of all resources provided by the grant, high degree of student involvement, creativity, and fun. Awardees will receive a school site license of Tool Factory Podcasting to install on every computer in their school, 3 Olympus Digital Voice Recorders, 3 Headsets and Microphones, a Clip Art Station, Worksheet Station, Web Page Station, and the Tool Factory's Simple Guide to Podcasting.

http://www.toolfactory.com/olympus_contest/olympus_podcasting.htm

Application deadline: April 30, 2008

Application process: Complete from online

* ING Unsung Heroes K-12 Education Award *

Teachers in public or private K-12 classrooms are eligible to apply for the ING Unsung Heroes K-12 Education Awards, which will select 100 finalists based on their creative, innovative classroom projects and unique educational programs. Each of the 100 finalists will receive \$2,000. First place will receive \$25,000; second place \$10,000; and the third place winner will receive \$5,000.

http://www.toolfactory.com/olympus_contest/olympus_podcasting.htm

Application deadline: April 30, 2008

Application process: Complete application available online

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