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SISD

Technology Unplugged



Welcome to the 2004-05 school year! Another great school year is underway. The beginning of a new school year provides us an opportunity to impact all students that enter the doors of Sherman ISD schools. Students come to us with great anticipation and expectations for what the year will hold. Students come with many technology skills and vocabulary words that did not exist five to ten years ago. Are we ready for them?

Technology is a complex, rapidly changing field. Technology tools that were once considered a luxury in our classrooms and working environment are today considered a necessity. Many students have access to technology outside of school and they are very adept in the use of new technologies. In an effort to help you become better technology users and keep up with your students, the SISD Technology department publishes the SISD Technology Newsletter monthly. The SISD Technology newsletter includes a variety of topics including current implementations, future projects, tips for better computing, ways to integrate technology into the curriculum, and other articles related to using the tools of the 21st Century.

This issue addresses several questions the technology department has been asked the past couple of months. Recently we have had many work orders dealing with Spyware. We have provided information and tips on what you can do to prevent Spyware installations on your computer on p.3. Network policy affects every computer and user on the network and we have clarified the SISD network policy on p. 6.

Summer was very productive for the SISD technology department. Network infrastructure was upgraded at Crutchfield, Fairview and Perrin Elementary schools. The computers at Crutchfield and Fairview were replaced as part of the Sherman ISD technology replacement cycle. Summer professional development opportunities for teachers (p.4) and technology camp for students (p.2) were both very successful initiatives.

The mission of the SISD Technology Department is to provide the services and support necessary to assist the students, teachers and staff of Sherman ISD to successfully use information and communication technologies to maximize learning, productivity and performance. OUR number ONE goal is to see that all students, teachers and staff members have the necessary technology tools and a positive technology experience in SISD. If you have questions, comments or concerns, please contact us. Thank you for your patience and support as we strive to provide excellent technology resources for SISD students, teachers and staff!

"In technology we are "white water rafting." Some of us are in the raft. Others are the driftwood that is being pulled along. Others are rocks, and are not moving at all. And then there are the boulders that hold everyone back."
- David Thornburg

Are you in the raft, drifting, a rock or a boulder?

OUR GOAL:
Everyone in the raft!

Enjoy this issue of *SISD Technology Unplugged* and have a great year!

Mignon Plyler
Director of Technology

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<http://www.shermanisd.net>

Tech Tip: backup or packup!

What do I do when I need technology support?

Tim Mitchell,
Senior System Technician

Sherman Independent School District
Technology Helpdesk

Is your computer broken? Need technical training? For all technical needs, we have an automated helpdesk site to allow you to report any issue that requires technical assistance.

Our helpdesk system, known as HEAT (Helpdesk Expert Automation Tool), is the tool used by the Technology Department to organize workflow and automate the reporting process of technology needs.

The use of HEAT is fairly simple. Direct your browser to <http://helpdesk.shermanisd.net> and enter your user name and password. If you have never logged in before, your user name is the same as the first part of your email ID, and your default password is 'sherman' (it is recommended that you change your password under the Edit Account link after logging in). To create a work order, click the New Issue link on the left, and enter your room number and the problem description in the specified text boxes. You can view the status of any work order by clicking on the link for that work order on the main page. Finally, you can edit an existing work order by clicking the Edit link from the work order detail screen.

If you need further instruction on the use of the HEAT access page, or if you have trouble logging in, your Campus Technology Specialist can provide support documentation and assistance to get you started.

<http://helpdesk.shermanisd.net>



Summer Technology Camp

Beth Weeks,
Dillingham Technology Specialist and Technology Camp Coordinator

The SISD Technology Camp had an overall theme of Computer Sleuth Investigation, or C.S.I. Each week covered a different topic: Sound, Space, and Flight. Each week the students ended their camp with a videoconference with NASA at the Langley NASA site in Virginia over the topic that they had studied. Approximately 200 students attended the three different weeks of technology camp. They worked on laptops that allowed them Internet access, desktop publishing and multimedia tools.

The kindergarten students used Learning.com and Print Shop to work on typing and mouse skills. They created a daily journal, CD name tags, funny pictures, mailing labels and T-shirts.

The 1st-3rd grade students used PowerPoint and digital cameras to create claymation presentations as well as labels, friendship cards and

T-shirts.

The 4th-8th grade students, the young computer sleuths, used PowerPoint to create interactive presentations, Netscape Composer to create Web pages and Macromedia Flash to create animation. Later the class created logos in Macromedia Fireworks. Students also used Print Shop to create T-shirts and labels.

Teachers at this year's camp were Marlene Monk, Mary Lu Aycock, Kristen McCoy, Jamie Harvey, Jenifer Parker and Brandi Lee.



USING THE RIGHT ELECTRICAL RECEPTACLE

Chuck Edwards, SISD Director of Maintenance

During the 1996 Sherman ISD Bond Program, extensive electric systems were installed to address the increasing use of electronic equipment. This equipment primarily is desktop computers and electronic printers. Classrooms and offices have designated isolated-ground circuits and receptacles for a dedicated purpose. These are identified by either an orange color receptacle/cover or a gray receptacle/cover with an orange dot on the face of the receptacle. These receptacles are to be used only for electronic equipment. Isolated-ground circuits and receptacles increase your sensitive electronics' resistance to surges. An isolated-ground also provides a clean grounding path to the service panel and reduces electromagnetic noise that can interfere with your computer equipment's operation.

We would like to remind you that other electrical appliances, especially small refrigerators, incandescent lamps or any "motor" type of device, will disrupt the purpose of these circuits. So if you have this type of receptacle in your classroom/office, use this for the sole purpose of powering your computer equipment.



SPYWARE

Tim Mitchell, Senior System Technician

It's silent, it's invisible, and it may already be running on your computer. In the past few years, spyware has become an increasing problem for personal and business computers.

What is spyware?

Spyware is defined as an application installed on your computer that exposes or monitors the information stored on your computer, the data that you type (including which Internet sites you visit), and even your personal passwords. The existence of spyware on a computer represents a serious threat to the security of the computer and the entire network. Spyware is often used by advertisers that track your web surfing habits and then send you targeted advertisements and/or spam e-mail messages. Even worse, spyware can be used to exploit e-mail passwords, credit card numbers, etc., for much more malicious purposes. Further, spyware applications constantly run in the background, which takes away system resources from the operating system and legitimate applications; computers infected with spyware often run very slowly. Some spyware actually hijacks the system process and disallows the use of spyware-removal tools, which usually requires a complete system reload and subsequent loss of

data. Spyware in itself is not necessarily considered a virus, but often the two go hand in hand insofar as the danger they represent. In short, spyware is a nuisance and a risk, and every effort should be made to avoid or remove it.

Where does it come from?

Spyware is often packaged along with free applications or screen savers that appear to be legitimate. The authors of such software allow you to download their software for free, but they make their money by embedding spyware into their application and then selling to advertisers the data collected by those using their software/spyware. Spyware is almost always installed by the user of the computer, whether they realize it or not.

How do I avoid getting spyware on my computer?

Very simply, do not download or install any application or screensaver from the Internet, particularly if it's free. When it comes to software, you get what you pay for; downloading a 'free' application could end up costing you a great deal of money and trouble. For more information about the policy regarding the installation of software, refer to the SISD Technology Acceptable Use Policy.

What if I've already got it?

If you suspect that you have installed



spyware on your computer, technical assistance will be required. Please place a work order at <http://helpdesk.shermanisd.net> so that a technician can address the problem.

What is the Sherman ISD Technology policy on spyware?

Any software that is to be installed on a SISD computer must be approved by undergoing a rigid testing process. If you have a business application that you wish to install on a computer, contact the Technology Department to arrange for an evaluation of software. Note that this only applies to software used for instructional/business purposes; we do not evaluate or support any software that does not serve a legitimate instructional/business function; the installation of unsupported software is a violation of the SISD Technology Acceptable Use Policy.

Summary

Spyware is an unwelcome and nasty visitor on your computer. Everyone should take the appropriate precautions to avoid spyware. If it finds its way onto your computer, technical assistance will be required to remove it.

SISD Summer Staff Development: A Huge Success!

Teddy Pitman,
Special Projects

Many employees of Sherman ISD and other school districts in Grayson and Collin counties used some of their vacation time to attend a wide variety of professional development classes offered by SISD during June, July and August. Classes were held at Austin College, Sherman High, Crutchfield Elementary, and Dillingham Intermediate. Information on implementing our local TEKS-based curriculum was shared throughout various workshops, seminars and book studies. Special Education classes offered strategies for all teachers working with regular and special education students who have a variety of behaviors, skills and levels of knowledge.

Employees taking technology classes were introduced to United

Streaming in the Technology Integration workshops in addition to learning other effective instructional practices for integrating technology into their classrooms. Application classes included the Microsoft Office suite. Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Publisher were taught in the 2002 (XP) format. Campus computers are in the process of being re-imaged with the new versions of these programs. If you missed out on these summer classes addressing the new features of these programs, more classes will be offered during the school year. Many of these classes meet requirements for the technology competencies required of SISD employees.

SISD is an SBEC certified training provider and class participants receive Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credit in the form of certificates for all professional development classes that

they attend. January 17, 2005, will be a 6 hour comp day for campus-based instructional staff including teachers, teacher aides, clerical staff, diagnosticians, counselors, nurses, and psychologists. Employees are able to apply 6 hours of their summer training to that January comp day, but they must fill out a form from their campus principal to receive approval.

To summarize Summer 2004 Professional Development: 440 employees of various school districts including SISD, Bells, Bonham, Denison, Dodd City, Ector, Ft. Worth, Gunter, Leonard, Pottsboro, S & S, Sam Rayburn, Savoy, Trenton, and Whitewright, registered for 1200 class spots in 77 classes. Overall, SISD summer staff development was a huge success!

Jammin' Graphics & Electronic Dreams

Mary Hensler, SHS Art Teacher

Senior David Tarvin begins each morning mixin' it up in the Art Department's Graphics Lab. As a third year Design and fourth year Band student, David is the perfect choice to create original tracks for this year's Digital Yearbook. David works on the eMacs in one of Apple's programs called Garage Band, which allows even a novice to combine multiple tracks, along with loops, drumbeats, and any of the 200 instruments the program can simulate. Imagine jammin' with your computer, on keyboard or guitar, which suggests a whole new meaning to being wired.



The SHS Annual is not changing, just moving into the new millennium, by augmenting the traditional paper and picture book with a whole new format – a digital CD. So students, parents, and faculty alike will be able to view Bearcat highlights in a multimedia presentation combining still pictures, video clips, and of course original SHS rock.

The CDs, which will be included with the price of the annual, can feature about a thousand electronic pages (similar to the traditional book), but with 30 minutes of video clips and music. What an exciting way to remember your high school experience; and we thought brownie cameras were wonderful when I . . . well, never mind.

Our goal is that students in the Multimedia, Graphics Design & Animation, along with the Journalism classes will collaborate to design the layouts for the electronic pages, while the Video Technology classes will compose the video clips. It will be a multi-lateral-bi-digital-cross-curricular-computer extravaganza, combining art, photography, video and music with the latest in technology for a Bearcat e-media experience. Well, I am excited about it because I know the results will be spectacular, and leave this year's Cats with fond electronic memories.



Mignon Plyler, Director of Technology
 Tim Mitchell, Senior Systems Technician
 Colin Bell, Technology Systems Technician



Computers ON or OFF?

There have been a number of questions recently regarding the appropriate procedure of when to shut down computers. Some people have been leaving their computers turned on constantly, while others shut them down at the end of the day. There are a number of arguments for and against each scenario, and until now there has been no official procedure either way.

The Technology Department would like all computers to be left ON constantly during the week (even at night). Be sure to close all applications and log off to the windows login screen before turning off the monitor. Due to the remote administration functionality of Windows 2000, many updates and installs are deployed across the network after hours. By performing said administrative tasks after hours, we decrease the impact on end users and lessen network traffic; in addition, we are able to deploy software and updates without having to sit down and log into every computer that requires an update. The computers – specifically, the computer only (not the monitor) - need to be left on throughout the week, as the remote administration feature is only available when the computer is powered on. However, the monitors, which use the most energy, may be powered off daily. All computers and monitors should be shut down on Friday for the weekend. If it is necessary to deploy updates on the weekend, we will make special arrangements with the Campus Technology Specialist prior to the deployment.

Hopefully, this clarifies the issue of when to power off the computers and monitors. Thanks for your help with this matter.

Symantec AntiVirus:

Antivirus Definition Updates:
 Updates daily @ 8:15 a.m. and checks for new definitions every 60 minutes.

Antivirus Scan: Every Monday night @ 11:00 p.m. (if computer is not on scan will start within 24 hours when computer is booted.)

Systems Management Server: (updates system inventory)

Software Inventory: Every Monday night @ 8:00 p.m.

Hardware Inventory: Every Monday night @ 10:00 p.m.

Windows Update Services:

*Updates operating system (Windows) Wednesday morning @ 4:00 a.m.

*Computers must be left on nightly or they will reboot randomly the next time they are turned on (the user will not be notified.)

Email "How To's"

Setting up and Using E-mail

Logging on Using the I-Mail Server: (You must do this first to change your password.)

1. Double click on the Netscape.7 icon.
2. Click once in the Location Bar near the top of your screen.
3. Type in mail.shermanisd.net and press enter
4. Click in the User ID bar and type your first initial and last name with no spaces.
 Example: jsmith
5. Click in the Password box and type sherman. (It will be sherman until you change it.)
6. Click the Logon button.

Changing Your Password:

1. Click the down arrow next to Personal Account Options.
2. Choose Change Password.
3. Click and drag over the ***** in each box.
4. Type sherman in the old password box.
5. Type your new password in each of the other two boxes. (Pick something you will remember – you will be the only one to know it.)
6. Click on the Save button. (You will get a message that says Success.)

Sherman ISD Network Policy

Jared Earley,
Network Administrator

As you go about your day to day routine, checking your email, researching topics on the Internet, recording your grades, looking up student info on the AS400, or any other activity that requires use of your computer then you are participating on Sherman ISD's sophisticated network. At the present time Sherman ISD houses around 50 servers, 3500+ computers, and a 10/100 switched infrastructure connected to a gigabit fiber backbone. In order to keep things running smoothly and to provide you the best support possible with all of the above said equipment, the Sherman ISD Technology Department relies on standards and policies to administer and maintain your supplied computers/software/infrastructure. Without following these standard's and policies your computer could stop working or worse yet the network could be compromised and prevent all computers from working. With our standards in place we are able to troubleshoot and repair items quicker because we know and are trained on the equipment. The policies are in place to regulate what is best for Sherman ISD's network as a whole. Here is a brief summary of the Sherman ISD Network Policy that everyone needs to adhere to.

- 1) No personal equipment is allowed on the network (this means, laptops, hubs, switches, Wireless devices, computers, printers, etc)
- 2) No personal software is allowed on the network (any software that wasn't bought by Sherman ISD is not only disallowed but illegal)
- 3) Any type of freely downloaded software that is used for malicious activity of any kind
- 4) Using any methods to get around any type of security device
- 5) Sharing your network logon username and password with someone else (everyone should have their own username and password, if not a Technology Heat workorder needs to be turned in to correct the problem)

Failing to adhere to this policy not only may cause problems with your computer but as said above could effect all other computers on the network. Also by not adhering to the Network Policy you are violating the Acceptable Use Policy which is not tolerated. That being said if you are not provided with the equipment you need please turn in a Technology Heat workorder so we can assist you. Please do this for all needs even something as simple as a network cable. If you need a software application then you need to follow our Software Policy which is to first turn in a Technology Heat workorder about the needed software. We will then respond to you that we are ready for the 100% fully functional software (demo's with restrictions are not accepted since we are unable to fully test the software). We will then need to fully test the software for 30 days so we can evaluate and determine if the software will work with our equipment and poses no security risk.

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Sherman ISD does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, marital or veteran status, or disability.

