[this week w/ mr. g]

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[assessment of learning]

it's hard to believe. but the semester is quickly coming to a close and your students will soon be leaving me. switching to ms. spencer's reading class.

as we head into our winter break. i wanted to take some time to reflect on the past few weeks. your students have been hard at work and have covered a lot of ground. we have worked on things like email. online learning environments. productivity software. video production. and more. you should be extremely proud of the work they have done. don't forget to ask them from time to time what they've learned. better yet. why not have them show you?

i have found that the best way to assess learning is by asking someone to actually demonstrate what it is that they've learned. one such tool. that i've shared with you before. is called animoto. we have used this to create stunning. simple videos that engage and entertain while presenting important information.

so. no matter if you are skiing. taking a road trip. or just having a few people over. take some pictures. shoot some video if you can. and then have your student create a video for you using animoto. i think you'll be impressed with what they come up with!

even better. use their creation to make a holiday greeting card that you can send to friends. family. or anyone who might want to hear from you!

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[student spotlight]

name: landry

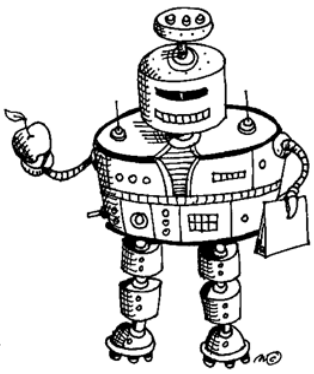
grade: 8

what are you good at:
i really like to make videos. i have been shooting and making my own movies for years. mr. garner even has me in a contest next month where i'm making a documentary about the domino effect

favorite piece of technology:
youtube! because i make videos. it is great to be able to have a place to put these videos. also. i like that i can share them with my friends

what couldn't you live without?
that one's easy...
my phone. i text all the time. plus. i'm usually watching videos on youtube or on facebook

[have you heard? robotics at moore rocks!]
featured article



on saturday, december 4th, moore sent seven students to compete at ut tyler against over 100 other teams in three different competitions. the intermediate arena team, using nxt legos, competed against more than 30 other teams from the east texas area. while they struggled in the first two rounds, they made some adjustments and came stomping back with a strong third round, leapfrogging them ahead four places. team members were 7th graders william and daimen.

the advanced arena team, comprised of 8th graders allen, shawn, and ramsey, competed against nearly 60 high school teams, with a strong, consistent performance. they struggled in their third round, dropping them from contention, but a great effort nonetheless!

the invention team, 6th graders joshua and jason, worked for weeks developing an idea of how to quickly and effectively put out forest fires, without damaging the natural beauty of the woodlands. their idea was for a "tree" that uses ground water to extinguish fires, with solar-powered heat and smoke detectors that would activate the pump, dousing the flames and preventing millions of dollars of damage. their presentation impressed the judges and they brought home second place! the team and their invention will be heading to san angelo, tx in april for the state competition. way to go, guys!

in february, 8th graders jonas, cyrus, and quentin will be competing at the east texas state fair with their mars rover. there will be several area schools competing in multiple categories such as rock collection, overall speed, maneuverability, incline climbing, and weight. each team will also give a presentation detailing the process of creating their mars rover and what they learned from the engineering challenge. good luck!

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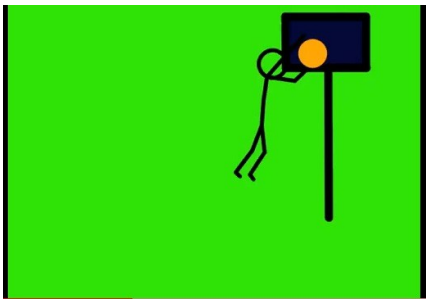

[weekly geek pick of the week]

this week, my pick goes to stykz and scratch. you get a two-for-one special this week, in the spirit of the season of course! this week, i wanted to show you a couple of resources for making your animation. these particular programs are downloadable and, once downloaded, don't require any kind of internet connection.

the first, stykz, is very basic and probably the easier of the two to get started with. the main idea is that you have a scene or series of scenes that, when played together, create a short video. remember those flip books you used to make? kind of like that, but way cooler!

the second, scratch, is a project from the massachusetts institute of technology to teach basic programming. on the website, scratch.mit.edu, you can see many examples of the project in action. many students, some as young as elementary-aged, are using scratch to create animations and interactive games that are not what you'd expect from such a simple-looking program.

give them a shot and see what you think! there is a bit of a learning curve, but once you get past it, i think you'll have a blast!

here is a short example of an animation i made recently:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4p5iwi4al2g

[classroom application]

animation is a great tool that has a lot of potential for teaching and learning. think about all the details that go into creating an animation! you have to have a scene-by-scene, down-to-the-second understanding of what it is that you're creating. this depth of understanding is extremely valuable in many areas of study.

take science, for example. students in 8th grade science are currently studying the phases of the moon. what if, instead of static pictures that show 6 or 8 different phases, they created a fluid, dynamic animation that demonstrated exactly how the phases looked as the moon moved from waxing to waning and back again. one thing in particular this would help with is the order of the phases. static images don't help this particular understanding, but a dynamic animation paints a vivid, memorable experience for the student to reflect on later