



**Wired in more ways than one:
CHS students and teachers are enthusiastic about technology**

What landed Columbiana High School (CHS), Columbiana, seventh among *U.S. News & World Report's* 2011 Top 10 Most Connected Classrooms in the nation? The answer is progressive-thinking, careful planning and creative financing on the part of Columbiana Exempted Village School District.



Every Columbiana High School student receives a free netbook that he or she can use to access wikis and other learning tools. The devices also allow information flow between teachers and students using a secure class website maintained by each teacher. For example, the site allows a teacher to post a lesson worksheet for students to download, complete and send back to the class site for the teacher to pick up. Students also can submit papers and receive their grades through the arrangement.

All CHS classrooms also use SMART board (interactive whiteboard) technology, and selected science and math classrooms get board-interactive wireless slates as well. Using the system, science students, for example, can dissect a virtual frog on the whiteboard, with each student doing parts of the dissection from the classroom's wireless slate. The technology also allows the completed work to be saved and uploaded to the class website, where students can review it later.

Finally, teachers have access to electronic student response systems that allow students to silently answer questions posed by their teacher. Results are tabulated instantly and posted on the class whiteboard or saved for the teacher to view at a later time. Teachers can use the systems to find out what percentage of their students understood the last reading assignment, or—if they elect to receive the responses with a student ID number—how each student fared on a learning game or quiz.

Every elementary and high school classroom and about 80 percent of middle school classrooms have a SMART board. The district's goal is 100 percent.

"Regardless of the grade level or content area, effectively integrating technology is all about finding the best tools for each classroom situation," says Jason H. Martin, the district's *coordinator of technology/student and staff services*. "Technology drastically increases student success by empowering each child to explore, discover and achieve educationally."

How they funded it

Columbiana Exempted Village School District continually monitors grant clearinghouse websites to identify technology grant opportunities, with considerable success. When the district receives a grant, it reallocates what had already been set aside for technology to grow its digital capabilities in additional ways or in additional grade bands. District finance officials also take a long-reaching view of how funds are allocated, figuring that annual savings on copy paper, toner, copier maintenance and textbooks help pay for additional technology.

Buy-in keys

Starting slowly and planning carefully helped the district get and keep teacher buy-in. When CEV began its technology transition with just a few whiteboards, it selected classrooms of teachers who were considered most likely to embrace the technology and promote it among their peers. As the district considers new forms of technology integration, it also consults with teachers to make sure it will truly benefit them and their students. "Think through every step before you take it, and proceed slowly, making sure you are purchasing what teachers and students really need," Jason Martin says.

The district also does extensive teacher professional development around technology. "Whether it is a classroom set of iPads, an interactive white board or a desktop computer, professional development is at the heart of every successful technology initiative."

Where to start:

Martin recommends these education and technology grant websites:

Martha Holden Jennings Foundation: <http://www.mhjf.org/>

Best Buy Teach@15 Awards: http://www.bestbuy-communityrelations.com/teach_awards.htm

IDEA/ARRA Funding: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/factsheet/idea.html>

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