



Photograph by Shelton Wilder

“Without the immersion enabled by the Toshiba 1:1 pilot program, we would not have gained the confidence nor made the time-saving tweaks to our strategy.”

—Nancy Zeiss, Instructional Technology Facilitator

Watauga Public High School Breaking New Ground with Ground-Breaking Technology

Students entering Watauga High School in the Fall of 2010 are opening a new chapter in the rich history of this public school in North Carolina’s scenic Blue Ridge Mountain high country. Along with marching into a modern new facility, they’ll also be entering a program designed to propel their learning well beyond the newly formed walls—one that challenged the school’s IT team to design the most significant technology implementation in the school’s history.

But as the district broke ground on the new building—offering large open spaces for collaborative study, a media center, plus amenities like Wi-Fi® and video projection in every room, WHS technology facilitators had a mission of their own. The goal? Put a PC in the hands of nearly 1,500 students within a three-week window at the start of the school year. To be successful, instructional technology facilitator Nancy Zeiss and teachers like James Eichmiller knew they first had to test laptops in a 1:1 pilot program to gain critical support from the district technology team, teachers, students and parents. Clearly, as the walls began going up, so would the pressure on the 1:1 Implementation Team.

featured products



Toshiba Notebooks for Schools® Laying the Foundation for Implementation

Though Watauga teachers had worked with hardware from various vendors on and off, Zeiss had been hearing good things about



Toshiba's Notebooks for Schools (NFS) program. Created in 1995, it was designed to help schools test, evaluate and prove the value of laptops for learning. And it had demonstrated its efficacy in case after case, putting advanced mobile technology in thousands of public and private schools across the country.

So, as construction on the new school began, WHS turned to their local Toshiba reseller representative, completed an NFS grant application and was ultimately awarded over \$50,000 worth of mobile computing equipment, including award-winning Portégé® M700 Tablet PCs, docking stations and accessories, plus a mobile digital projector. The much-needed pilot program was on.

Seeing students go from active to interactive and engaged

Within weeks, the Toshiba technology quickly proved its worth in the classroom, receiving high marks from students, teachers, and parents. Geometry teacher Eichmiller, in particular, began using the Toshiba Tablet PC together with Microsoft® Office OneNote® and a Web-based message board for in-class and after-hours collaboration. Leveraging the PCs' built-in wireless, students connected securely to his Web page, where they could send emails, get assignments, plus post and answer questions on assigned homework problems—all in a secure environment.

But even more remarkable things began to happen: students started freely interacting through their classroom blog, showing how they solved geometry problems by way of audio/video demonstrations. Zeiss was excited, to say the least. "We felt having a...website and requiring content from each department would help acclimate the teachers and faculty to digital media," she said. "The combination of the website, the mobility of the Toshiba Tablet PCs and wireless access is truly changing the face of teaching and learning at our school."

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"I looked at students whose grades improved after being issued the Tablet PC. These...test averages went up a letter grade during that period."

—James Eichmiller, geometry teacher and Tablet PC pilot program lead instructor

Building toward a brighter tomorrow

Led by the commendable efforts of Zeiss and Eichmiller, Watauga teachers and students fully embraced the Tablet PC at the conclusion of the pilot period, securing the vital support from the district administration. Conglomerate data from multiple studies have shown increased engagement, higher attendance and lower behavioral issues. In particular during the pilot, Watauga found that—

- Test scores improved for a number of students in the test group
- Student note-taking improved significantly
- Classroom participation and test preparation improved
- Online student collaboration increased markedly
- Students learned to create A/V screen-casts for problem solving

Pioneers of the future

Selected for the Toshiba Notebooks for Schools pilot program from over one hundred applicants based on their commitment, dedication and enthusiasm for technology integration, Watauga High School is now fully prepared and empowering their students, faculty and community, for a bright future.

Perhaps Superintendent Dr. Marty Hemric best captured the pioneering spirit of Watauga students and educators, saying, "It is our teachers' use of instructional technology that matters most. When we place empowering resources in the hands of talented professionals, we achieve admirable results."



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