

## Using Technology in Holland Hall's Middle School Arts Program

Joel Bicknell

The following article, written by Middle School Drama Teacher Sally Adams, details how integral technology is to the artistic process our students engage in throughout the Fine Arts curriculum.

Kids at Holland Hall Middle School know there is a natural synergy between arts and technology. Students use computers, digital cameras, SMART Boards and other modern tools on a daily basis. There are so many options in the broader world of art that it takes a digital Sherpa to guide kids through the creative landscape. Educational guidance is especially important in the arts where it can be difficult to distinguish what has value. Consider 500 channels of television and you get the idea.

In spite of the morass, there are some very exciting and valuable ways teachers at Holland Hall use technology to forward their students' creative processes. With MacBooks and desktops available to kids throughout the day, teachers must keep up with new programs and equipment in order to provide mentoring.

Ginny LeDoux, Middle School vocal music teacher works with one computer program in particular. "I have a snowball mic(rophone). With that and GarageBand I'm able to make audio clips for the kids and play them back right away so they can critique their own work."

Students see the value in critiquing their own work. "You can go back and see the mistakes you made and correct them," says 11-year-old Dakota Christian.

Dave McPherson, Middle School technology teacher, is a working artist in technology media. He believes laptops and digital cameras should be tools. "You don't want the art to be about the technology. You want the technology to serve the creative process."

Jan Butler, Middle School visual arts teacher, taps students for their creativity using a technique called claymation. "For eighth graders, the premier art project is claymation movies where we combine digital still pictures in iMovie HD to create animated movies similar to Wallace and Gromit." Drama students in eighth grade use video technology to create short films from storyboard to film festival. In the winter and spring, claymation videos and eighth grade movies from Sally Adams' drama classes are combined and presented in a world premiere event in the Branch Theater of the Walter Arts Center.

In Debra Morgan's strings classes, students are able to improve their playing with an audio tutorial set up in a practice room. "Basically, the kids have certain passages they have to do. They tape it and I critique it. It allows me to stay in the classroom and it allows them to go in and test. It really serves a double purpose."

When there are so many learning objectives, efficient use of classroom time is as important as the creative process. In addition to extending the teacher's reach and opening new creative pathways, technology also gives students access to a broader vista. Eleven-year-old Michael Oyekan sums it up, "It gives you an electronic eye on the world and you see things that you've never seen before."