**Vanguard Remote Learning Article**

***Using Voxer in Our Schools***

***-Dr. Alex Rivera (Principal) & Mrs. Danielle Pallatto (Third Grade Teacher)***

Successful integration of technology can reshape what teaching, communicating, learning, and planning looks like in our schools. At its best, technology integration is seamless with little thought given to the fact that we are even using tech tools. Students, teachers, and school staff are more actively engaged in various activities that fit in seamlessly with the everyday routines of the school.

The happenings within our schools can be fast-paced and require attention to detail. To support communication amongst school personnel, Voxer is a tool that can help us to stay connected and communicate more effectively during the school day (no matter if we are working from school or home). Gone is the need to schedule a meeting or craft an email. As soon as there's information to share and a decision to be made, Voxer provides an opportunity to leave detailed messages in real-time that can be retrieved immediately at the touch of a button (or when time permits).

When the need to meet in person does arise we can only hope that everyone arrives on time (otherwise information may need to be repeated). It's a very real challenge getting teachers and/or administrators from various schools/buildings to meet in one place. Voxer allows us to be strategic not only when we schedule meetings, but in who needs to be "present" for what. School personnel can establish a series of chats with colleagues that allow you to disseminate important information as soon as it's ready to be shared. You don't need to rely as heavily on face-to-face meetings for sharing and reviewing information. Whether you are voxing with a colleague to discuss planning a lesson or voxing with administrators about professional development ideas, communication and collaboration can be greatly enhanced through this platform.

School administrators can use this tool to support teachers with immediate feedback. Teachers very much appreciate the prompt reply to their curriculum-related questions and value immediate feedback from classroom visitations. Voxer allows for voice messages that can highlight amazing aspects of what is happening in the classroom that can be shared with others. At the end of the day, many of us appreciate not always being caught up in lengthy phone conversations with our colleagues or drafting lengthy emails.

Lastly, Voxer supports our professional learning. Educators can use this tool to facilitate book talks with one another allowing for the sharing (and archiving) of multiple ideas. No matter your location, this tool allows us to come together from all parts of the world to learn from one another. We can enhance our professional learning network through connections that otherwise may not be possible due to geographic constraints.

***Enhancing our Assessments Through Gamification***

***-Mrs. Danielle Pallatto (Third Grade Teacher) & Dr. Alex Rivera (Principal)***

We learned from an early age that playing games can be lots of fun. For some people they pour hours upon hours into game play. Their objective, to beat the game! As teachers we can tap into that kind of engagement through the experiences we put in front of our students. Gamification (applying game elements to non-game environments to encourage higher participation and motivation) allows us to create unique experiences that can allow for differentiation as students choose which of the additional elements they will take on.

There are numerous applications and platforms to implement this type of learning experience (that support both in-person and remote learning). Programs like Quizlet and Flippity provide students with the opportunity to turn flashcards into digital learning tools with game-like features. Another application, Gimkit, helps mask learning about time and money as an exciting game. Each correct answer will earn the student money, but be forewarned, an incorrect answer could be costly! Additionally, a platform called Deck Toys uses teacher-made presentations to create interactive, game-like lessons. Teachers can add differentiation features, while students can choose their own path of learning through a “self exploration” feature. Another program, Factile, turns your lessons into one of America’s favorite games, Jeopardy! Teachers can create their own questions that best fit their needs, or choose from hundreds of templates designed by other teachers. Remember to keep your hand close to the buzzer and make Alex Trebek proud!

While fun and engaging learning experiences are important, the data these tools provide are equally valuable. As a teacher, I value all components of these gamified tools. I look for what it can bring to both my students and myself. Many of these applications and platforms collect data in real time and allow teachers to reflect on their work and make changes going forward. The data I collect, whether it generated from the app, or from my own observations, is of great value. I am able to improve my own instruction and strategies based on my students’ performances. I also share this data with my students! I find it to be a great opportunity to help students set their own goals. With an increased use of technology and games in the education world, I have also begun exploring having students create their own games using these platforms. While it is still a work in progress, together we are enjoying every step of the way!

From a principal’s point of view, these tools (and others like them), allow for immediate understanding of student strengths and needs. Real-time data helps ensure that instruction is closely aligned with the needs of the learners in the class. Teachers are able to use the data gathered from these tools to organize grouping and build their lesson plans. Lastly, teachers can communicate their findings with fellow educators to discuss what practices have worked for others and what problems persist when teaching the same content. With remote learning still an option for some, we want to continue being creative and purposeful in how we engage and assess our students.