



In-Class "Field Trips" Possible with Kan-ed Funded Equipment



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Oxford USD 358 in south central Kansas purchased high definition videoconferencing equipment with funds received through the 2008 Kan-ed Enhancing Technology Grant Program. The school has been using the equipment in the high school to make Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) connections possible.

Commenting on the impact of the videoconferencing equipment, Oxford's Superintendent Deborah Hamm stated, "It has allowed us to both receive and send classes. For instance, our Spanish teacher is sending Spanish classes to other schools. If we didn't have the equipment and the other schools didn't have the equipment, we wouldn't be able to do that. The students that are receiving the Spanish would not have that experience, and the school might not be able to offer a foreign language at all. In addition to what we do here with the students, we also have used the equipment for college graduate courses for our teaching staff. We wouldn't be able to do any of these things without the equipment." The equipment allows them to work collaboratively with other districts to maximize course options.

Marvin Percival, Technology Director at Oxford USD 358, described how they have used the videoconferencing system with the community. "We've done some gardening and some quilting classes. We've done some Bible study classes for older adults. We've also used the IDL system for meetings where coaches and athletic directors need to get together, instead of driving. It cuts down driving time and costs. We've had 4-H clubs use it as a leadership training tool."

Hamm commented, "From the standpoint of a superintendent in a small district, I think the thing that I appreciate about the Kan-ed grant is that it is available to a wide number of people and a wide number of groups. To me, they're taking money that has been collected and using it in a great way to open opportunities for kids and communities that wouldn't be available otherwise. We just don't have the funds to be able to provide this kind of equipment without the grant funds. We've spent a lot of money on technology. This just provides another avenue for us to be able to leverage our dollars and spend the money wisely to provide opportunities for our kids."

Percival shared that another benefit of the videoconferencing equipment is the opportunity to network with a lot of other schools, even schools outside of the state. "Using the videoconferencing equipment is a good way for students to take a field trip. Students can go places and connect to various sites, without having to get on a bus. Places that we could never travel." As an example of one of those field trips, he described, "The other day, we did a two hour Brown vs. Board of Education session. We connected with schools from New Jersey and New York and Washington D.C. That was pretty neat because our students got to actually visit with other students in all parts of the country." He also mentioned that a math teacher had connected his class to a professional baseball team, the San Francisco Giants, to work some math problems.

Oxford USD 358

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The school is interested in expanding its use of the equipment. Hamm stated, "We're also hoping to expand it into more of a global or international approach for our students. Because of our location, our kids don't necessarily have the opportunities to travel or visit with people from other countries. We'd like to offer more in the way of international connection, and we've begun looking at some different opportunities there."

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