

# Empowered Desktop Provides Kansas Students and Teachers Access to Valuable Tools

**KAN-ED -- WHERE KANSANS ACCESS THE INFORMATION AGE**

Baxter Springs USD 508 in southeast Kansas has been benefiting from the Kan-ed Empowered Desktop since it was introduced in 2005. They began using it in the middle school and then expanded into the high school the following year. Ross Davis, Director of Technology at Baxter Springs, reports that the Desktop is accessible to approximately 650 people, which includes all faculty, staff, and students in the middle and high schools.

Davis shared that the most useful applications available through the Desktop are netTrekker, the Kansas Assessment tools, and Atomic Learning. The netTrekker is a K-12 search engine that offers a safe way for students to search for reliable information online. Atomic Learning allows students to access tutorials for using software (e.g., creating a playlist in iTunes, entering equations into a graphing calculator). The Kansas Assessment tools allow teachers to make custom practice tests, assess whether students are meeting specific learning goals or curriculum standards, and identify areas in need of improvement. Davis described that the biggest impact of the Empowered Desktop in his district has been related to Kansas Assessments, "Prior to the Empowered Desktop, it had been so difficult for the teachers curriculum-wise. We have a state mandated curriculum in terms of math, science, social studies, and reading, but our textbooks don't actually follow that curriculum. The Kansas Assessment tools on the Empowered Desktop allow the teachers to make tests in areas that our textbooks don't cover, and they can then search for sources to cover those topics by using netTrekker."



"The biggest challenge we have faced in terms of using the Empowered Desktop is getting everyone to take advantage of it as a tool," Davis remarked. Carolyn Ward, Librarian at Baxter Springs, does her best to make students aware of the many valuable resources available through the Empowered Desktop. She stated, "With an interest in genealogy, I frequently use the HeritageQuest link and encourage the students that express an interest in genealogy and/or history to check out the census and books that are available there. Since Homework Kansas was introduced, I shared this information with the students and encourage them to use this source in the evening when they need assistance. Students also learn to utilize the Backpack to save projects so that they can continue working on them at home and/or school. Territorial Kansas resources are used within the computer classes and encouraged for use in the study of Kansas history."

Ward shared her perspective on the Empowered Desktop, "The fact that students can be introduced to the information in class and then review it at home if they have Internet access is a big plus. There are a lot of great resources on the Desktop, and I hope that they continue to be available." Davis shared a similar sentiment, "I think the Empowered Desktop is a really good resource that gives the state a chance to start providing a lot more tools for the schools."

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**Baxter Springs USD 508**  
**Serves: 950+ students,**  
**70+ educators**  
**Kan-ed member since:**  
**September 6, 2002**