

Santa and Barbie Become Teachers' Aides at Sandusky City Schools

On a typical day in Sandusky City Schools, you might see Grade 7 math students using a Web 2.0 Internet tool to create avatars. In one, Santa Claus explains the mathematical “order of operations.” Each student loads his or her work on the class wiki, a social collaborative Web page, so classmates can review it.

Or you might watch high school math students making sure Barbie® doesn't get her neck broken in a bungee jump by writing and testing a slope-intercept equation.



Resources

Here are some great ideas for digital learning projects.

<http://www.scs-k12.net/AdamsTeamProjects.aspx>

http://www.scs-k12.net/SHS_Team_Projects.aspx

<http://www.scs-k12.net/OsborneTeamProjects.aspx>

Buy-in Keys

The district has tapped a variety of sources, including E-Tech, to help initiate and support its digital learning capabilities, but smart teacher professional development is key. The district used its initial ARRA funds to hire an instructional technology expert who teaches educators about digital learning tools and provides one-on-one coaching. The coach delivers 100 minutes of PD each month, and 50 Grade 7–10 teachers are regularly using multiple technologies in the classroom.

All trial jumps are video and sound recorded using district flip cameras.

According to Christine Zess, Sandusky City Schools instructional technology facilitator, digital learning exercises like these help students learn and apply the critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration and creativity skills that are viewed as critical for successful 21st-century living. Students also are mastering another critical 21st-century skill: information-technology literacy.

“Transition to technology-based learning is a series of small steps taken one at a time,” Zess says. Each year, the district trains more teachers to use technology tools and encourages them to take on increasingly complex projects.

“Technology truly transforms teaching and learning,” Zess says. “It provides creative lessons to help our students develop and sharpen the 21st-century skills they will need.”

