

Teacher tech awareness spurs student interest, learning

There's often a generational gap for teachers when it comes to technology. A new program in Arizona is seeking to close that gap by bringing teachers up to speed on how they can use text messaging and podcasting technology in the classroom. The goal is to enable teachers to create lessons in a comfortable and fun format for students.

Key points

- Modern technology helps create fun, interesting lessons.
- Tech program guides teachers on incorporating technology.
- Local partnerships, grants alleviate tech funding concerns. ■

"Kids can be more tech-savvy than the instructors," said Catherine Eden, director of the Bob Ramsey Executive Education Program in the College of Public Programs at Arizona State University. "We want to use that technology to enhance their learning."

To better prepare teachers, the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, and Arizona Telemedicine Program faculty, working with an industry partner, will provide a 12-hour teacher certificate program in how different technologies, such as videoconferencing, podcasting, document camera, DVD, the Internet, and text messaging, can serve as high-impact educational tools to enhance the K-12 education experience. The program was developed in response to a 2007 executive order by Gov. Janet Napolitano that urged classroom implementation of technology.

The tech program helps teachers understand what the students are using and shows them how to use it in the classroom. The goal is to reach students using familiar technology such as YouTube, even though some schools have disabled access to that Web site. "The program has generated a lot of interest from educators in the state because it puts a positive twist on things such as YouTube and texting that may have negative connotations for the district," said Linda Hess, the program's executive assistant. "The teachers can share videoconferences and podcasts with their peers and eliminate borders between districts."

The program will cover technology such as Smart Board, a touch-sensitive display that connects a computer with a digital projector to show the computer image. Educators will also learn how to use a Flip camera and upload presentations to YouTube. They will be versed on technological etiquette. The instructors

Principal drives tech initiatives

A new program, created by a joint grant to the University of Arizona and Arizona State University, will educate teachers in Arizona on how to use things such as YouTube and podcasting in the classroom. Although some schools and teachers have already embraced the technology as valuable learning tools, others have been skeptical of its educational use.

The school's success with technology implementation is often dependent on the school leader. "You can tell how a principal views technology when you enter a school," said Catherine Eden, director of the Bob Ramsey Executive Education Program in the College of Public Programs at Arizona State University. "Some are on top of the latest technology and want their teachers to have the best. Principals have to be engaged and stay on top of technology." ■

will follow up with the teachers for a year to determine how they are implementing the technology.

If you're interested in maximizing the technology in the educational setting, Eden identified some of the challenges to overcome:

■ **Model enthusiasm.** Although some principals and school leaders have embraced technology, the challenge is getting reticent teachers enthused and comfortable. Lack of familiarity may hinder a teacher from embracing technological resources. To combat this, researchers say districts must provide ongoing development that shows teachers not only how to use technology, but also provides them with effective instructional strategies and applications.

■ **Develop funding sources.** Technology is not a cheap undertaking for any school. In Arizona, a monetary grant to two universities provided the funding to teach the educators.

■ **Provide support, feedback.** Older teachers may be less comfortable with the technology than their younger peers. "Reach them in groups in a non-threatening ways such as educational workshops," Eden said. "Make sure that you provide support and feedback during the workshop."

■ **Foster collaboration.** Partner with other schools in your area on teacher training. Train the participant teachers to introduce the technology modalities to other educators in their school. Look for technology partnerships with local districts. With dwindling federal dollars, your district should look to partner with outside groups to fund your technology needs — including professional development.

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