



Connection Reflection

Need a Last-Minute Gift?

Editor's Note: This is about the time during the holiday season when you are "stumped" for at least one last-minute gift. This issue of Connection Reflection can help you! There are several affordable gift ideas for the educator in your life OR for you and your classroom. Just add one or more of them to your holiday list!

Performance through Podcasts— An Enjoyable Gift That is Well Received

By:
Dr. Henry Thiele
President



Dr. Henry Thiele

As a former band director I believe that having students perform in every classroom is an essential part of demonstrating knowledge. One of the easiest ways to have students create a public performance is through podcasts. A podcast is an audio recording that is posted to the web for people outside of the classroom to listen to, and perhaps even offer feedback. Podcasts are very well received by parents and students who love to check in and listen to student created

work. If you are new to podcasting a great place to learn about it is through Wes Fryer's wiki ([click here](#)). As part of this holiday issue I thought we could take a look at the couple of supplies needed to effectively podcast in your classroom. You could purchase these as a gift for a colleague or friend who is a teacher or for yourself. There are really two main ways to record podcasts. The first is to use a computer, microphone, and software to record the student speaking. If you use a PC the best

software is Audacity <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>. It is free. Mac users are provided with the program Garage Band, which is easy to use. The best tool for getting audio into your computer is a [Blue Snowball Microphone](#). It costs around \$70. It is excellent for the classroom because it comes equipped with three settings that allow for ideal recording of an individual, a small group, or the entire room. I have used this effectively to record in many settings.



Blue Snowball Microphone

(Continued on page 3)

Inside this issue:

Give the Gift of Podcasts	1
Three Inexpensive Gift Suggestions	2
Gorilla Tripod	3
Save the Date— Second Annual Special Education Conference	4

Special points of interest:

- Podcasting requires few pieces of equipment and can be easily done on a budget.
- Mark April 16 (Maine South High School) for the second annual Special Education conference. Bring a friend/colleague.
- Gorilla tripods help you keep your camera steady.
- Have you thought about a hands-free car speaker for your cell phone. For only \$60 you can purchase a nice one!

Holiday Shopping: Three Inexpensive Suggestions

By: **Judy Okazaki**
Executive Director



Judy Okazaki

Here are three recommendations for your holiday gift-giving consideration. All three are useful and reasonably priced technology gifts.

The first is a simple item that has been a common accessory for a long time, but with a bit of a twist. It is a set of ear bud headphones that come with a circular zipper case. The size of the case and the circular design makes it easy to drop into a brief case, purse, suitcase, car bin etc. Best of all, when needed it can be easily found. The



JBuds J3 Micro-Atomic In-Ear Earphones with Case

case also does a pretty good job of keeping the headphones untangled.

The manufacturer is JBuds; the model. J3 Micro Atomic In-Ear Earphones with Travel Case. They come in several colors which include jet black, silver/white, paparazzi pink or electric blue. Each set

comes with four different sizes of earbuds. They sell for \$19.95 and are available at Amazon.

The next suggestion is an extra phone charger. Finally the industry has decided to standardize on a couple of sizes, so the chance that chargers can be shared has greatly increased. It is helpful to have them in different rooms of your home or to carry for travel. The one I like best is flexible. It has removable parts so you can exchange the wall charger with the car charger or take both of them off and connect to your computer using the USB.

The third recommendation is for a hands-free car speaker for your cell phone if you do not already have one installed. Current car speakers have many features. They allow you to charge your phone, direct calls through and play music stored on your phone or USB drive through your car radio system. In my opinion, the GOgroove FlexSMART X2 Advanced Wireless is the one to go for! It has a bluetooth FM transmitter with charging, music control and hands-free calling for Android, iPhone, Blackberry and Windows

Smartphones. It can be found for \$60. Motorola has a similar device available, the T505 Bluetooth Portable In-Car Speakerphone which sells for \$59.

And then of course who's not looking at the xBox 360 Kinect? Okay, so I went beyond three and it doesn't come under the classification of inexpensive, but it is hard to resist.



Impatiently Waiting for Two Others!

There are two products I wish I could be recommending, but I feel they are still evolving, so I'm impatiently waiting. The first is a wireless reading device. Each model has its limitations and the jury is out on the winner. I would like to



GOgroove FlexSMART X2 Advanced Wireless Car Speaker

recommend an Amazon Kindle because it is a feature rich device and easy to use, but it is not compatible with all of the free books that are available through libraries which use the services of Overdrive, the global e-book distributor. Also, the Kindle does not yet offer a color screen. Only the "Nook" from Barnes and Noble has a color reader. As I really appreciate color, I'll hold off

for now.

The second product I have to wait for is the android tablet. There are lots of models already available: the Cherry Pal Cherry Pad for \$188, Archos has one for \$169, Augen Gen Touch 7800 for \$149. There are more feature rich models (more memory, larger size screens, better quality displays) for around \$300 I'm waiting for some consumer testing and market driven

How About a Gorilla Tripod?



Alice Schmitz

By:
Alice Schmitz
Director of
Education and
Professional
Development

So, I've
procrastinated on
some of my
holiday shopping

and still have a couple individuals that I've determined are hard to buy for left on my list! I've decided on a gorilla tripod for those individuals who use their cameras in a lot of different settings. This flexible tripod twists and bends to hold a camera stable in just about any circumstance—and with all of the small cameras, stability is an issue! I've seen this tripod twisted around a deck railing,



Gorilla Tripod

a classroom cabinet handle, a table leg, etc. Priced around \$20, it is a great gift for colleagues, friends, or your classroom!

Speaking of your classroom . . . you might want to think about picking up a couple of FLIP video cameras. The nice thing about the FLIP video camera is that students are able to take video using a few simple buttons

on the back of the camera. They then plug the camera into the computer's USB port and do their editing. The software for editing is resident on the camera.

A middle school special education resource teacher and I just finished working with her class to make videos using the FLIP

cameras available in their school. After carefully planning the project, the teacher and I explained the cameras (it took about five minutes)

and the students were off and running! Their videos turned out to be interesting, met the classroom objectives, and were fun to watch!

There are several sources to purchase a FLIP video (Target, Costco, Amazon.com, Best Buy, etc.) As a

teacher, however, you are able to purchase one and get one free right now from the Digital Wish Foundation ([click here](#)). You could receive four cameras for a total of \$300. The particular model for which this offer is being made records and stores one hour of video. If you have some available budget money, you might want to think about a purchase from the Digital Wish Foundation.



FLIP Video
Ultra-HD One-Hour

Podcasting is Fun and Educational—Try it with Your Students!

(Continued from page 1)

The other method for recording podcasts is to use a mobile recording device and then to move the audio to a computer later. This is an excellent method if you are going to be mobile or want students working in small groups. The best devices dedicated for audio recording are the [Sony ICDUX70 Digital Voice Recorder](#) and the [Olympus WS-110 WMA Digital Voice Recorder](#). Both sell for between



Sony Digital
Voice
Recorder

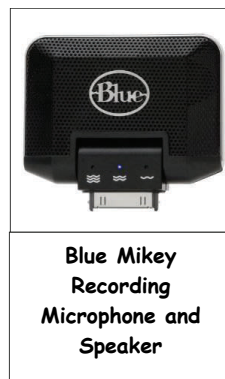
\$60 and \$80. The Sony will hold over 290 hours of recording; the Olympus,



Olympus Digital
Voice
Recorder

over 60 hours. Possibly the most popular audio recording device is the iPod. These devices are simple to use, but do not always offer the best audio quality.

The best tool for boosting the recording ability of your iPod is an \$80 [Blue Mikey Recording Microphone and Speaker](#) which is advertised as a tool that can "transform your iPod into an all



Blue Mikey
Recording
Microphone and
Speaker

-purpose, high-grade recording device."

All of these tools help gather the audio that you can use to publish podcasts. Once you have these, the fun really begins in creating activities that

make students performers on a worldwide stage.



SET Connections

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Connecting
Special Education and
Technology

Join Us

Log on to our website at
www.setconnections.org
OR
Email us at
info@setconnections.org
for information

Have You Joined the Ning?

There are many "hot"
topics in all of our
classrooms. Therefore,
we invite you to help
each other:



1. Join our Ning at <http://setconnections.ning.com>
 2. Scroll down the opening page to the Discussion Groups.
 3. Double click on the title, **Holiday Gift** (or the last discussion —**Reading**)
 4. React to the question posted or pose your own!
- Hopefully, as a community, we will be able to help each other with resources, ideas, and motivation to help our students reach greater competency!

Save the Date—Second Annual SET Connections Conference

Special Education and Technology: The Next Step A Special Education Conference

Saturday, April 16, 2011— 8:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Maine South High School, 1111 South Dee Road, Park Ridge, IL 60068

Plan to join us for a morning of

- presentations on timely topics
- discussions about special education and technology
- networking with colleagues and presenters
- Three CPDUs and door prizes

Bring a Friend or Colleague

Check the website:
setconnections.org
for information