



Classrooms for the Future at Windber Area SD

WINDBER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

FEBRUARY, 2008

Classrooms for the Future: How Pennsylvania Students will benefit

Today's students live in a digital world. As schools do their best to prepare students to be productive citizens in the 21st Century marketplace, the tools and techniques of instruction are changing. Classrooms for the Future is about creating environments where students can experience deep cognitive development by using inquiry-based lessons, real and relevant project-based learning, and the use of a variety of communication and collaboration tools.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has provided both infrastructure and support for the integration of technology and improved instruction in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies classrooms across the state. High school students are poised to enter the workforce, or continue their education—it's important that education prepare them, in the short window of opportunity that remains, for the challenges of our "flat world."

There are many examples of how our schools need to adapt to the needs of today's students. Not only is technology relevant to the world in which we live, it can transform the learning experience. But, as with many important changes, it requires a fundamental shift in the approach to education.

Classrooms for the Future was designed to provide support for the transition that must take place in our public schools.

THE GOALS OF CFF:

- Improving teaching and learning in English, math, science, and social studies
- Changing classroom practice
- Increasing student engagement
- Increasing academic achievement

PROVIDED TO SCHOOLS:

- Laptops for every high school in the program
- Interactive white-boards
- New and innovative software tools
- A technology coach for teachers
- Professional development opportunities
- Information on new tools available - web 2.0, Wikis, etc.

Who is working with CFF this year at WAHS?

The Windber Area School District has targeted the Math and Science departments for this first year of technology integration. The participating faculty members include:

- Mr. Christner (Science)
- Mr. Culp (Science)
- Mrs. Elchin (Science)
- Ms. Jury (Math)
- Mr. McClain (Math)
- Mr. McGough (Math)
- Mr. Petro (Science)
- Mr. Podrebarac (Math)
- Mr. Single (Science)



Our classrooms are changing! Mr. McClain's precalculus class works on a lab examining exponential growth. Notice the interactive white-board and student laptops.



Partnership Culminates in Special Event

The Windber Area School District and the Westmont Hilltop School District have collaborated during the 2007-2008 school year to implement their Classrooms for the Future programs. Their efforts have involved pooling their resources to effectively use the grant award from PDE, including a joint-coaching system. Marlene Harbart and Kate Deater, the coaches for these districts are shared between the districts. They alternate their time between the two high school buildings and work with both teams of teachers. And, because of that collaboration, each district benefits from the experiences of the other.

While both Windber Area and Westmont Hilltop have been integrating technology for years, the CFF grant gives them the opportunity to supply their teachers with experiences that increase their level of knowledge and confidence with technology. One unique opportunity was brought to these teams of teachers by two teachers that have pushed technology integration throughout the state of Pennsylvania. On Thursday, February 21, 2008, a Mini-Conference on Technology Integrations was hosted by the districts and held at Westmont Hilltop High School.

EdTechInnovators, Ben Smith and Jared Mader, traveled from their home district of Red Lion Area to share their knowledge and experience with technology integration. Both instructors emphasize the use of creativity and innovation among their students, and encourage students to try new tools and methods to solve traditional problems. Ben Smith is a physics instructor that has transformed his teaching and student learning through the use of technology. He runs a 'paperless' classroom where students both receive and submit assignments digitally. Students use digital pictures and video to enhance lab reports, and tools like Google Docs to work collaboratively. Student responders are also a part of their technology toolbox, providing them with immediate, detailed feedback about student learning. Jared Mader, is a chemistry instructor and the Director of Technology for the district. His students also use a variety of online and digital tools, with an emphasis on Podcasting (publishing audio). Mader proudly claims that, "Every time they 'sync' their iPods, I'm forcing my way into their lives!" The two admit that there is a lot of work on the 'front-end' of their lesson design, but they say the results are worth the work.

"I LOOK TO THE FUTURE BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE I'M GOING TO SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE."

GEORGE BURNS AT AGE 87...
HE LIVED TO BE 100



Mark Prensky is a nationally acclaimed writer and speaker regarding technology integration. You can read his articles, **Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants** or **Do they REALLY think differently?** at www.marcprensky.com

What's a Wiki?

A Wiki is a software tool that allows users to create, edit, and collaborate easily through the use of a website. The first 'wiki' was created in 1994 by Ward Cunningham. He originally described his creation as, "the simplest online database that could possibly work." The name comes from the Hawaiian word for 'fast.' Cunningham chose that name after re-

membering a visit to Honolulu where he remembered being told by an airport employee to take the Wiki Wiki Shuttle to his destination.

In recent years, wikis have taken-off among educators because they are free, easy to create and edit, and are available for students to work on from school or from home. The most popular sites

for educators include: Wikispaces, PBWiki, Uwiki, and ProjectLocker.

Wikis can be seen in K-12 schools across the US, and are becoming popular with college instructors as well.



For more information on any of the articles included, please contact the CFF coaches for WASD and WHSD:

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