

Chino Valley Unified School District Students Gain Knowledge and Confidence with EasyTech

Learning how to use technology is one thing. Using these skills to complete meaningful tasks and solve real-world problems is another. Students at Cortez Elementary in the Chino Valley Unified School District are getting real results from technology, benefiting from one teacher's commitment to technology integration.

One teacher's commitment to technology integration

Paul Larson, a 5th and 6th grade teacher at Cortez Elementary, realizes that students learn best when they can put their knowledge to work in meaningful ways. To motivate students and encourage an interest in learning, Larson uses EasyTech from Learning.com to teach students lessons that will serve them long after they leave the classroom. Along with newfound skills, real-world expertise, and applicable knowledge, EasyTech is giving the students confidence, purpose, and drive.

A champion of educational technology, Larson ensures that all students in his classroom get plenty of time on the computer. Each student uses the computer every day and also attends the computer lab once a week.

When Larson began using EasyTech in the classroom, he immediately realized the potential of teaching technology skills through real-world, interactive lessons. It was a basic keyboarding lesson, he remembers, but "the kids just ate it up!" At the beginning of the school year, Larson presented EasyTech lessons one by one; today, having developed broader skills, students can choose from assignments in a variety of areas.

Students use EasyTech to apply technology to what's going on in the curriculum. But Larson is quick to point out that there are lots of ways to learn. He tries to encourage multiple learning styles by offering up different ways to acquire and present information. EasyTech, he explains, fits right into that. To continue his own learning and find new and innovative ways to use EasyTech in his classroom, Larson has been through an EasyTech Certification Academy Workshop at the Learning.com offices in Portland.

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*Paul Larson
Teacher*

Chino Valley Unified School District

Parent involvement spurs students' learning— at school and at home

Believing strongly that parental involvement is a key indicator of student success, Larson regularly communicates with parents and augments in-class lessons with parent/student resources that will help his students continue learning outside of the classroom. Mark Mann, principal at Cortez Elementary, agrees with Larson's approach: "Parent involvement is invaluable. The key is to provide activities and support that engage parents as active participants in their children's education."

When he first began using EasyTech in the classroom, Larson contacted parents and let them know about the program, passing along their child's unique username and password. With them, students—and parents!—can work on EasyTech assignments and pursue extra EasyTech lessons. About 20% of his students use EasyTech from home. Why? Larson explains, "They love it. It's thoroughly engaging and interactive." Larson's students show their parents what they're working on, and the parents get excited about it as well. Parents also appreciate the safe, controlled online environment that EasyTech affords their children, and feel confident accessing it knowing that the school has recommended it.

“As an instructional leader, I am compelled to provide staff a road map to meet content standards without adding more to their perceived workload. Educators are looking for ways to liberate time, and EasyTech accomplishes this need.”

*Mark Mann
Principal
Chino Valley Unified School District*

Building on essential skills

Larson believes that technology skills give each student a head start in their continuing education and their lives after school. Visits by guest speakers—parents, former students, and college students—are some of the best advocates for technology. They are quick to tell the students how useful technology is down the road, and engage students in discussions about using technology now in their own classroom.

The technology skills the students at Cortez Elementary learn are fundamental building-blocks that will serve them well throughout their education and their lives. In addition to keyboarding lessons, the students also learn basic word processing skills, including proofreading, selecting text using drag and double-click, spelling, and grammar.

Another lesson often-used in Larson’s classroom is presentation software with PowerPoint. Students see their teacher creating and showing PowerPoint presentations, and are eager to create their own. From book reports to multi-media presentations on dolphins, volcanoes, or sports, students are able to apply the lessons they learn with EasyTech to create and share information about topics that interest them. Even elementary students are able to combine technology skills for a uniquely personal presentation: students often include their own photographs that they have taken with a digital camera and uploaded to the computer.

When the students become the teachers

It’s the mark of successful teaching—and learning—when students are able, and eager, to help their peers. In the Cortez Elementary computer lab, you’ll see such students decked out in white lab coats with EasyTech and Cortez Elementary logos on them. The students took on the role of lab technicians when the position was vacated by a faculty member earlier in the year. Strapped for resources and faced with a growing contingency of technology-savvy students, Larson targeted some of his students who showed an aptitude for technology and offered them an opportunity to pitch in with teachers who needed help managing their students in the lab.

When other classes come in to use the lab, Larson’s technicians are available to help. As students encounter problems (anything from web-browsers not opening properly, to log-in difficulty) Larson’s “EasyTech Technicians” move about the room and answer their questions one-by-one, allowing the students to get back to work quickly. Mrs. Castillo, a teacher who brings her class to the computer lab, praises Larson’s students. “They know computers better than I ever did,” she says. “There’s no way I could teach them like this on my own. Larson’s kids are wonderful,” she concluded.

Technology learning boosts student confidence

With EasyTech at their fingertips, and the encouragement of their dedicated teacher beside them, students at Cortez Elementary are reaping the greatest reward of the technology lessons they are learning: confidence in themselves. "Using EasyTech has boosted students' confidence about what they can do on the computer," explains Larson. "And the confidence spreads. Students can use technology, and because of that they carry confidence into other areas."

Principal Mann agrees that the benefits students acquire from EasyTech lessons are greater than the technology skills themselves. "The use of any tool must be aimed at mastering skills that will foster leadership (motivation, self-confidence, persuasion, coaching, communication, etc.)," explains Principal Mann. "If you observe Mr. Larson's approach, this is the most evident component of his goals related to EasyTech."

When asked to describe how they feel when they learn something new with EasyTech, the students themselves are quick to point out how EasyTech has affected them. "It makes me feel more accomplished," shares one student. Another says she feels "great achievement and eager to learn more."

EasyTech empowers teachers and students

In the classrooms of innovative educators, a passion for teaching, coupled with the tools available in EasyTech, create an empowered, eager student body. The students in Cortez Elementary are not only learning how to use technology, they are learning how powerful knowledge can be and have the confidence to share their skills with their parents and their fellow students.

While students are the primary beneficiaries of EasyTech at Cortez Elementary, the teachers and administrators are reaping rewards as well. "The greatest challenge for instructors in our school is finding time to meet certain core content standards, especially those standards that are part of the accountability program," concludes Mann. "As an instructional leader, I am compelled to provide staff a road map to meet content standards without adding more to their perceived workload. Educators are looking for ways to liberate time, and EasyTech accomplishes this need. Especially, if used strategically and tailored to the needs of individual learners."