

Project iLETTs

Professional development project promotes teacher use of technology

Potter Junior High School—Fallbrook Union Elementary School District

The advent of new technology presents many and varied challenges for teachers. In a world where being “educated” requires the acquisition of continuously changing skills related to finding, organizing, and categorizing information that is growing at a rapid rate, educators must stay abreast of new developments in order to prepare students to be successful knowledge users.

To stay current, the teachers themselves must be familiar and comfortable with constantly evolving technology. Unfortunately, many do not have the resources to keep up with the newest innovations.

To meet this challenge, Potter Junior High School in the Fallbrook Union School District customized a professional development program to empower teachers with the requisite skills to enable their students to be successful knowledge seekers and users in the 21st century.

The program was so successful it far surpassed its initial goals and played a major role in the realization of a 20-point gain in the school’s Academic Performance Index (API) score the first year after its inception.

The Improving Learning through Educational Technology for Staff and Students (iLETSS) program was designed to provide teachers with access to technology tools, resources, training, and coaching to support the integration of technology in language arts classrooms. Promoting field-based and self-directed learning as essential elements of professional development, the iLETSS project sponsored a summer institute which provided teachers with laptops and guided them through the process of completing an indi-

vidual professional growth technology action plan, of selecting individualized professional development growth activities, teaching strategies, a timeline, and a method of accountability for achieving project goals.

Funded by the No Child Left Behind legislation Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) Title II, Part D, grant, students, too, received technology upgrades. The project called for a 5:1 ratio of students-to-computers in all language arts classrooms.

University, site, and student mentors provided support and training throughout implementation using a researched-based

model for professional development called ILAST (Improving Learning for All Students through Technology).

Based on design principles extracted from the Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow Project (ACOT, 1998), the ILAST model incorporated the following principles:

- Application of learning to authentic tasks
- Application of new processes to curriculum and standards in a content area
- Appropriate instructional strategies and use of emerging technologies modeled by instructors
- Team collaboration and reflection
- Integration of mentors throughout the learning process

Continuous improvement throughout the project was a critical goal. Evaluation and reporting provided data to guide further



FAST FACTS

NAME OF DISTRICT

Fallbrook Union Elementary School District

ABOUT FUESD

- Located 50 miles north-east of San Diego
- Nine schools—seven in the Fallbrook area and two on the military base of Camp Pendleton
- Includes seven elementary schools, one middle school and a home school program
- Serves over 5800 students in K-8th grade
- Employs over 300 teachers and support staff

CURRICULAR FOCUS AREA

English/Language Arts

GRADE LEVEL

7th Grade

PRIMARY SOURCE OF FUNDING

EETT Competitive Grant

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Potter Jr. High Whole School (State Star Program) Standardized Testing and Reporting

The California Department of Education (CDE), Education Technology Office administers the EETT Competitive and Formula Grant Program under Title II, Part D, of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Funds from this grant are used to assist districts to utilize technology to enhance teaching and promote learning. Funds are distributed equally to the EETT Competitive and Formula Programs. The CDE distributed \$95 million dollars in 2005-07 to local educational agencies (LEAs) and will distribute \$33 million dollars in 2007-2008.

EETT Competitive Grants (EETT-C) provide funding for grades four through eight to assist eligible local educational agencies in using technology to enhance teaching and learning. It is a competitive grant process for which LEAs must complete an application which is scored and ranked against other competitors. The top scoring applications are funded.

EETT Formula Grants (EETT-F) provide funding for grades kindergarten through twelve to assist eligible local educational agencies in using technology to enhance teaching and learning. Funding amounts are based on the LEA's proportion of their eligible Title I, Part A amount applied against the Title II, Part D total available amount of money to be distributed.

development. An evaluation team completed periodic classroom observations using an instrument that measured the implementation of teacher and student technology standards in the classroom based on the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS).

The majority of the teachers at Potter were not prior technology users and needed to acquire new technology skills as well as new content to help their students score well on state tests. A three-day in-service on learning strategies and information literacy was designed to immerse teachers in the same process that they would be using with their students.

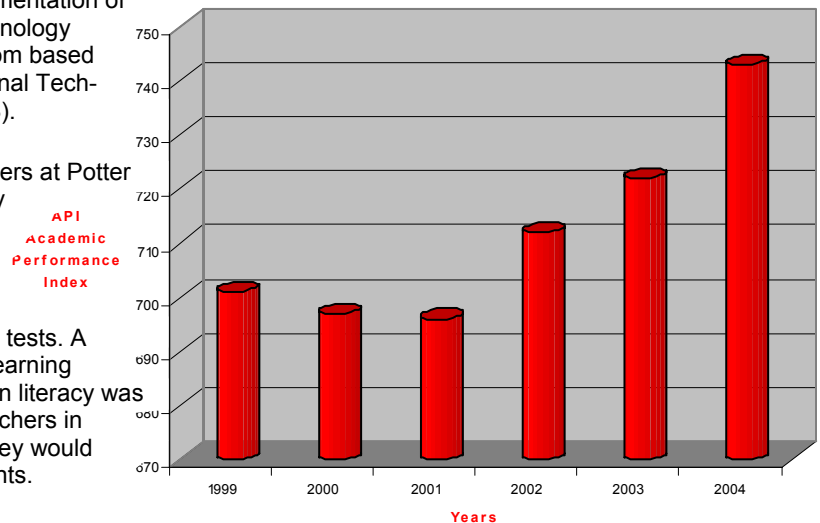
Students in the iLETSS project increased their use of technology to meet state academic content standards in English/Language Arts through access to equipment, software, Internet and resources. Project goals for students targeted the acquisition of information literacy skills to:

- Evaluate websites for validity and accuracy
- Appropriately credit quoted and paraphrased information
- Create documents using word processors, publishing programs, simple databases and spreadsheets to manage information
- Create reports as part of classroom research

The EETT grant was directly responsible for a two-year reconfiguration of language arts class time. The implementation of the grant enabled the expansion of class time for language arts and reading to two full periods for 7th grade students in the first year. The second year of the funding permitted the same increase in language arts instructional time for the 8th grade. The school also used the grant to fund an Intervention Coordinator and Educational Technology Integration Specialist position.

An indirect benefit of the EETT grant was increased support for technology as an academic intervention for non-proficient students as the

project provided evidence of the efficacy of technology in this application.



Significant gains in test scores were evidenced at Potter Jr. High the year after the implementation of the iLETSS program. Academic Performance Index (API) test scores at the school increased 20 points the first year after implementation of the iLETSS project. In addition, its Similar School ranking increased three points, propelling Potter to 2nd place in a pool of 100 schools identified with like populations.

A review of the API scores for special populations and demographics of Potter Junior High also revealed additional success in the implementation of the iLETSS program. Scores increased for all students across classifications after the implementation of the program, narrowing gaps in achievement between the classifications and with improvements exceeding previous years.

It must be noted, however, that the gains documented cannot be exclusively attributed to the project as multiple strategies were implemented simultaneously. The success can be ascribed to a variety of changes applied during the grant period but, according to Bill Banning, principal during the term of the iLETSS project, the elements leading to the improvement could not have been put into practice without the technology and opportunities provided by the EETT project.

For additional information, visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/et/ft/eett.asp>