TriBeam Products boost access and achievement for students

For Ken Sajdak's twelfth grade economics classes at Waukesha South High School in Waukesha, Wisconsin, the use of handhelds creates a "lab" setting that allows students to complete assignments using Web research and professional software applications. According to Sajdak, "schools are chasing their tails trying to reach an elusive ratio of students with computers." Handhelds, enabled with Web access and file beaming products made by TriBeam, are attractive alternative.

Handhelds, enabled with Web access and file beaming products made by TriBeam, offer computer access for all students at a much lower cost than traditional computer labs.

A variety of classroom uses

Sajdak uses the TriBeam BeamCast device to quickly transmit assignments and information to every student's handheld. For his economics classes specifically, he beams flashcards for *Learn!?* as well as eBooks and spreadsheets. In future, Sajdak plans to send HTML documents including URLs to enable easier student access to selected Web sites. Students upload files distributed by the TriBeam access point and complete their assignments using word processing or spreadsheet applications. Completed projects can be printed or beamed back to the teacher - something that Sajdak says "does wonders" for his eyes, saving him from reading and grading numerous hand-written papers. Using professional office software also teaches students real-world skills and enables them to perform calculations and analyses that would be much more difficult on paper.

The BeamCast device, made by TriBeam, Inc.

Students in Sajdak's required economics class also use TriBeam's Web access functionality to research stocks, and gather information to prepare for classroom debates on such topics as, "*Is Microsoft a monopoly*?" Giving students a gateway to the internet to complete tasks and prepare for future class discussions helps ensure their success on any given assignment.

Students are better prepared

In addition to simplifying instruction and enabling students to obtain Web-based information, Sajdak believes that the use of handheld computer labs in the classroom improves students' performance. "A study I did of the handheld classes versus traditional instruction showed a significant improvement in achievement. I saw improvement in thinking skills and what-if [analyses] because the technology was with them." And some feel that students are more engaged when such 21st century technology is part of the learning process. Ultimately, teaching students to produce professional looking assignments and conduct extensive internet research provides better preparation for college coursework.

The future of the handheld classroom

While the cost to provide each student access to a computer in the classroom may be prohibitively high for most school districts, equipping classrooms with a TriBeam wireless access point and having each student provide their own handheld device is a much more cost-effective solution. Sajdak estimates that by their senior year nearly 80% of high school students have purchased a graphing calculator for use in math and science classes. He feels that if schools would encourage the purchase of a handheld instead of the graphing calculator, and invest in the TriBeam Web Access Points, students would gain a lot more functionality for the nearly the same investment. According to Sajdak, "Handhelds are computers and with the addition of a few accessories - like TriBeam - your classroom can be technologically connected and enabled for a fraction of the cost of a computer lab."

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