

Getting the Word Out

By Patricia L. Fry

From interactive computer kiosks to online museum exhibits, students are creating a buzz about their schools. Administrators can take that kind of PR to the bank.



Showcasing Their School

Visitors to the Indian Creek Science and Technology Magnet School in Indianapolis, Indiana are greeted not only by principal Dennis Brooks, but by an interactive computer kiosk, as well. Contents of this technological PR machine come directly from students at the school, who use the kiosk to showcase their projects. According to technology coach Mark Gibson, the kiosk is “a window into the daily creations of students and demonstrates what our science and technology magnet program is all about.”

Upon touching the iMac computer screen, a parent or visitor might see an example of the first-graders' digital video enactment of alphabet letters; what second-graders are learning about the solar system; or Chemistry Craze, a MediaWorks' (Interactive Solutions, Inc.) project created by fifth-graders.

“The children are using computers all day long,” says Gibson. “Their topics will take them from research and study to a written report and finally to demonstrations and presentations, some of which are showcased in the kiosk at the front of the school.”

According to Gibson, “The children are learning real-world computer skills here at Indian Creek. The kids are making movies and animated presentations. They're putting these things into a logical, presentable format; and the kiosk is a way of archiving and preserving their projects at a point of delivery.” Kiosk presentation also opens a window into the future for younger students, like first-graders, who can see what fourth- and fifth-grade students are working on.

The principal's laptop also holds the contents of the kiosk, which he uses in presentations to parents of prospective students. “We're essentially competing for people to come to our program, and so we try to market what we do here that's different than other schools in our township.” Gibson explains. “Unlike the more linear PowerPoint presentations,” he says, “with the MediaWorks software Principal Brooks can instantly jump around to any point in the presentation to showcase different aspects of our school.”

Recently, Gibson and several of his students created an MTV-style digital video for the kiosk, featuring the assistant superintendent of educational support services, Dr. Duane Hodgin, in a rap routine performed in conjunction with student-produced character education projects. Gibson says, “When the assistant superintendent saw it, he liked it a lot. He takes the presentation to share with other schools.”

The iMac kiosk offers a twofold benefit at Indian Creek School: as a tool to demonstrate the school's innovative approaches to technology instruction and as a motivating force for student achievement. What child wouldn't work harder to have his or her project chosen for display on the kiosk? At this school, students really get to show what they know.