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VIDEO: Port Arthur school adds technology to enhance learning

By [CHRISTINE RAPPLEYE](#), The Enterprise

PORT ARTHUR - The "eggpert" in Tracey Gabriel's fourth-grade class has students divided into teams each with a different colored egg-shaped buzzer.

As Gabriel asks a question, from how to spell a word to defining science terms, the students squeeze their half of the egg to buzz. The quickest gets a chance to answer the question.

"What is an obtuse angle," she asked to a chorus of buzzes. "It's smaller than a straight angle and bigger than an acute angle," came the answer from a member of the Hot Pinks Ladies, named because their egg half was bright pink.

The egg buzzers is just one of myriad new technological doohickeys used in classrooms at the Wilson/Washington Technology Theme School at the former Franklin campus, which opened in August.



Guiseppe Barranco/The Enterprise

In a Jeopardy style learning game, Tracey Gabriel asks her class questions at the Wilson/Washington Technology Theme School in Port Arthur. The first student to buzz in on the egg-shaped computer was allowed to answer the question.

"We're dealing with kids who are multitaskers with video games," Principal Jerry Gloston said. "We're just catching up."

MULTIMEDIA

[Technology at Wilson/Washington Technology Theme School](#)

[Port Arthur ISD](#)

The Wilson/Washington Technology Theme School opened is combination of the middle school students who would have gone to Wilson Middle School, which is now closed, and 120 elementary students who applied and were picked by lottery from the Franklin and Washington elementary schools. The rest of the elementary schools are at Washington.

It took a committee of more than a dozen, including electricians to the principal, to coordinate installing labs and computers during the summer, Gloston said.

Technology is used for learning games as well as immediate feedback on, assessments,

tests and quizzes, she said.

As a result, grades are improving, and student participation is growing, Gloston said.

As most of the students in Gabriel's classroom are competing to answer science and spelling questions, others are on computers with headphones reviewing other material.

Next door, in Caneace Reid's fifth-grade class, the "COW" doesn't refer to an animal. It's a purple computer-projector that shows mini-lessons on a screen.

Last week, they pulled up the animated lesson on the water cycle on the Curriculum on Wheels, or COW, and in a few minutes later they were reviewing it.

In Reuben Sampson's third-grade class, students review two-digit subtraction with a rocket game on the computers. With the immediate feedback, it's easier to see which student needs help and what to immediately clarify and reinforce, he said.

Earlier last week, when there was dense fog in the morning, Tralyn Scott, 9, wanted to know was caused it.

"It's water that's about to evaporate," Scott said with a proud smile. He looked it up online in Sampson's class.

Even the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes have computers and other technology in their classrooms.

In Julie McBride's pre-kindergarten class, one of the learning stations is using the computers with science math or reading games. No keyboards are at those as the students just use mouse clicks.

"They love it," McBride said. "They can do it on their own."

"Clifford's Thanksgiving Visit" was the story time book in Gloria Smith's kindergarten class.

After reading about the big red dog's adventure the old-fashioned way, the 10 students took a little group quiz that flashed up on a television connected to a computer.

This time they got five out of five questions right and punctuated it with a round of applause.

Each of the middle school students has a grant-funded laptop that gets mixed in with books, paper and pencil as they research.

The seventh-graders social studies students work on their laptops to research the colonies to make brochures and ads and look up delegates to the constitutional convention so they can have a mock convention in coming weeks.

In Natonya Holmes' class, Gustavo Ceja, 13, had to find out about Pierce Butler from South Carolina, and Jalesa Thomas, 13, had to find out about William Houston of New Jersey. Both found answers online.

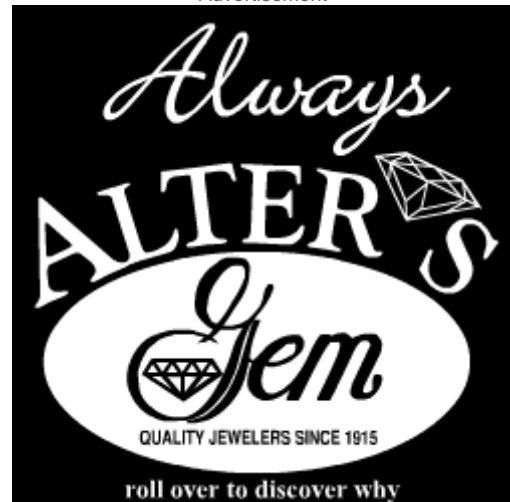
"They go find more information than I did," said social studies teacher Kelley Hammons. "It opens a whole new world and a chance to (virtually) visit that world."

Once the district's new bond-funded high school is finished, the middle school students and their laptops will move into the Memorial Ninth Grade Center, formerly Lincoln High School. A new Washington Elementary was included in the recently passed \$189.5 million bond issue.

Once built, all of the students from Franklin and Washington will attend there.

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