

# Taking the Plunge: Diving into Technology

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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## Getting Our Feet Wet

My task this year was to engage students in my classroom and within the school with authentic learning tasks using technology. At the beginning of the year, many students were at an exploratory level with computers and needed time to learn how to log on, open programs and save projects. I wondered how I was going to infuse technology into the classroom in a meaningful way.

I began introducing a wide variety of programs and tools to my students as possible culminating projects to show what they know. Tasks included: creating comics using Comic Life software to write about a human right that had been violated and how it was resolved, writing legends and publishing them through Pixie software. After some pre-teaching and collaborating with my teacher-librarian, I was impressed with the ease at which my students were using technology and I felt that we had moved out of the exploratory phase. Around December, I wondered how could the students use technology to share their learning with a broader audience. They were already uploading samples of their work onto their e-portfolios, but the digital works were confined to viewing by myself and their parents.

## Diving In

I formulated a plan to create a blog site to share samples of students' math journals. My "Collaborative Inquiry Team", comprised of grade 4/5 teachers, focused on the use of journals to improve students' writing in mathematics. Biweekly, we would choose student samples to post on the blog. Classmates would then post comments as a form of peer assessment.

Since we had dabbled with other technologies and software, my students were able to use their background knowledge to self-select appropriate tools that would allow them to represent their mathematics thinking verbally, symbolically, graphically, concretely, or pictorially.

Some students chose to use Pixie to create a mathematics journal, and it was beneficial to listen to them orally explain their thinking in accompaniment with their diagrams, pictures, and text. Pixie projects can be exported in movie formats, so many were uploaded to the mathematics journals on the blog site.

## Sharing the Success

Our excitement with Pixie and the blog began to spread. My students became “tech buddies” for other classrooms and we tutored kindergarten, grade one, grade two, and the other grade five classroom as to how to use the blog and other technologies to share their learning. As of May, seven classrooms use the blog to post mathematics journal samples and provide comments for others.

When I began this project, I did not predict the eager participation in the blog. The site has enabled teachers to move students along in mathematics literacy in a more engaging way. I am proud of the technological learning my students have demonstrated this year. They have demonstrated great determination and leadership. Our journey through the use of technology has been successful and rewarding. Just remember, that you can journey too, as long as you are willing to take risks.

To view our school math journal please visit: <http://forestgroveschool.blogspot.com>.