

Educating Learners for the Future **by Jo-An Vargo and Henry Finch**

The world is rapidly changing, and our students are going to need a wider skill set for their future education and employment. Director of Technology Henry Finch and I recently read an article that pointed out the need for students to “think critically about the information they give and receive, accepting that others may have a different perspective”. It described learning opportunities that help shape students’ problem solving, effective oral and written communication, and social and emotional skills by “infusing global awareness into the curriculum and using technology to enhance project-based learning”. As Billie McConnell, director of the the K-12 Digital Learning Institute at Abilene Christian University stated recently, “The jobs they’re going to have don’t even exist yet”. Obviously, technology will be an important part of our students’ future. As a Primary School, the division seeks to enhance the educational experience for our young students using new technologies appropriately. It’s important to keep in mind that we view technology as a tool and not as a destination in and of itself.

Therefore, the journey we began during the last school year is only the beginning as we examined how to upgrade our existing technology. Beginning last fall, a great deal of time has been devoted to coordinating the use of technology to support our educational goals within each grade, between grade levels and between divisions. Over the course of last year, we have examined many types of technologies (not just computers) such as mobile devices, integrated learning systems, and interactive white boards, among other devices. We endeavored to learn how each device could enhance our program without distracting our students from the curricular goals.

Most of second semester was devoted to observing technologies in action, going to conferences, conducting hands-on evaluation of various technologies, and speaking with several consultants about the uses of technology in early childhood education. After careful research and discussions between teachers, administration, the department of technology, and the business office, we’ve made a set of decisions that met our educational and financial directives. Not every classroom is receiving the same technology because we are trying to make sure that each developmental level has the appropriate technology to support their curricular activities.

The school has also joined the 8th Floor Consortium sponsored by Tulsa Technology Center and Tulsa Community College, and Primary School teachers have already started training in preparation for the new technology they will receive. In addition, there will be other opportunities for professional development during the school year. Professional development will be ongoing as will our continuing discussions with the other two divisions and the school-wide Educational Technology Committee to ensure that a smooth consistent technology implementation will continue to occur throughout the school during the next several years.

The implementation of this upgrade project will take the entire 2011-12 school year. Much of the equipment has already been ordered. Some has been installed, and the rest will be installed at various points during the first semester. We’re excited by the opportunities we will

all have to expand our understanding, develop new skills, and increase our technical literacy as we seek to continually improve the educational opportunities for our students at Holland Hall. We'll make sure that we keep you apprised of our discoveries in the coming months.