

Upper Perk Tech Pulse

Keeping You Informed on UPSD Technology

Special points of interest:

- Google login update
- Teacher webpage training
- New Technology Support Ticket System

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep everyone informed of the goings-on of Technology in Upper Perkiomen School District. Each month the status of projects and challenges will be updated and any new changes will be announced. We hope you find it informative and beneficial!



Clever Badges

We've been experimenting with making Chromebook logins more efficient for our younger students since the start of the school year. First we enabled "Kiosk mode." That allowed kids to click on an icon on the Chromebooks and get to work with minimal delay.

We are taking that a step further now. Working with Tom Guellich, we have setup a new login method called "Clever Badges." We use a cloud-based system called Clever to automate roster data to several other cloud systems such as MAP. Clever also supports single-

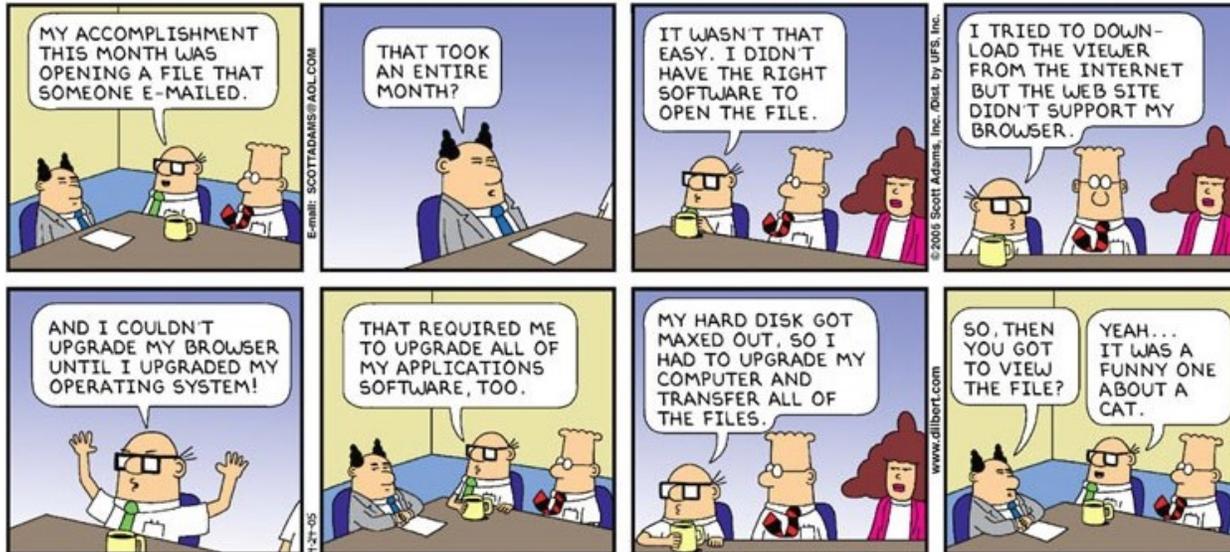
sign-on through several mechanisms. Clever Badges allows us to print out unique QR codes for each student in grades K-3.

When K-3 students log into Chromebooks, they only have to click on a couple of buttons and then hold their unique QR code up to the camera. The authentication happens automatically through Clever and Google, and the student is logged in to her/his account. Mr. Guellich has tested this and it is working well, so very soon we will roll it out to all K-3 students.

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Did you know? Microsoft released the latest major update of Windows 10 on October 17, 2017. It is dubbed the "Fall Creators Update." Major updates are released every 6 months and are supported for only 18 months after their release date.



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Google Updates

Google has made several updates over the past couple of months.

The first change hit Chromebooks, which always update automatically. The login screen is now much larger than before, and the background on the login screen has changed. This was done by Google to make it easier to identify the various fields and buttons on the login box. The actual process of logging in is still the same.

The second change Google made is around the Google Drive app on Windows computers. This app is distinct from Google Drive cloud storage. Two products having the same name is confusing, so Google changed the Windows app to Google Drive File Stream and added functionality.

What is changing?

The old Google Drive app will cease to be supported on December 11, 2017. Google's Drive changes are limited to the client applications for Windows and MacOS. It is the application that is installed on computers which we use to synchronize files between the computer and Google Drive. The new Google Drive File Stream replaces the Google Drive and the Google Photos synchronization apps and adds support for Google Teams.

What is not changing?

The overall functionality of Google Drive is the same. What we know as "Drive," which is the cloud storage platform that we use to store and share Google files will remain the

same. No data will be lost, no files renamed or reorganized, etc.

What is Technology doing?

We are pushing out Google Drive File Stream to staff computers. It will automatically install.

What should you do?

We recommend that everyone stop using the Google Drive sync app now and use the web interface until Google Drive File Stream reaches your computer. If you have Google Drive File Stream now, feel free to use it. If you have any questions or receive any prompts that you are unsure of, please contact your Tech Assistant and they will be happy to help.

Teacher Webpages



On October 20, all teachers were trained how to setup their pages in the new Finalsite platform. Everyone has until the end of the 2017-2018 school year to complete their page.

In the training, general expectations were covered for what teacher pages should contain. Contact information, an “About me” section, the schedule, and a link to the learning management system (Google Classroom or Schoology) are all required. In addition to the types of content, the content itself must be kept up to date.

In terms of the overall look of the pages, UPSD is trying to stay away from PDF files and heavy use of clip art. Aesthetically, both tend to detract from the overall look that the new website has established. Limiting them will also make it easier to update the page in the future, so it is beneficial in many ways.

The trainings were largely workshops, in which teachers were shown the tools and then given some time to work on building their pages. There were a few glitches at first, with some teachers unable to log in and create their

pages, but they were resolved quickly.

There is a lot of support available if anyone needs help. Please feel free to reach out to Barb Eisenhauer, Allie Stephens, Bryan Ruzenski, or the school webmaster.

Moving forward, when teachers are ready for their new pages to go live, simply contact one of the same people and the current link to the Google site will be changed to point to the new Finalsite page. Several teachers have already completed their pages and they look great!

MATHia Fix

The issues that students were having accessing MATHia from home are fixed. We worked with iboss for a few days, they escalated the issue to an engineer, and he was able to resolve it. It turned out that iboss was blocking the term “models” at home but not at school. That explains why the “Rational Expressions” module was the area that most consistently caused problems. On the first screen that students saw when launching it, the words “Rational Models” appear. The details that the math teachers and students gave us helped immensely in narrowing down the issue.

There are some questions that are still causing issues regardless where the student is when accessing them. Specifically, some problems seem to have no solution. No matter which multiple-choice answer is chosen, or what is typed into the free-answer fields, the questions are marked incorrect. The math teachers and Allie Stephens have been working with Carnegie Learning to figure out what is happening. Fortunately this issue is limited to a few specific questions, so it is not widespread. Some of these have been fixed by Carnegie Learning, but new ones are discovered occasionally

as students progress through the modules.

Even with these issues, MATHia is a vast improvement over Cognitive Tutor from a technical perspective. And despite the issue with iboss, we are still happy with it. The product is a big improvement over the old Lightspeed filter, and the iboss support team was persistent as we worked through the problem. Now that these growing pains are behind us, iboss and MATHia are stable.

CARNEGIE LEARNING

New Support Ticket System Launching

As mentioned in previous newsletters, the Technology Department has been evaluating Support Ticket systems to replace the much maligned SchoolDude system.

We have settled on a product called “OSTicket.” One of its key features is that it integrates with Active Directory so we don’t have to remember a special password. We can log into it with our normal computer accounts.

Our favorite feature, and one we are sure will make all of our lives easier, is that the system can be emailed and it will open a ticket. There will no longer be a need to log into a website to create a ticket. A special email address will be setup which anyone can send to and OSTicket will “automagically” create a ticket on the sender’s behalf. It will literally be as simple as that.

There are still some configuration tasks we have to perform. We need to get all of our email addresses entered, add some rules, and figure out the logistics of closing out tickets in SchoolDude and transitioning to OSTicket. We are targeting a launch date of November 27, to coincide with the return from the Thanksgiving break.

“the system can be emailed and it will open a ticket.”

A Personal Experience with Cyber Crime

In October, I was fortunate enough to go on a wonderful vacation with my family to Disney World. We were looking forward to it for months and had a great time.

As is the case with many IT professionals, I help my friends and family out when they have tech issues. One of them in particular is very impatient with any kind of technology. In addition, he is paranoid about people stealing his information. That is usually a healthy thing, but even that can be used against people.

I was eating with my family (I learned that in Disney World, people are either doing something completely awesome, waiting in line for something completely awesome, or eating something completely awesome). My

phone started buzzing with text messages but I wanted to stay in the magic zone and ignore it for a while. After the third buzz, I snuck a peak and saw a frantic message for me to call my paranoid friend. Suspecting he was just panicking over something trivial as usual, I put it away and made a mental note to call him later.

The phone continued to buzz, so I texted back that I would call later. Immediately he replied that he needed to speak with me right away. I told him I would call when I was done eating.

When I called, what he told me made my stomach turn. He was reading an article and received a pop-up warning that his computer was infected by a virus and that he needed to immediately

call Microsoft at a 1-877 number. I know that those messages are always scams, so I told him to turn the computer off and that I would deal with it when I returned. Unfortunately, it was too late. He called the number, spoke to someone, subscribed to their fake security service with his credit card, and gave them remote access to his computer so they could “diagnose” it.

I told him to immediately call the credit card company and cancel the payment and get a new number. Since he gave the scammers remote access to his computer, they could have easily stolen any personal information he had stored there. I told him to change all of his passwords and contact his bank to change his account number

there. I also suggested he contact social security and put a lock on his SSN.

It took him a day to get everything cleaned up and secured, and so far there are no signs of any fraud. That’s the good news. The bad news is that for the next several years he will have to carefully screen all of his financial statements. In other words, ten minutes of poor judgement now mean years of inconvenience.

The take away from this is that if something appears on your computer that is asking you to take action based on some anxiety-inducing message, it is fake. It is safest to simply ignore it.

Contrary to the stereotype of the socially awkward computer geek, cyber criminals have a good understanding of human behavior, and they use human tendencies against their targets.