

PTO Meeting minutes 4-27-04

Technology Presentation: Kalpana Guttman & Jane Franz 5th grade, Lynette Lawton 4th grade and Jen Toran 3rd grade.

This year Burr School is the recipient of two SILC grants. Last year we received one SILC grant, to total three. This is the largest number of grants awarded to any elementary school in Newton. The primary goal of these grants is to infuse technology into classrooms across the city. Rather than "computer labs" where technology is taught as a separate subject, the idea is to integrate technology into the curriculum. The grants allow for 6 laptops (one is a teacher lap top) and LCD projector, Digital video camera, laser printer, a wireless airport and an airport card, a scanner, headphones and software. In most cases, when the SILC computers are used in conjunction with the mobile cart purchased by the PTO, student to laptop ratio is 2:1.

The teachers presented examples of "all classroom" lessons and discussions that have been dramatically improved by this technology. In each case the teachers have found that they have spent far less time on classroom management and have focused more time in engaging the students in "higher-level" thinking and active class discussions. Student presentation skills are greatly enhanced as they have the opportunity to present projects with visuals displayed by the LCD. There is also capability to burn CDs and back up information.

F.A.Q.s:

Is there support for teachers in using this technology?

Yes. There are monthly SILC meetings where information is shared as well as many workshops that are available to introduce new skills and software instruction.

Do you monitor what internet sites the children are accessing?

Yes. The teachers prepare web quests for the students. Web quests are pre-selected lists of websites that the teachers have carefully researched and students are instructed to use these sites for their projects. Internet access is structured, monitored and controlled.

Are the students that are not in the SILC classrooms at a disadvantage?

No. One of the objectives is to share the knowledge between classrooms. The SILC classes are meant to be "seed" classes. SILC Teachers create lessons and share them with the other classes. PTO funded technology (the carts and the LCD projector) enable the other classes to utilize the "all class presentations".

Do you see a difference in children who have access to computers and the internet at home to those that do not?

No. Rarely will the students use the same skills at school as they would at home. Primarily children that have exposure to computers at home use them for playing games or using the internet. Most of the skills that are introduced in the classroom are new skills so the children are starting at the same level.

How often are you using the technology provided by the PTO funds?

Use of the mobile cart has increased significantly as teachers are integrating technology into their classes more frequently.

PTO Business

Kelly McDade presented the minutes of 3-31-04. They were read by the group, there was a motion to accept them, it was seconded and voted in. The next PTO meeting will take place May 11, 2004, and the final meeting of the year will take place June 9, 2004.