

School Enjoying Access to Desktop's High Quality Resources

In 2005, Burlington USD 244 in southeast Kansas made the Kan-ed Empowered Desktop accessible to the entire district, which currently includes approximately 800 students and all teachers. Linda Holman, Technology Specialist at the elementary school, described, "They can access the Empowered Desktop anywhere in the building. We have computer labs, as well as computers in the library and classrooms. Anywhere they have an Internet connection, they can get to it." Craig Kuhlmann, Technology Specialist for the middle and high schools, further commented that access to the Desktop is not limited to school. He stated, "The students utilize it from home quite a bit as well. We do an annual survey, and right now approximately 85-90% of our families have Internet."

Holman shared her perspective related to which Desktop applications are most useful at the school. The three most useful applications on the Desktop for the elementary students, according to Holman, are Whale of a Tale, OWL Literacy, and netTrekker. She went on to describe, "Whale of a Tale is an application for K-3. It has four different subject areas: science, language, math, and social studies. There are different lessons within those categories. The students watch an interactive video and take a little quiz at the end. That's been really beneficial, and it's used a lot." Holman commented that the Desktop has a really great impact on the students' learning environment. She said, "It's nice to be able to go places like netTrekker that we know are a little more kid-friendly than just doing a Yahoo or Google search. I really stress the importance of using the resources available on the Empowered Desktop when we do our research projects in the computer lab." She also remarked, "It's nice to have kids go to one place and have a few things that they can do at that one place."



Kuhlmann had a more difficult time narrowing down the most useful applications for the middle and high school students. When responding, he mentioned six applications, including Ebsco, World Book, ProQuest, Gale/Cengage, Test Builder, and netTrekker. All of these resources, with the exception of Test Builder, are research databases or search engines that students use to find information related to specific research topics. Kuhlmann commented, "A lot of the teachers doing research papers or different activities at the high school make sure that the students are using the Kan-ed Desktop, because they know that the information that the students are going to be getting from World Book and the Ebsco product and such is going to be high quality, credible, reliable data. That's a big issue in utilizing those resources first for different projects." The other feature mentioned, Test Builder, is a resource for teachers that allows them to make tests related to specific state assessment standards.

Kuhlmann offered a final remark, "The Empowered Desktop provides a tremendous resource. It contains so much information in one area, and we appreciate being able to access high quality resources without the cost. For each individual school to go out and individually purchase these resources would be astronomical, but being able to group it together as a state and have these resources available to everyone is tremendous."



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