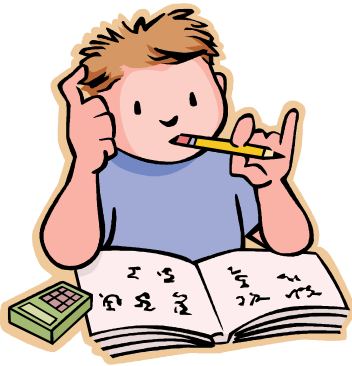


EMPOWERED DESKTOP: ONE-STOP SHOP FOR LEARNING TOOLS

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Hays USD 489
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200+ educators
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Approximately 200 teachers and 3,000 students in the Hays USD 489 district use the Empowered Desktop to increase the resources available in the classroom. Alicia Brungardt, Instructional Technology Coordinator for Hays, provided several examples of how Desktop applications are used by both teachers and students.

The netTrekker search engine and the state assessment aligned Test Builder are both valuable resources. “NetTrekker is used by teachers to find materials to use in the classroom, and by students to create or produce products to demonstrate knowledge. The Test Builder is something that is starting to become more popular in our district. Being a former English teacher, if I would have known about the Test Builder, I would have used it from day one in my classroom, because I can drill all the way down to a specific indicator and then choose how many questions I want to test my students over.”

Brungardt also talked about the value of Homework Kansas, which she described as an online chat service for homework help that targets students from about middle elementary school through high school. “Homework Kansas is an awesome resource. It provides a lot of good information without giving kids answers. It gives them good direction. The student logs in and provides his/her grade level and subject area, then they’re connected with a teacher who works as a tutor. It provides an online chatting service along with whiteboard features so that the student can write notes if they’re trying to solve a math problem. Kids that have used it have really liked it.” Brungardt also mentioned that Homework Kansas operates from 4-11pm each day, so it is a convenient resource when teachers are generally unavailable.

At the high school, counselors are using the Kansas Career Pipeline application with students. Brungardt said that this application is “helping kids identify their strengths and areas that they may show aptitude so that they can start thinking in terms of careers. At the high school level, that’s really important because if they have a career path in mind, it helps them to make class selections that might be more appropriate for their career goals.”

Brungardt summarized, “The Desktop has allowed us to use technology as a tool that facilitates learning rather than becoming the focus of learning. It provides excellent resources for teachers, so that they don’t have to spend so much time searching for good resources. It’s kind of a one-stop shopping center, which is excellent for teachers, because one of the biggest issues teachers have throughout our district, and probably everywhere, is lack of time. This saves them time when it comes to planning lessons and finding materials that are appropriate for the age level of their students.”

“I know that when I have taken teachers to the Empowered Desktop and I’ve shown them what’s available, they are usually pretty excited about how they can use this in the classroom. It’s something that they can take back and use the very next day, or they can tie it to a unit immediately. They’re really amazed by how many resources are easily accessible on that site,” Brungardt shared.