



Stories of Excellence



Case Studies of
Exemplary Teaching
and Learning
with Technology



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS



*“Storytelling can open our perspectives
to more brilliant possibilities.”*

Susan O’Halloran

Introduction

By **Jenifer Fox**, Author, Founder of Strengths Movement
in Schools, and Former Head of Purnell School

The need for change in our schools’ curriculum is no longer debatable. For students to succeed in the 21st century, the curriculum must focus on the technological world. We must help students develop the skills necessary to think critically, solve problems, and make informed decisions.

Technology has become the new literacy for young people. Through it, they learn to collaborate in a global community. It is this global community—and our students’ need to successfully participate in it—that inspired this report showcasing exemplary technology programs and the schools that implement them.

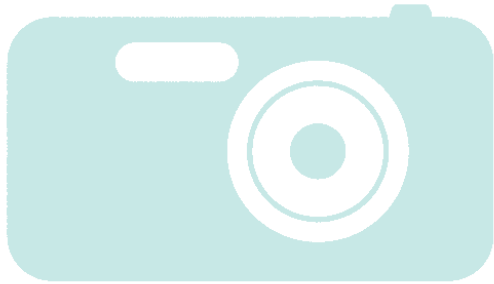
The 21st century demands that we fully and seamlessly integrate technology into our curricular goals. Our curriculum will be most successful when it incorporates a variety of learning styles and embraces a variety of student strengths. Above all, the curriculum connects students to the real world and engages them in authentic and creative experiences that teach them to think critically, solve problems with innovation, and connect to the communities that call upon them to make contributions. Each of the stories of excellence in this booklet accomplishes these goals.

Furthermore, all the schools from which these stories originate have shared strategies for successfully implementing these projects — strategies that are perhaps unique to independent schools. Each school has as part of its mission a commitment to student-centered learning, diversity and inclusiveness, the development of creative thinkers, and the use of technology to prepare students for life beyond school. Each school strives to educate the whole child, provide rich authentic experiences, and honor students' learning styles in pursuit of excellence.

These stories of excellence are intended to serve as models to inspire other schools and teachers to create their own programs and join in the unfolding story of how schools are keeping pace with the changes occurring in society and in our students' lives. The stories should encourage independent school teachers and administrators to get online and begin to discover in earnest the plethora of creative, project-centered, and collaborative curricular initiatives taking place all over the world. Once you do that, you will see that the stories in this report are not simply models; they represent imperatives for student success.

The NAIS 21st Century Curriculum/Technology Task Force sees these case studies not only as examples of what individual teachers should be doing in their classrooms but as windows into the organizational and cultural adjustments independent schools need to make in order to support evolving curriculum. The world will not wait for us, and the students we teach will not either. The time for these stories is now.

Case Study #14



THE PROJECT

River Studies Podcasts

THE SCHOOL

Cold Spring School

Coeducational, Day School, Grade Levels: Preschool-6

Total Enrollment: 134 students

263 Chapel Street

New Haven, CT 06513

203-787-1584

www.coldspringschool.org

Technology involved:

- iPods
- microphones
- camera and camcorder
- handheld USB microscope
- Computers and Apple's iLife suite of software
- Listen and Type software program for transcribing the podcasts for conversion into Spanish

Summary

Fourth-grade students create audio walking tours that anyone can download to an MP3 player and listen to while walking along local rivers. They hope New Haven residents will use the podcasts to learn about their water resources and will want to take better care of them as a result.

Audio tours include descriptions of plants one would be likely to see, folklore and related music behind the plants, student discussions of various environmental concerns, information about the history of the area, and related interviews with a rich variety of community specialists who share their stories and expertise.

Students in special interest groups develop podcasts for particular sites along the river. Ipod units are used to collect and store audio data, video data, and photographs. With the use of a small microphone that plugs

into the iPod units, students collect information at the sites they are researching.

Collaborating with teachers to decide the most effective way to present their research and findings, they create the basic plan, edit the podcast, and insert photographs, music, art, and video. Exporting the completed product back to the iPod units, they perform a final check and critical evaluation for accuracy, flow, and ease of use. After final adjustments are made, they post it to the Internet using iTunes to make it available to the general public. With the help of the Spanish teacher, they are translating several podcasts to make them available in Spanish.

Experience these podcasts by searching for “Mill River” in iTunes.

Requirements

Students need basic skills with the iLife multimedia suite, iPods, and digital still and movie cameras. The program also requires a lapel microphone, a “Snowball” microphone (bluemic.com), iPods for data storage, and an iLife suite of multimedia software, which includes GarageBand, iTunes, and iMovie. Cold Spring used a Kodak Easyshare camera, a Canon camcorder, and a Proscope, a handheld USB microscope that records and stores project data. The school already owned most of this equipment but lacked the iPod Nanos, a key device for the project’s success. The Watershed Fund provided a \$4,800 grant to purchase them.

Teacher

Karen Zwick, 4/5 Class Master Teacher/Technology Director:
kzwick@coldspringschool.org



CONCLUSION

The Brilliant Possibilities: Lessons Learned from the Excellence Challenge

By **Lorrie Jackson**, Director of Communications and Marketing, Lausanne Collegiate School

What does it take to transform how we teach — to engage our students and let them lead the learning? These 21 case studies show us that excellence in the classroom begins when we do not simply use technology for technology's sake but when we:

Use what we already have.

Many of the case studies use free websites (Facebook, wiki and blog sites, and so forth) or software that is often bundled with a school's computer purchase (iTunes, GarageBand). Implementing a new lesson in your classroom may require nothing beyond the technology you have now.

Connect beyond our campus.

Note that more than half of the case studies include community involvement: connecting students with places and people beyond their campuses. From Peru and China to the museum or river down the street, the world is waiting for you and your students.

Learn to let go.

Where's the PowerPoint book report or lecture notes in Word? If you want each child to absorb and then recite the same facts and concepts, these stories are not for you. These case study educators were willing to

equip students with an academic foundation and the technology they need to set them free to explore, inquire, investigate, assess, synthesize, and create. They achieved true classroom engagement and meaningful learning by liberating the students and limiting the lecture.

Make learning hands-on, no matter how advanced the curriculum.

Again and again, the case studies feature concepts or courses that can be highly abstract, esoteric, or theoretical. Technology gives students a chance to roll up their sleeves and play around with concepts in a more concrete way than would be otherwise possible.

Expect the world from our students.

Third graders creating award-winning videos. Sixth-grade boys writing lyrics on the hardships of war. Middle-school students conducting energy audits and making energy-saving recommendations to area homeowners. High schoolers writing art history podcasts worthy of publishing on the Smithsonian's website. When we as educators believe our students can reach beyond our own expectations, they will surprise and delight us.

Need more inspiration and conversation? Take a look at the stories found in the NAIS "Stories of Excellence" community at www.nais.org/go/communities (go to Teachers of the Future/Open Community/Stories of Excellence) or simply step outside your classroom door. Each day across the U.S. and beyond, independent school educators are making learning come alive for students through the innovative use of technology. It's time we all took the excellence challenge.