

Free is always better!



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NOTEWORTHY

What is SOSSIG and What are the Benefits?

SOSSIG stands for Strategic Open Source Special Interest Group. Our goal is to promote the use of open source and free resources to computer educators everywhere. Open source software is generally created by people who have a real interest in the product. They put their heart into it! After the software is created, it is shared with other people. New people see ways to improve the product, they make additional changes and share it back

with the world. Others suggest improvements based on their needs. All of these people contribute to the improvement of the software. Money's not everything to people who like a challenge. It's just what they do!

Join SOSSIG and benefit from, technology assistance, new ideas, training, resources, and sharing expertise!

Special points of interest:

- What is SOSSIG
- Linux
- Google App Shopping
- iCloudy or Clear?
- Member Spotlight
- Resources
- Publishing Information

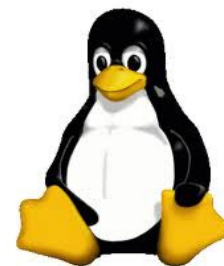
Linux

Did you ever wonder what Linux is all about? Linux is a free and open source operating system. It originated from Unix code but because of copyright issues, it became Linux.

You see the free and open source nature of the product allowed the software to be changed and improved. So, while it originated from Unix, it wasn't really Unix anymore. Similar to the other operating systems like Ubuntu, Red Hat, and Puppy have spun off.

Open source allows users to tweak the operating system to be what the user needs. That's

why there continues to be new and improved versions all the time. Gotta love the penguin! Hopefully, we will have a more detailed overview in the future.



App Shopping in Google

By Beverly Still, Doctoral Student, University of Houston

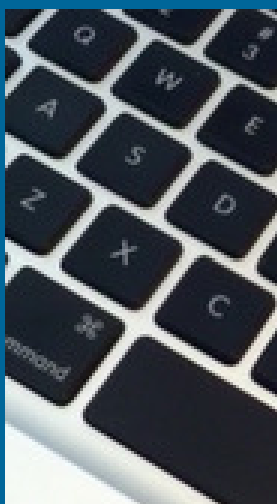
In spite of its ubiquitous nature, some of us need to be reminded that Google, or in this case, Google Chrome, has a lot to offer teachers.

With budget issues looming large in education these days, open source and free technologies can be a boon for educators. While Google may seem so well-established that it's carved in stone, you're likely to find new and novel ideas in Google Chrome's Web Store. If

you haven't already downloaded Google Chrome (which, like all things Google, is free), you can do that here: <http://www.google.com/chrome> Then, you can "shop" at the Google Chrome Web Store here: <https://chrome.google.com/webstore>

There are many great educational apps, and apps in some other categories that could easily be adapted for teaching and learning. All of these excellent resources have the added benefit of being absolutely free. So if you

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Ask about our Moodle!

Have an interesting story or information to share? Send your submission to ezimmerman@

hjsid.net.

Be sure to put SOSSIG Newsletter in the Subject line.

So What's Moodling?

By Ellen Zimmerman, Hardin-Jefferson ISD and Lamar State College-Orange

Moodle is an open source (free) learning management system. If you've always wondered where the name came from, here it is: Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. That's why we just call it Moodle!

Through TCEA and SOSSIG, educators have the opportunity to have their own Moodle account with administrative support built in. SOSSIG supplies the version updates and management of the Moodle for the regions that choose to use the accounts.

So how does it work? Each region that wants to have a Moodle account is set up with one person as the administrator or go to person. This person can set up individual campus accounts. It works best if you have a group to collaborate with. It does not have to be a large group to get started. Just one person who is ready to go can start a new trend!

Moodles can be used for teacher professional development or practice to create content for students.

For more information on a Moodle account, contact Ken Task at ktask@suddenlink.net

Fun Online Collaboration

By Ellen Zimmerman, Hardin-Jefferson ISD and Lamar State College-Orange

I recently had the chance to play with a site called Twiddla.com with my high school students. We all loved it! Twiddla "is a real-time online collaboration tool." There is no limit to how many can join a meeting, although more may be a little slow. There is no signup required so students can set up a meeting and share the link to let additional students join. (Or the teacher can control the meeting room.)

During our Twiddla experience we learned NOT to use the sandbox! Just like a real one,

there were some things there we didn't like! (The sandbox has anyone who wants to experiment on the site. Not controlled.) Students could not save their screen easily so we used the wonderful screen shot feature to keep their work. If you are on a Windows unit, simply fn+prtscn then paste into a word processing document. On a Mac, use command+shift+4 and drag to add an image of what you select to your desktop.

Students of all ages can share drawings, web Pages, document, images, and more. There is even a math interface to mathURL. Start Twiddling!



App Shopping, Continued from Page 1

haven't shopped at the Store recently, you might want to swing by there and check it out.

Here are just a few of the applications that are available in Google Chrome's Web Store:



The Fractulator - A fraction calculator that will add, subtract, multiply, and divide fractions.



Scientific Calculator—A powerful, programmable calculator for Google Chrome.



iLearn Languages—Practice basic words in foreign languages. Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, German and Czech languages are supported.



Connected Mind—Draw unique and memorable mind maps, store them in the cloud for free and access them anywhere.



3DTin—A 3D Modeler that runs in your browser.

Mobile Device Tips

By Ellen Zimmerman, Hardin-Jefferson ISD and Lamar State College-Orange.

You may have heard about the iTunes latest 10.5 update and how you can now use iCloud for online storage and iSync to wirelessly sync files and music to your devices, but do you really know what that means? I checked them out this week and this is what I found.

iCloud will sync your choice of the following, Mail, Contacts, Calendars, Reminders, Bookmarks, Notes, Photo Stream, Documents and/or Data on the devices of your choice. Notice that there's no music listed here. Your music files do not count toward the 5 gigs of free storage they give you. For me, this makes a big difference! All you have to do is set up your device for iCloud, usually done right after you update your software to iOS 5, go to Settings, select what you want to sync and turn on the Storage & Backup option at the bottom. For more information about iCloud, go to www.apple.com/icloud/get-started/

My next question was, "What's included in that data and documents category?" There are certain apps that Apple has iCloud enabled. Pages, Keynote, and Numbers, for instance are on the list. If you are an avid Mac software user, you should be dancing about now! However, I use Microsoft products, Drop Box and AppstoGo so this doesn't benefit me.

iSync is where the music part of the cloud comes in. When you go to Settings and turn on the iTunes Wi-Fi Sync, your device will now sync over wireless, or cell service, if you choose to turn that on. In other words, your iTunes music, apps, and books will automatically sync without you having to plug the device in. Pretty nifty!

After I turned iSync on, I went to iTunes on my iPhone and selected "Purchased". When I went

to my music category, it showed All or Not On This iPhone. I found music listed on Not On This Phone that I didn't remember I had! Then all I had to do was click

on a cute fluffy cloud and voila, my music was on my iPhone! In the past, I tried to keep a playlist updated with my most recent music purchases so I could make sure they were synced so I could listen to them easily. Now I don't have to worry about missing a recent purchase on my computer and not having it on my phone. There's not much detail but here's a link to an overview <http://www.apple.com/icloud/features/>. Apple is explaining what iSync does as part of iCloud but the option is set up in a different location all together.

iTunes Match is not a free option but costs \$24.99 a year. If you have a lot of music that was not purchased through iTunes, you may want to check it out. If you sign up for iMatch, your non-iTunes music files will be compared to the iTunes data base and you will basically receive access to an iTunes version of the same song. (They can't really provide your file off of your computer for you to access so you are getting streaming access to their copy of the song.) In some cases this actually provides you with a much higher quality version of the song. I haven't made up my mind about it yet. You will always have your backup copy that you started with but I'm not sure if I have that much pre-iTunes music to deal with. For more information about iTunes Match, go to <http://www.apple.com/icloud/features/> and scroll down some.

Ellen can be reached at ezimmerman@hjisd.



"your iTunes music, apps, and books will automatically sync without you have to plug the device in."

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SOSSIG stands for Strategic Open Source Special Interest Group, also known as one of the SIG's offered as part of TCEA membership. Our mission is to build and activate a community of educators who promote and support opportunities for technological advancement and a broader educational foundation that Open Source software solutions bring to K-16 education.

TCEA stand for Texas Computer Education Association and it is the largest state organization devoted to the use of technology in education. TCEA is dedicated to the improvement of teaching and learning through the use of computers and technology.



Check Out These Resources!

TCEA's Job Board Link	http://jobs.tcea.org/
Free Webinars from TCEA	http://www.tcea.org/learn/webinars/lunch-and-learn
SOSSIG Home Page	http://sos.tcea.org/
TCEA's Home Page	http://www.tcea.org/
TCEA Convention 2012	http://www.tcea2012.org/2012/public/default.html

SOS(S)IG

Member Spotlight

This month we contacted Bill Long to find out what he is doing in his district. Bill is the Technology Director for Harper ISD, Harper, Texas. Here is what he had to say.

At Harper ISD we have installed a Virtual Bridges server that can virtualize Microsoft Windows (XP - 2007) and Linux (RHEL or DEB). Currently, we are using older desktops that have a customized version of Ubuntu 10.10 on them. We have moved away from MS Windows on student machines, with the exception of the high school Business Image Management and Multimedia and our Elementary lab which run WinXP in local virtual machine on PC. We have also installed Open Office on all student use computers because we did not have the budget to continue buying MS Licenses and we do not want to get locked into a campus agreement.

Currently, students in grades 6-16 have been given Google Apps accounts and are using the Google Apps suite more often than Open Office. Teachers

are starting to embrace the concept of 'sharing' documents and lesson plans with students. I have a teacher that is creating projects and sharing them with groups of students and grading according to the work the student contributed to the project. Students in grades 6-11 do not have the ability to email each other or anyone from the outside (except HISD Staff). Students in the 12th grade can email out due to college applications and such.

We are currently looking at a tablet pilot with our freshman since most of our recent adoptions shipped with the textbooks in PDF form on a CD. The goal for Harper ISD is to go to digital textbooks and even phase out laptop and PC labs. With the Virtual Bridges purchase, iPads and Android devices can control a 'virtual' OS session of MS or Linux, if needed.

Bill Long can be contacted at blong@harper.txed.net.

