Ecosystem Project Teaches Students About World

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Hillsboro Junior High School 7th grade girls took their technology skills on the road recently when they presented to a crowd of teachers and administrators from across Texas at the 2017 TCEA (Texas Computer Education Association) Conference held in Austin.

“In their presentation, ‘Here’s Looking at You, Kid,’ the students demonstrated how they collaboratively create newscasts and videos using iPads and audio and video editing software,” said Hillsboro ISD’s Director of Instructional Technology Cindy Darden.

Darden began working with the students when they were 6th grade TechSperts at Hillsboro Intermediate School. After teaching them how to create video newscasts teachers could access from the web to show during their classes, Darden submitted a proposal to the district how to create video newscasts teachers could access from the web to show during their classes, Darden submitted a proposal to the district for the students to present at the conference.

Darden said the opportunity to present was a great learning experience for the girls.

“Presenting helps them build public speaking and communication skills,” she said. “They also used their media literacy knowledge, as well as creativity, collaboration and critical thinking skills.”

Hillsboro Intermediate School 6th grade science teachers Mary Joe Schronk and Jeremy Sweaney helped spark student interest in science by kicking off the year with a research-intensive ecosystem project.

Students were charges with creating a model of an ecosystem and presenting it to their classmates through the use of a poster, flyer or Google Slides presentation.

Students could choose any ecosystem on Earth they wanted to learn more about for their presentation.

“They were able to realize science isn’t just something in a textbook,” said Sweaney. “They were engaged in taking more of an interest in the world around them.”

After exploring the living and non-living elements of their chosen ecosystem, students used various resources, including books, educational web sites and videos, for further research.

“Students collected, analyzed and interpreted information,” said Schronk. “They constructed charts to document their detailed observations and used evidence to communicate their discoveries.”

Students then compiled their findings and developed their presentations.

“They loved sharing their final presentations with their class,” Schronk said.

Ecosystem Project Teaches Students About the World

Student Chefs Turn Up the Heat in Creative Cooking Competitions

Cupcake Wars, which was modeled after a popular television show by the same name, was a friendly competition among 8th- and 9th-grade students in the Principles of Hospitality classes. Students received a set of criteria on which their confections were judged: flavor, texture and overall appearance reflecting the assigned winter holidays theme. They worked in small labs, baking half a dozen cupcakes per team in one class period and then used the following class period to decorate and present them. Finished products were judged, and one team in each class was named the winner.

Taking a nod from another cooking show, Chopped was an advanced competition among the 10th through 12th grade students in the culinary arts program. Roughly 100 students participated in the event working in teams of six. Student chefs were given a basket of ingredients, three of which they knew in advance and then two ‘secret’ ingredients that were revealed in class. Their task was to create an entire entrée or in later rounds an appetizer during their 45-minute class period including prep time, cooking and clean-up. A winning team was selected from each of the four competing classes.

Both the Cupcake Wars and the Chopped competitions were fun ways for the students to get hands-on experience, work collaboratively and to showcase their creativity.

Hillsboro ISD Online

We’ve updated our website! Features include a consolidated district events calendar, consistent navigation and a content language translator. The new design can be viewed on the district events calendar, consistent navigation and a content language translator. The new design can be viewed on

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HISD Education Foundation Awards Annual Teaching Grant Recipients

The Hillsboro ISD Education Foundation directors and donors, accompanied by members of the Hillsboro Band, marched the hallways of the Hillsboro ISD (HISD) campuses to award 19 grants to deserving individual teachers and teams.

The grants, totaling $23,199, will be used to purchase technology and tools including Chromebooks, physics’ lab materials and non-traditional student seating to continue to prepare HISD students to excel in the classroom.

Foundation Executive Director Katharine Matthys said, “We are grateful for the continued and generous donations from our community members, our business partners and HISD faculty and staff that make the Accolade Parade possible.”

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2016–2017 GRANT RECIPIENTS!

HILLSBORO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
(Five grants totaling $5,258)
Melissa Hawkins and Danielle Spencer — Polishing our Chromies by Collaborating, Customizing, and Communicating
Rebecca Moore — More Magazines Please!!
Marion Ramos — This IS D3SMO Fun!!
Christine Robinson — Coding Our Way to Careers
Taylor Sanders — The Future is Flexible

HILLSBORO INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
(Three grants totaling $4,144)
Carol Malby and Ann Teel — Lights! Camera! Student News Coming Your Way
Laurie Lewis — Technology to the Reading Rescue!!
Daisy Abreu, Alma Cruz and Laurie Mc Donald — See S.A.M. (Spanish, Art & Music) with the iPad

HILLSBORO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
(Seven grants totaling $8,143)
Cheryl Comer — Let’s Get Graphic
Tammy Fry — EagleBots
Laura Moulder and Chris Smith — Learning on the Move
Crystal Buxkemper — Celebrating Science Mastery Through Stations
Katherine Polley — Student Voice: Turning Up the Volume
Dayna Marshall and Megan Vought — Keep Calm and Chrome
Laura Adams, Crystal Volcik and Amanda Sloan — NSPIRE-ing STEM

HILLSBORO HIGH SCHOOL
(Four grants totaling $5,656)
Janel Morris, Schivonne John and Tabatha Davis — Essential Equipment for the Practical Application of Newtonian Mechanics
Melisa Springfield and Janel Morris — Technology-Driven Response to Intervention in Secondary Mathematics
Michelle Steele and Erin Lobato — NexGen Readers are Tomorrow’s Leaders
Jennifer Faulknor — Locked into Science

Eagle Softball Complex Rededication

In front of family, friends, players and fans, the Eagle Softball Complex was rededicated this season to honor a Hillsboro man who gave much to the sport and the young ladies he coached.

On February 17, at the first home game of 2017, the new metal sign above Turner Hennig Field was unveiled and a ceremony marked the bittersweet occasion. Game announcer Bill Siddons read a short biography, and Hillsboro High School junior and Lady Eagle pitcher Karoline Creech shared stories of her first pitching coach.

Hennig first became interested in softball when his oldest daughter started playing. And when his youngest, Jade, picked up a ball, he started coaching—a gift he shared with local athletes for the next 18 years.

Turner Hennig passed away in 2014 and his daughter said the family is deeply honored that her father is being remembered this way.

“I know he smiled down on us that night,” said former HHS pitcher Jade Hennig. “His memory will always be here for us.”

Hillsboro High School Expands Internet Access for Students

Hillsboro High School (HHS) students now have an all-access pass to the Internet thanks to the school’s partnership with Digital Wish, an organization helping to fund use of 20 MiFi jetpacks.

Jetpacks are wireless routers that act as mobile WiFi hotspots allowing students to access the Internet from anywhere. Currently, students are allowed to check out one jetpack from the library and return it the next morning.

“Students can access homework at home, as well as collaborate with other students outside of class,” said Michelle Steele, HHS librarian.

The jetpacks automatically connect to any in-range school device, further increasing access to students.

HHS was originally granted 14 MIFI jetpacks in 2014 through a TEA Technology Lending Program, but funding ended last year.

“Sustaining the program was important for our students,” said Jo Hayes, HHS associate principal. “Digital Wish was there to help and even increased our access from 14 jetpacks to 20. We’re so thankful.”

Look for Hillsboro ISD as a featured school district on the Digital Wish website soon.
In fulfilling the mission of “Preparing Today’s Students for Tomorrow’s World,” Hillsboro ISD (HISD) educators are shifting their focus away from standardized test scores and toward capturing the true characteristics of a 21st century learner.

This approach to teaching and learning—HISD’s Portrait of a Learner—embodies four skills businesses and industries deem necessary for students to be successful: critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity/innovation.

Students throughout the district are engaged in programs and initiatives designed specifically to develop all four skills, starting with the youngest learners.

The Maker Space Program

- Develops problem-solving skills
- Fosters communication using technology to program robots, and create and publish stories and videos
- Encourages problem solving and bringing creations to life
- Allows for dreaming new ideas and using technology to develop them

The Maker Space program, implemented at the Hillsboro Elementary Media Center and run by GATE teacher and campus librarian Christine Robinson, allows students to work both collaboratively in groups and independently using robotics, Storytelling Legos and K’Nex educational tools.

Students use two types of robots: Cubelets and Spheros. Cubelets, robots linked with magnets, have a special function, which students are challenged to figure out. Students program the Spheros, sphere-shaped robots linked to an iPad, to move around different spaces.

Reading and writing skills are supported by Storytelling Legos. In one project, 1st grade students used dice labeled with the elements of a story, such as a character and a setting (a dentist on a mountaintop with a dragon) to tie together a story.

Students create models using K’Nex tools, which consist of sets of wheels and gears. Once they have built their models from instructions, they are challenged to improve upon them. One student built a motorcycle and found that it wasn’t very steady, so she modified her design to make it more stable.

Students’ critical thinking is also challenged as they use skills learned through Hour of Code, a national program to learn simple programming. The code is provided in strings that can be moved around like puzzle pieces creating an action.

“The tools in the Maker Space and the projects that are created with them are designed to prepare the children for the technology-driven world they will enter,” said Robinson.

Lex Lab

- Develops solution-based thinking through design
- Promotes communication across campuses through technology
- Creates opportunities to complete challenges and solve problems
- Encourages exploration of new ideas and problem solving

At Hillsboro Intermediate School (HIS), there is palpable excitement about the newly opened Learning Experience Lab (Lex Lab), made possible through a $25,000 grant from The Monsanto Corporation.

Equipped with robotics kits, a 3D printer, 3D scanner and other tools, the lab is popular with students who make the most of their access to the new learning environment. “Students come at lunch and before and after school,” explained Pam Hamilton who runs the HIS GATE program as well as being the Lex Lab coordinator.

Projects in the Lex Lab combine access to new-design technology with classic problem solving and model building. A project the 5th grade students recently completed entailed watching videos of the television show Tiny Houses for inspiration and then designing their own tiny houses inside a 240 square-foot footprint.

With an eye toward projects with an authentic purpose, relevancy and an audience, Hamilton tasked 3rd and 4th grade students, who are working on the formative elements of empathy, integrity, grit and self-control, to make a stop motion animation video of a story about empathy. The video was shared with the 2nd graders who will be joining them next year. “Since they’ll be moving up, this is a good way to communicate across campuses and bring them up-to-speed about the things that our campus values,” said Hamilton.

Innovative Learning Spaces

- Encourages problem solving using the most current technology
- Facilitates communication while supporting multiple learning styles
- Promotes teamwork with classmates
- Allows freedom to focus on creative thinking

Across the district, innovative learning spaces have been implemented. Classrooms have been redesigned to create spaces that support the way students learn and to encourage good behavior and focus. These classrooms offer a variety of seating options—low tables with cushions or stools, high tables with chairs, lap trays and ball seats—so children can choose what makes them most comfortable.

Hillsboro Junior High School (HJHS) has updated their library to an innovative learning space with computers and flexible furniture.
Hillsboro School District's Breakfast in the Classroom program was piloted at Hillsboro Intermediate School (HIS) in the fall, and the Hillsboro High School (HHS) Life Skills class utilizes the HHS greenhouse where they grow seeds and transplant vegetables and flowers, which they sell at a plant sale in the spring. "Transaction math is especially important in the Life Skills class so working the plant sale after harvesting what they grow gives the students the opportunity to use real-world skills," explained Life Skills teacher Haley Walker.

These are some of the many programs at HISD, which underscore the district’s commitment to explore innovative ways for students to learn, preparing them to excel in the increasingly competitive marketplace.

The school partnered with the PTA to redesign the space, incorporating new furniture such as wobble stools, multi-level workstations and tables of various shapes and colors. An entire wall of the library was painted to create a floor to ceiling whiteboard where students can showcase their work. Also, bookshelves that blocked natural light were moved so students can put their feet up, plug in their computers and look out the window while they work.

At HISD, creative learning spaces extend beyond classrooms and into gardens that have been built throughout the district.
HILL COUNTY FAIR
Destini’s Dream Prom

The room radiated hot pink and zebra print for the guest of honor at Destini’s Dream Prom, 14-year-old Hillsboro High School (HHS) freshman Destini Ramsey.

Not everyone gets their own prom. But Destini wasn’t your average girl. The spunky little kid with cystic fibrosis moved to town with her family when she was in the 3rd grade and quickly became part of the community.

So when her disease took a turn for the worse this fall, and the perpetually positive and sassy young lady expressed wistfulness that she’d never attend a prom, her community rallied to crown her queen for a night.

Led by local business owner Amy Marsh, friends, community members, and school staff whipped up Destini’s Dream Prom on Saturday, January 7, and 300 friends and fellow students donned their best to celebrate with her.

Asked why he thought it was important to put on a prom for Destini, her friend and date for the night Kyle Lincoln replied, “She struggled with being sick a lot; Destini deserved a night where she didn’t have to think about being sick and could just have fun with her friends.”

HISD School Resource Officer and family friend Lynelle Sparks said Destini was humbled by the community outreach, honored, and “loving every minute” of the party Hillsboro threw for her.

The artistic and outgoing HHS band member passed away peacefully on February 1 and will be remembered for being a bright and lively friend to many.