

VSTE Minecraft Survival Summer 2017



New to Minecraft? Interested in learning more about this game that seems to have captured your students' attention? This summer, the Virtual Environments PLN will be exploring Minecraft survival mode.

The first live meeting will take place, Friday, May 26, at 6:45 EDT. The team will build a safe house.

Three students from eastcoastminers.org will come build recipe frames to show novices how to build the basics.

We will be playing in survival all summer: Memorial Day to Labor Day and helping those with little or no Minecraft experience. The idea is that teachers will learn why their students love this game, while talking with other teachers about how it can be leveraged as an instructional tool in the classroom.

If you have been wanting to learn about Minecraft but didn't know how to begin, this is your chance! You need to get a Minecraft account from <https://mojang.com/>. Then send your Minecraft login name to K4sons@gmail.com and ask to be whitelisted.



Visit our website at <https://sites.google.com/view/vstesofs17> to learn more.

New Board Members Elected for 2017 – 2020 Term

Five candidates have been elected to the VSTE Board of Directors for the 2017-2020 term. Two are new members while one is returning for a second term. We welcome all of them to the VSTE leadership:

[David French, Virginia Beach City Public Schools](#)

[Heather Hurley, Arlington County Public Schools](#)

[Anita Harris, Cumberland County Public Schools](#)

[Terry Lowry, Wakefield Schools](#)

[Michael Speidel, Loudoun County Public Schools](#)

National Day of Action for Education

Join CoSN, ISTE, and SETDA on **May 11, 2017**, for a national Day of Action to advocate for the policies that could significantly impact educators, their schools and the students they serve.

What You Can Do on May 11th

On May 11th, we ask that you please join educators and advocates all across the nation by taking one (or all) of the

following extremely critical actions:

1. Send a prewritten letter to Congress

Use our easy advocacy tool to send this [pre-written letter](#) to Congress about the effectiveness of E-Rate and the Title IV, A block grant, which houses the ed tech provisions in ESSA.

2. Tweet #ERateWorks, #MoreTitleIV, #Act4EdTech

Here are some sample tweets you can use:

- Millions of students are connected to the internet at school because #ErateWorks @AjitPaiFCC
- Personalized and digital learning is possible in schools because #ErateWorks to provide broadband in classrooms @AjitPaiFCC
- Give schools the funding to provide Students with a well-rounded education @[Congressperson] #Act4EdTech #MoreTitleIV
- Every school benefits from #edtech funding @[Congressperson] #Act4EdTech #MoreTitleIV

3. Call your members in Congress!

Unsure who your Representative is? – Visit the [Find Your Representative](#) tool. Unsure what to say? – Here is a script you can use when speaking to staff member of the office.

- I am a **[insert title and organizational affiliation]** and I am calling to urge Senator/Representative **[insert name here]** to support full funding of the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant program under Title IV, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Congress authorized Title IV Part A of ESSA at \$1.65 Billion to ensure that each school district received funds to support access to a well-rounded education, improve student's physical and mental health and improve conditions for learning, and to increase the effective use of technology.

Unfortunately, the current appropriation bill falls far short of full funding.

- There is a wealth of evidence that supports the needs for students to have access to a diverse academic curriculum that includes science, arts, foreign language and civic education; programs that support students physical, mental, and behavioral health, and the improve school safety; and modern, classroom based technology. All of these areas are critical to ensure all students graduate from high school ready to enter.
- ESSA consolidated most of the programs that support student health and safety, well rounded academics and education technology into this new flexible block grant. Without a significant investment in Title IV Part A, districts will be faced with the unnecessarily difficult decision of choosing which area to invest in. Full funding of Title IV Part A will ensure that each district is provided funds to invest in each of these critical areas.
- I urge Senator/Representative [**insert name**] to support the full funding if Title IV Part A.

We hope you can join us on May 11th to support edtech policies!

**Leading Ed Forum, October 19
& 20, 2017**

October 19 - 20, 2017, Culpeper, Virginia

**Leading
Forum ED**

2017



<http://www.vste.org/LEF2017>



VSTE and the Virginia Department of Education are partnering to present the Leading Ed Forum, a two-day conference for school division instruction and technology leaders including chief technology officers, technology directors, and superintendents. Session topics will focus on E-rate, digital equity, 1:1 initiatives, and student data privacy. Broadband connectivity will be a special focus on Friday, October 20.

The conference will be held October 19 – 20, 2017, 8:00 AM to 4 PM, at Daniel Technology Center, Germanna Community College, Culpeper, Virginia.

[Registration Open Now](#)

[VE PLN: Summer of Survival](#)

This summer, Memorial Day through Labor Day, VSTE Place in Minecraft will hold its first Summer of Survival! Participants will be able to warp to survival mode for a completely different Minecraft experience. We will discover why our students beg for survival mode at school. It's challenging, but fun, and we will need each other to survive!

You may be able to earn points from your district with your VSTE certificate of participation. There will be a list of achievements to accomplish over the course of the summer. You can complete them in a few weeks or take the entire summer.

The idea is to have fun while networking with other educators inside Minecraft.

Participants will need a Mojang account, a copy of Minecraft installed on their computer, and access to VSTE Place, the VSTE Minecraft server. Contact K4sons@gmail.com to get your Mojang Minecraft account whitelisted on our server.

Keep up with all the events at the [summer website](#) and the [Google Plus community](#).

TSIP Refresh: Feedback Requested

The Virginia Society for Technology in Education (VSTE) has drafted new Technology Standards for Instructional Personnel (TSIP).

These standards update the original 1998 standards (<http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?000+reg+8VAC20-25-30>) and represent base level skills that every educator must meet in order to be considered proficient in the use of technology for teaching and learning.

We welcome your feedback on these standards. You can review the standards [here](#) and then complete a [short survey](#).

What Is Instructional Technology?

Members of the VSTE Board of Directors will be taking time to periodically share their ideas and passions with the VSTE membership. In this post, Board Member Tim Stahmer muses on the meaning of instructional technology.

A primary mission of VSTE is, of course, to help empower educators to make great use of technology for teaching and learning. Many of our members even have “instructional technology”, or some variation on the phrase, in their job title.

But what exactly is “instructional” technology? As opposed to another variety of tech, like the 1977 Ford Pinto.

Ask around and you’ll probably get many different answers to that question, but, since this is my post, here is my twitter-length definition:



Tim Stahmer
@timstahmer

Instructional technology is anything that can be used directly by students to enhance and extend their learning.

That would exclude the student information system many teachers use every day. Certainly the online grade book, attendance system, and other tools in most SIS packages is an essential part of classroom management. But it’s not used by students in any part of their learning.

We also drop the learning management system (LMS) many districts provide for their teachers. Think Blackboard, Edmodo, or Google Classroom. Also not “instructional” technology.

I suppose you could make the case that students might use parts of some LMS directly for their learning (a blogging tool, for example). But that’s not how they are commonly used. Most LMS function as organizational and distribution systems for content pushed to students, again to improve classroom management.

Also not “instructional”: response tools (Kahoot, Socrative), interactive whiteboards, video tutorials (Khan Academy), and a long, long list of curriculum games. Although I’ve seen a few (very few) special cases, student interaction with these resources is almost always as consumers, responding to material provided by publishers and teachers, not using them as creators.

And for me, that is the fundamental component for any technology to be considered instructional: control. When I say “directly by students”, I expect them to have some meaningful control as to how the technology – device, software, website, whatever – is used in the learning process.

So, what would I consider some examples of “instructional” technology?

That word processing program most students use would count, but only if they have some decision about what they will write. It would be even better if their writing was connected to the web, allowing them to present their ideas to a larger, more meaningful audience. One without a red pen.

We could include one of those slide show presentation programs, but only if the student has some control over the content. And again, let’s extend that control and let them determine the tools that will allow them to best explain their

ideas to an audience beyond the walls of their classroom.

Then there are the devices that many students bring to school everyday, the ones that too many of their teachers still consider as the antithesis of “instructional”. Beyond providing access to vast amounts of information, those so-called phones are also powerful creative tools that can be used to record, edit, and distribute still images, audio, and video. Tools students can use in many, many ways to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and learning.

Of course, all of the above is only my opinion. But what do you think? How would you define “instructional technology” (or it’s shorter, equally vague sibling “edtech”)? Tweet your ideas to @timstahmer and @vste and let’s have that conversation. Or post a longer comment to [this post on my blog](#).

Because in the end, the terminology we use when discussing these issues – with our colleagues, the community, legislators – does matter. We must be very clear when advocating for the use of technology in our schools and why it makes a difference for students.



Tim has been helping educators make better use of technology for teaching and learning at his website [AssortedStuff](#) since the turn of the century. He also loves to connect with interesting people on [Twitter](#) and is a member of the VSTE Board of Directors and serves on the conference committee.

April is ISTE Advocacy Month

April is ISTE Advocacy Month and this year your support in advancing our advocacy efforts is more important than ever.

ISTE's advocacy work over the last several years is under attack. Our work on E-Rate, the Lifeline program and educational technology funding via the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is at stake with the new Congress and Presidential Administration.

Despite the challenges ahead, there's also good news. ISTE has an outstanding set of tools to help you develop your own advocacy efforts at the state level.

Sign up for the [ISTE Advocacy Network](#), a one-stop source for information about edtech policy.

Participate in the ISTE advocacy campaign by following **#Act4Edtech** on Twitter and retweeting [@isteconnects](#) updates.

Watch and share this [video from ISTE Board President Mila Fuller](#) to learn more about ISTE's advocacy priorities and how you can help advance our efforts.

Your support and participation is critical! Speak up. Share out. Help us protect edtech funding and advance smart policy.

The Word Change (Quick, Find the Exit!)

Members of the VSTE Board of Directors will be taking time to periodically share their ideas and passions with the VSTE membership. In this edition, Board Member Josh Long provides ideas for implementing personalized learning.

Changing the way we teach is a difficult task. Asking anyone to change something they have been doing for a long period of time creates tension and stress. I think of a quote I saw from Woodrow Wilson; "If you want to make enemies, try to change something." Nothing can be truer than the changing environments of our classroom. I am currently in a district that is going through this change as we speak. It's a great change as we shift and dive our focus onto a focus of student learning. It is a philosophy that I embrace, it's good teaching, and it hits on everything that one of our previous bloggers touched on, which is personalized learning and personal learning. It is difficult trying not to be that person on the stage anymore giving all of the answers and all of the clues out to scholars. So how do you begin to let your scholars begin their journey on personalized learning and personal learning?

Here are my thoughts, take them with a grain of salt, as I am not an Orator... I am just a teacher of 16 years who believes that if you change the way you teach, it will benefit the scholars and practitioners around you.

1. Know that personalized learning when it comes down to it is just good teaching practice...it is not something new; it is a change from the norm.
2. Trust yourself to take on this change. You are good at what you do or you would not be in this position.
3. Go in knowing that it is going to take time to change,

it isn't something that is going to happen overnight, just like we can't expect scholars to change their way of learning overnight

4. It is no secret that we are no longer teaching students for factory-based jobs. We are in the time of tailoring scholars for jobs that require global communication and understanding of different cultures. In most classrooms I observe, students are in rows, talking is done by the leader in the front, and time for discussion is held to a minimum... (If it's not broke don't fix it right?) The problem with that I believe is that we don't see the problems yet, but we will in the future.
5. Understand that personalized learning isn't chaos in the classroom...it is just another way of students learning, in the manner that is best suited for them. This gives the practitioner a great vantage point of seeing and knowing how all of our scholars use to learn. In fact it most likely will be less chaotic in the room as students will be doing something that is meaningful to them which means they will be engaged in their own learning and not their neighbors.
6. Personalized learning to me also doesn't mean putting them in front of a device and expecting them to learn everything from the computer or a piece of software. Communication is the key, I believe, to good personalized learning. That may occur with a Skype call to an expert in the field, or seeing a scientist working with animals in their respective field.
7. Lean on your peers for help. Working together to come up with lessons that will inspire your scholars to dive deeper into their learning will make it shine on how much they have actually gained and learned through their unit of inquiry.
8. Lesson plans are a one way street sometimes. Through personalized learning there are many ways to get to the end of the road, with frequent stops along the way to help gain further and deeper understanding of a topic or

thought (Understand though that I'm not saying a lesson plan can't do that...many times in my class we would wander off the beaten path to discuss something related to the topic at hand.)

I hope that you too can find the way to change the way you reach out to your scholars, and know that yes, it really does look a lot different now than when we were sitting in those chairs those many years ago.



Josh Long is the Supervisor of Technology for Fredericksburg City Schools.

Spring 2017 CETL Study Groups Scheduled

The VSTE CoSN Council has scheduled two sets of [CETL®](#) study groups in Northern Virginia. It will be led by Dr. Barbara Gruber from Loudoun County, a CETL certified educator.

Northern Virginia:

This study group will be held at the Steven F. Udvar Hazy Center, 14390 Air and Space Museum Parkway, Chantilly, VA 20151 and led by Barbara Gruber.

April 29, 2017, 10 AM – 1 PM

May 13, 2017, 10 AM – 1 PM
June 10, 2017, 10 AM – 1 PM
July 15, 2017, 10 AM – 1 PM

Central Virginia:

Update: We have had to cancel this face to face study group. We are working to find an alternative, possibly online.

April 22, 2017, 10 AM – 1 PM
May 20, 2017, 10 AM – 1 PM
June 17, 2017, 10 AM – 1 PM
July 8, 2017, 10 AM – 1 PM

If you wish to attend the Northern Virginia study group, you must register by April 14, 2017.

[Register now.](#)

The exam will be administered on Friday, July 28, from 8 AM to 12 PM, in Colonial Heights, Virginia.