*The Computer Center*
*Scarsdale Middle School*
*June 1, 2009*

# *In the Middle*

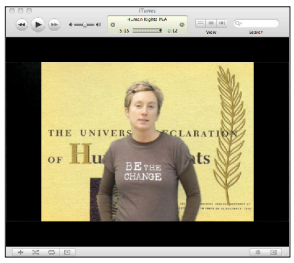
The PSA project described on this page is just one of several iMovie projects supported by the Computer Department this year. Long a central part of Andy Verboys' 8th grade technology class, iMovie was formally introduced to this year's 6th grade class through a project in Jeff Tuttle's technology class. This new program acknowledges the likelihood that incoming 6th graders bring with them iMovie experience and the hope among teachers in all departments and grades that students will create movies for projects. Of course, all this iMovie experience allows Andy to work at a more advanced level in his class, including introducing high-end applications like Final Cut Express.

Along with the 7th grade social studies project, a research project recently completed in CHOICE has brought the school to the point where we can track a student's experience with one specific technology as they move through the Middle School. And teachers at all levels can assign work, understanding students' background with the software.

Significantly, this schoolwide iMovie foundation comes as a result of efforts of teachers -- working both independently and with Computer Department support -- from all three grades and more than one department.

While we have a similar foundation with Photoshop and presentation software (Keynote and PowerPoint), it is interesting to consider what other technologies might allow students to benefit from the same kind of concerted effort. For example, over the years, a number of teachers have created what might be called publishing projects (brochures, fliers, newsletters) using extended word processing techniques; and more recently, a number of teachers have begun to use Garageband to create podcasts. Is there the potential here for a department (or grade in a department) to adopt a systematic approach as the seventh grade social studies teachers did with the PSAs?

Moving towards another important skill for students, a one or two day introduction to using Numbers or Excel would allow teachers in many disciplines to create projects which allow students to analyze and present data of many kinds.


## Human Rights Unit PSAs

Seventh grade students in all four houses created Public Service Announcements as an important part of their Human Rights Portfolios. The project began with instruction in the Library about research strategies and continued with students' reviewing iMovie basics. Students then used iMovie to create sixty second PSAs designed to raise awareness and inspire students to become involved with an important human rights concern.

All four seventh grade teachers worked together to design the unit, and two members of the Social Studies Department prepared materials for the project during an STI iMovie '09 class this spring. Ken and Doug each provided an introduction to two of the seventh grade teams and supported the project over the several days that students were given to create their PSAs. Introductions included working with images, sound and video clips, editing video, using transitions, and recording voice.

The project culminated last week with a ceremony in the auditorium in which STAHR awards (Students Teaching About Human Rights) were given in the categories of Editing, Music, Empathy, Research, and Overall Excellence. Steve Goodman summarized the way this impressive project meets many goals: "Student films are a fun way to incorporate research, writing and technology in a project which also makes them more media-saavy consumers. Making their own PSAs should help our students become more attentive, receptive and critical of the political messages they see."

## FileMaker Notes

FileMaker Pro continues to be an invaluable platform in the school and district for developing software that helps to meet data-intensive challenges. Here in the Middle School, we rely on FileMaker solutions to schedule parent conferences in the fall, organize the speech contest every spring, and we're just finishing the placing of fifth graders into middle school houses for the September.

At the same time, we are always excited when a colleague comes to us with an idea about how FileMaker's database muscles can be flexed on behalf of a curriculum project. In that spirit, Brian Fisher presented his Essay Template project at the most recent Superintendent's Conference Day. We have worked with Brian to design a number of forms that scaffold the writing process for students. This database also allows Brian to archive student writing over the course of the year and even standardize his assessment of writing.

We are also looking for opportunities for students to use FileMaker technology -- perhaps FIleMaker's user-friendly product Bento -- with projects requiring relatively extensive data collection and analysis using a data table, perhaps something related to financial, demographic, statistical or experimental data.

# Professional Development

## Summer STI

***S3910–Beyond Google 2.0: Wikis, Social Networking, and New Research Tools, SHS library. 6/29–7/1. DiBianco***

In this three–day hands–on course, teachers will master advanced search techniques for locating and utilizing information in subscription databases and will explore currentinteractive Web tools. Participants will learn the strategies and skills necessary to delve deeply into the resources of Scarsdale's online databases...

***S3812–Stop the Presses! Virtual Newsroom in the Classroom, GRA computer lab. 7/20–7/24. Tomizawa, Yang***

This weeklong course will engage participants in the study of journalism, media literacy, and online reading/writing comprehension to help teachers integrate media literacy and online comprehension and strategies into the intstruction. [Teachers] will use Wikis, blogs, Web design, podcasts, and other technologies...

***S3913–FileMaker Pro Bootcamp, SMS C159. 8/3–8/7. Crisci, Rose***

Beginners and experienced users alike will find support in the weeklong FileMaker institute. The course provides the time to learn this powerful database applicaiton as well as the opportunity to reflect on how this software can be applied to student and professional work in all subject areas.

***S3914–iWeek'09: Harnessing the Power of iLife, SMS C159. 8/17/–8/21. Crisci, Holvig, Verboys***

Participants will learn how the digital hub relates to the use of technology in the curriculum. Exemplars will be provided for the iApps: iMovie, iPhoto, iDVD, iTunes, Garageband, and iWeb. Also, training will be proved for the suite: Keynote, Pages, and Numbers. Each participant will create an instructional activity using at least one element of the digital hub and develop an assessment strategy for the activity.

***S3911–Integrating Video Clips with Vernier LabQuest. TBA. Szkolar, Williams***

LabQuest and LoggerPro data analysis software enhance laboratory explorations, automate data collection and data analysis, and enable science teachers to develop unique and visually powerful lab demonstrations. This course introduces new and experienced users to the operation and applicaiton of Vernier LabQuest tools.

# SMS Blogs, Wikis and Podcasts

## Media Server Impetus for Big Web 2.0 Push


While Scarsdale Middle School teachers have experimented with blogs, wikis and podcasts for several years, the District's new media server has provided the faculty with a friendly learning curve as they consider the potential for integrating this technology into their teaching. Here in the Middle School, Ken and Doug have published in media server blogs and wikis much of the content that in former years would find its way into newsletters. (We're not just computer teachers, we clients as well!) This has given us a chance to get to know the technology and provide a higher level of support. Unlike the experiences teachers have had with external blogs and wikis (blogger, pbwiki, etc.), by administering the media server internally, we can configure the technology to best fit our own needs, including providing an appropriate level of security.

As described in our own blogs during the year, teachers in a number of departments have adopted this relatively easy way to present information to their students and, the essential Web 2.0 part of it, a forum to respond and interact with their peers through blog comments. Recently, Jonathan Hilpert's students –– who had previously learned to create podcasts during a project modelled on NPR's "This I Believe" series –– have begun to upload podcasts as well as comments as a part of their Intensive Reading Unit.

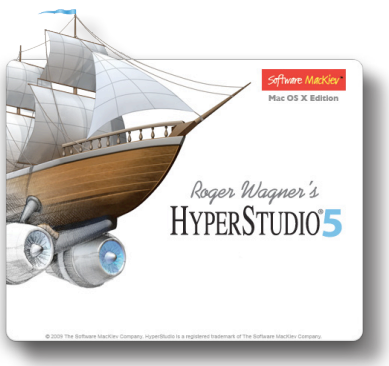
# Constructivist Learning in the Middle School

## HyperStudio Available Again, Math Students Experiment with Scratch

Before Keynote, before PowerPoint (well, before PowerPoint's dominance), even before the Internet (as we know it now) there was HyperStudio (and HyperCard and SuperCard). In its day, Multimedia Authoring Software made possible the unprecedented linking of text, images, sound, and movies; and HyperStudio made it easy for students.

This precursor to the Internet and PowerPoint still offers students with an experience that is different from current technolgies. Although HyperStudio has been redesigned to tap the resources of today's Internet, it continues to provide students with tools which have led some to describe it as a "software erector set." And according to HyperStudio's developer Roger Wagner, unlike PowerPoint, "the environment you're working in is nonlinear. The general structure ... is like a stack of cards that you can re–order and sequence and put together into the final construct of the subject."

Join us in the fall as we explore how today's students (like HyperStudio's first users) can use HyperStudio to create presentations, but also information kiosks, games, simulations... In truth, what is exciting about Hyperstudio is how completely open–ended the environment is.




Speaking of software that supports constructivist learning, Larry Chatzinoff's advanced sixth grade class helped us take a look at Scratch, a popular programming environment developed by the Lifelong Kindergarten Group at the MIT Media Lab. Scratch is designed "to help young people learn important mathematical and computational ideas, while also learning to think creatively, reason systematically, and work collaboratively." For the most part, Larry's students designed original simulations and games... of course, working from "scratch."