

From the Desk of Robert M. Lippincott

Last weekend I went to see the new movie *Bottle Shock*. It's a terrific late-summer treat set in the Napa Valley during the mid-1970s. I'll spare you the plot details in case you are planning to see it. Suffice it to say that at a critical point in the story, Character A desperately needs to reach Character B with a critical message BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE and the only way to get to Character B is to drive an asthmatic truck with a low tank through dusty vineyard backroads. Life before cell phones, right? Sometimes when I watch movies filmed or set in the pre-Blackberry era, I actually find myself getting impatient when plot twists could be easily untangled if someone just had a cell phone.

Ridiculous, of course. Indiana Jones wouldn't be Indiana Jones if he could just phone it in. But it is hard to imagine our world today without technology. This is particularly true for students because technology has never been absent from their lives. They use technology as a primary means to communicate and socialize, and in innovative ways to create, share and own content, whether it be Web sites, blogs, podcasts, music, or art.

Many students come to the classroom already equipped with the skills needed to navigate new technologies, but they still need you and their families to help them learn how to use these tools safely and productively to achieve learning objectives and develop higher-order thinking skills.

In fact, a key competency for educators is the ability to enhance the learning process through technology integration and digital media. It's also a part of federal and state legislation, and a central focus for business leaders, community members and parents, because it is necessary for preparing students for the challenges they will face in an increasingly competitive global economy. There is no doubt that the mastery and application of new technologies by both students and educators is critical.

Designing curriculum and instruction with this in mind can be a challenging task. Meeting these expected learning outcomes often requires changes to teaching methods and strategies. So in today's unique school environment, it's imperative that educators have access to the professional support they need to achieve the learning goals articulated by all groups, including students.

To assist educators in this endeavor, the PBS Education team built a new online education community—PBS Teachers Connect [PBS Teachers Connect](#)—around PBS Teachers, the Web portal to the wide-ranging multimedia instructional resources and professional development services that PBS offers preK-12 educators.

PBS Teachers Connect provides an online community where preK-12 teachers, librarians, technology coordinators, and other educators can connect, contribute, and grow professionally. We hope the community will aid you in your vital role as instructors and as advocates for the effective use of technology to enhance teaching and learning.

The community provides a place for educators to discuss rich resources available through public media in school and home learning environments. It also enables educators to develop personal and professional connections with peers that are focused on education topics that they are passionate about, and ultimately champion their cause to help students progress.

A key component of PBS Teachers Connect is the PBS Teacher Leader program, which recognizes and rewards innovation in the use of digital media and technology in education. These education innovators will be integral to community development, soliciting teacher-created content, and showcasing exemplary demonstrations of digital media use. I hope you will consider applying to join this program, if you are using digital media in an innovative.

The public television system has a strong educational mission that is closely aligned to the mission of the education community. We believe that education empowers students to achieve their potential, and ultimately strengthens the social, democratic, economic, and cultural health of the U.S. We believe that great educators make a difference in the lives of their students and those students' academic success.

More than 73 million people interact with PBS content on multiple platforms each week; educators and learners form the core of this audience. I hope you and your students are among them. And I hope that you'll visit PBS Teachers Connect. Your participation will add to its value for others.

Here's to a successful, happy and productive school year! Please know that PBS is right beside you every step of the way.