



White Paper
Field Study
Intel Education

Washington Parish Schools:

One-to-One Computing for Special Needs Kids in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina

Special-needs students in one of Louisiana's poorest parishes are receiving a 21st century education, and "regular kids" are clamoring to join their classes. It's the result of local leadership, fearless teachers, a focus on academic achievement, and interactive classrooms built around technologies from Intel, Detel Computer Solutions, SMART Technologies, and others. In an innovative arrangement inspired by private-sector efforts to assist in Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts, professional development training is provided by Detel, a Premier Intel® Channel Partner and member of the Hurricane Education Leadership Program (HELP) Team.

Introduction

“Kids come into class and ask; ‘Are we going to use the laptops today?’ They walk out and say; ‘This is the best day I’ve ever had.’”

Rhonda Van Winkle
Teacher
Franklinton Junior High

If you’re inclined to see the glass as half empty, you might feel sorry for special-needs children in Louisiana’s Washington Parish, one of the poorest regions in a state with some of the highest levels of poverty, illiteracy, and dropouts in the United States. And that was before Hurricane Katrina hit the parish in August 2005 with punishing winds that flattened homes, damaged every one of its schools, cut off communications, and left some parish locations still in the dark three months later.

But that half-empty perspective overlooks the parish’s assets: the character of its people; the strong community ties; the timber, watermelons, and dairy products the parish supplies to the nation; and the annual free fair that’s the largest in the country. It ignores Louisiana’s commitment to increase educational achievement, according to Quality Counts 2006, Louisiana now leads all states in accountability and efforts to improve teacher quality.¹ It fails to note the rising achievement levels within the parish.

It also overlooks Dr. Pamela Williford, Director of Special Education for the Washington Parish School System, and the dedicated teachers and principals who are committed to seeing the parish’s children succeed. Dr. Williford was determined to give her parish’s special-needs kids the benefits of a technology-rich educational environment, and she wasn’t about to let the worst natural disaster in US history stand in her way. In October 2006, the parish opened six interactive classrooms,

About the Washington Parish School System²

- 670-square-mile rural parish located in the “big toe” of Louisiana’s boot like shape and encompassing all areas of the parish that lie outside the city of Bogalusa
- 5,203 students
- 13 schools
- 83.6% of students receive free or reduced lunch
- 16.3% are special education students



1. “Editorial Projects in Education, Quality Counts at 10: Louisiana,” January 2006, <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2006/17shr.lah25.pdf>.

2. Data drawn from the Louisiana State Education Progress Report, 2004–2005, http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/pair/StateReport0405/00-Report_Cover.pdf.

each using laptop computers, electronic whiteboards, classroom response systems, and other technologies to provide a more interactive educational experience for special-needs students.

The response was immediate. Children are excited and engaged, and adults anticipate student achievement rising as a result.

In this paper, Dr. Williford and others from the Washington Parish School System share their early experiences using interactive technologies to enrich learning for special-needs children. This paper follows the framework of *Blueprint Solutions for K-12 One-to-One Computing Initiatives*,³ which identifies six components of a mobile, one-to-one computing implementation: leadership, funding, infrastructure, professional development, curriculum, and results.



Blueprint Solutions for K-12 One-to-One Computing Initiatives provides a practical framework for using mobile, one-to-one computing to improve learning outcomes.

3. See <http://www.convergemag.com/blueprint/blueprint.php>.

Leadership

“Special education students need individual attention. They need repetition. They need help focusing. Technology helps with that. Technology will never take the place of a good teacher, but it’s a wonderful tool to help you catch students’ interest and keep it.”

Darrell Fairburn
Superintendent
Washington Parish Schools

The Washington Parish Special Education Department is responsible for ensuring that students aged 3 to 21 who are disabled, homeless, have limited proficiency in English, or are gifted or talented, are offered an education appropriate to their needs. That includes the use of technology—not only because computer skills are important for today’s graduates, but also because technology can bring the world into the classroom, increase student engagement, and enhance learning across the curriculum.

Technology is already an important part of teaching and learning in Washington Parish. “Technology is part of the real world,” says Washington Parish Schools Superintendent Darrell Fairburn. “It’s almost impossible to find a job that’s not related to technology. For us as a rural district, technology provides so many opportunities. It opens up a new world.”

Parish schools have one or more computer labs apiece and at least a handful of PCs in each classroom. The parish’s education technology plan requires that students complete a technology-related project in each nine-week session.

But after reviewing research that showed the benefits of a technology-enabled classroom,⁴ Dr. Williford wanted to go further. “The research is clear that a technology-rich classroom has the potential to increase children’s achievement and raise test scores,” says the longtime teacher and a former adjunct professor at Northwestern State University in Louisiana. “The more we looked into it, the more we wanted our special-needs children to have the benefits of a technology-rich classroom.”

In discussing the program with district administrators, all agreed that technology is the means to an end. “We are very focused in this state and this parish on improving student achievement, so curriculum comes first—it drives what we are doing,” Dr. Williford says. “You’re putting the cart before horse if you focus on the technology. Technology is a tool. It supports us in teaching the curriculum and improving academic achievement.”



4. For an example, see John Schacter’s “The Impact of Education Technology on Student Achievement,” <http://www.mff.org/pubs/ME161.pdf>.

Funding

**“We have not had freebies.
We’ve used our IDEA money
to make this happen.”**

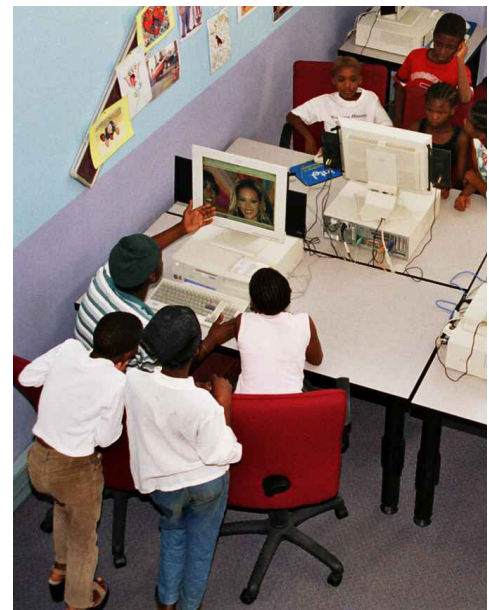
**Pamela Williford, Ed.D.
Director of Special Education
Washington Parish Schools**

Since Washington Parish Schools recognizes technology as essential to learning, the parish used existing resources to establish its new technology-rich classrooms. “You don’t want people thinking of technology as something extra, because then you start thinking you can cut it when things get tight,” says Dr. Williford. “I can tell you, if you tried to take these technologies away, the teachers would fight you. The laptops and whiteboards and other tools are as essential as the chalkboard or ditto sheet used to be. They’re like pencils—you use them everywhere and you use them throughout the curriculum.”

Parish schools already had a combination of wired and wireless networks, that were built using local and state money as well as federal e-rate funds—the Universal Service Fund Schools and Libraries program, which subsidizes the cost of acquiring, installing, and operating Internet connectivity. Computer labs are funded largely through Title I funds, and some software has been supported through Louisiana Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), which are targeted to low-income, low-achieving districts.

The cost of purchasing equipment for the technology-rich classrooms came out of district funds obtained through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which aims at improving academic results for children with special needs. Equipment costs—around \$36,000 per classroom—cover a mobile computer lab with 16 Intel® Core™ Duo technology-based laptop computers, plus interactive whiteboards and presentation systems, an interactive classroom response system, digital and video cameras, a digital microscope, printer, and three years of on-site service.

The parish also benefited from the Hurricane Education Leadership Program (HELP) Team, a consortium of more than 30 vendors, associations, and nonprofit organizations working together to help rebuild or renew 21st-century learning environments in schools impacted by the Gulf Coast hurricanes. Detel Computer Solutions, a HELP Team member and the parish’s primary technology contractor, donated professional training estimated to be valued at \$10,000, as well as a discounted service agreement. SMART Technologies, another HELP Team member, provided a discount on its products. Intel spearheaded the development of the consortium, and Terry Smithson, an education strategist at Intel, manages the HELP Team.



Infrastructure

“I don’t want junk that’s going to break. I want the best technology for my kids and my teachers.”

**Pauline Bankston
Principal
Franklinton Junior High**

In planning for the technology-rich special-needs classrooms, the parish faced an immediate challenge: The articles Dr. Williford reviewed didn’t spell out what constituted an optimum technology environment for junior high and high school students. Washington Parish Schools turned to its key platform vendor, Baton Rouge-based Detel Computer Solutions.

“You want your vendors to be part of the family and not adversaries. Detel is definitely a member of our vendor family,” says Sheryl Crain. As technology facilitator at Franklinton Junior High (FJH), Crain is responsible for overseeing FJH’s equipment and helping teachers utilize it for effective learning.

Detel is renowned for its service and support, as well as for providing integrated solutions built around reliable Intel® technologies. As a member of the HELP Team, Detel had decided to contribute technology training and curriculum support to school districts affected by Katrina. The company hired Dr. Teri Lawrence, a former classroom teacher and trainer at the Louisiana Resource Center for Educators, to deliver training and consultation.

“We’re a relatively small company, and service is where we excel,” says Keith Fontenot, Detel’s chief executive officer. “Training seemed like a great place for us to make a contribution. Since federal funds for technology training are being cut back, there’s a real opportunity for vendors to step in and make a difference.”

Dr. Lawrence worked with Washington Parish Schools to plan the interactive classroom.

“Interaction spurs motivation, which spurs learning outcomes,” says Dr. Lawrence. “We chose proven, reliable, flexible technologies that teachers can use in a variety of ways to engage students and enhance learning outcomes.”

The parish’s technology planners knew from the start that laptop computers would be an important part of the technology-rich special-needs classrooms. “We’re not buying many desktop PCs any more,” says Dr. Williford. “They’re obsolete except for in the office. The days of marching kids to a separate room are dwindling—it makes much more sense to bring the technology to the kids.”

Parish schools already had wired and wireless networks in place, including a T1 line to the Internet. Several parish schools had mobile PC labs, and Detel recommended that they install one for each interactive special needs class. Each lab comes with 16 Intel Core Duo technology-based laptops—approximately one for each student. Laptops are stored on a rolling cart that includes an access point and a five-port switch for attaching printers and other devices.

“The mobile lab is convenient for teachers to use,” explains Fontenot. “They can leave it in the classroom, but also have the flexibility to move the lab around the school. If we ever get another hurricane, it will be a whole lot easier to get the equipment out.”

Reliable, Innovative Technologies

Detel recommends Intel technologies for their performance, reliability, great battery life and innovation. "You don't want to cut corners when school kids are involved," Fontenot says. "We used to provide some non-Intel products, but they weren't reliable. The Intel technologies are rock solid, and the Verified by Intel program is a big win for us and our customers." Verified by Intel helps companies like Detel develop and support custom-built laptop computers, and ultimately gives schools, businesses, and organizations a broader choice of more reliable, affordable laptops that meet their precise needs and can be serviced faster.

Laptops are just a start, though. "We specified interactive whiteboards, a document cameras, interactive response pads, digital cameras, and camcorders so teachers can engage students more effectively and present lessons using a variety of media," says Dr. Lawrence. Six interactive special-needs classrooms are located at five parish schools: two at Franklinton Junior High, and one each at Mount Herman Junior High, Angie High School, Franklinton High School, and Varnado High School.

Safeguarding Kids and Systems

Laptops are tagged with an inventory number by Washington Parish Schools' central IT office before they arrive at the schools. Teachers talk with students about the appropriate use of the laptops and the Internet, and behavioral consequences are spelled out in the school system's technology code of conduct, which students and parents sign before children use the computers.

Laptops have Smart Filter* software installed to minimize the chance of students seeing or using inappropriate materials. Social networking sites such as MySpace* are blocked to student access. The district uses Symantec* antivirus software and further minimizes the risk of virus attacks by prohibiting students from bringing disks from home.

Classroom Technologies at Washington Parish Schools

- Detel notebooks with Intel® Core™ Duo mobile technology, 60-GB hard drive, and 14-inch monitor running Microsoft Windows XP Professional *
- Bretford mobile storage cart for laptops with a Proxim Orinoco* a/b/g wireless AP attached
- SMART Board* interactive whiteboard
- SMART AirLiner* wireless slates
- Elmo* P10 visual presenter
- Epson Powerlite* multimedia projector
- eInstruction* Classroom Performance System
- HP LaserJet* printer
- Sony Handycam* camcorder
- Kodak EasyShare* digital camera
- Scalar ProScope* USB digital microscope
- Projection screen

Professional Development

“The biggest problem with technology is the lack of appropriate training in relation to the curriculum.”

Pamela Williford, Ed.D.
Director of Special Education
Washington Parish Schools



Acquiring technology is, of course, just a start. The larger challenge is ensuring that teachers can use it to boost student achievement. Even for teachers who feel confident in a structured computer lab environment, having one-to-one computing and other educational technologies in the classroom presents new opportunities and challenges.

“It’s a whole different mind-set when you’re taking your class to the lab,” says Dr. Lawrence. “You have the opportunity to use technology all through the day and in all areas of the curriculum. You don’t want teachers getting out the laptops and thinking, ‘It’s technology time; I’m teaching technology.’ You want, ‘It’s English time; let’s pull those laptops out and get to writing.’”

Challenges in Washington Parish were heightened because some rooms had to be retrofitted, and some buildings are on the Historical Register. By the time students and teachers received the technologies, it was early October. The school year was in full swing, and there was little time for teachers to experiment with the new systems and explore ways to integrate them with the curriculum. Yet within weeks of being received, all the equipment was out of the box and being used successfully, and teachers as well as students were excited by what they were experiencing.

Washington Parish Schools fostered this success through a mix of in-service training and in-the-trenches coaching from school principals and technology facilitators. Dr. Lawrence provided both immediate and ongoing in-service training sessions, and because of her qualifications, many of the sessions qualify for continuing education credit. She’s also on hand every week or two to hold in-service sessions or consult with teachers on ways to incorporate technology into near-term lesson plans.

“I’ll ask, ‘What are you teaching next week? What do you want the kids to learn?’” Dr. Lawrence says. “Then we’ll work together to select the technology that fits the lesson, and find software and curriculum resources. It’s

always focused on learning outcomes.” She draws on free resources wherever possible, including Microsoft Teacher Tools.*

School-Level Leadership: Fostering Success at Franklinton Junior High

School-level leadership has been critical to creating an environment that helps teachers overcome fear and become creative and successful at using technology to impact student achievement. Franklinton Junior High provides a great example.

Five years ago, standardized test scores at Franklinton were declining, and the school was on corrective action. FJH was, in the words of its current principal, a “dinosaur” in terms of the teachers’ use of technology. “We had some technologies, but teachers didn’t turn them on,” recalls Pauline Bankston, who became the school’s principal after teaching technology at Franklinton High. “No one did e-mail, so we put the daily memo in their in-box.”

Today, Franklinton Junior High is honored as a “school of recognized growth” by the state’s department of education for students’ steady improvements on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) tests. Bankston was named one of Louisiana’s leading administrators this year by the Louisiana Association of Computer Using Educators (LACUE) for her success in promoting the integration of technology into the educational process. In 2004, LACUE named FJH’s Crain the state’s middle and junior high school teacher of the year.

FJH has nearly one PC for every two of its 569 students, and two traditional computer labs, one laptop-based mobile lab, two interactive special-needs classrooms, and as many in-room PCs and other technologies as Bankston and Crain can squeeze out of the budget. Crain pores over grant announcements, and in addition to her submissions, many teachers write their own grant proposals. “Kids can pretty much count on using a computer in one or more of their classrooms every day,” says Crain.

Bankston turned the school around through a strong focus on curriculum, technology, and professional development. “Curriculum is my top interest. When I can’t sleep at night, I lie awake and think about what we can do next to improve the curriculum,” Bankston says. “Technology is going to be part of any job students go into, and it’s has been proven to bring up test scores. But you’ve got to bring the teachers along, and that means professional development.”

Bankston leads by example and collaboration, and her warmth and enthusiasm are powerful influences. “I’m a people person, and my technology facilitator is a people person, and that helps a lot,” she says. “I go into classrooms and teach, I go into labs and help with lessons—and I love it.” Bankston watches teachers’ lessons plans carefully to ensure they conform to state guidelines. She observes each teacher at least twice a year, and one of those lessons must make meaningful use of technology. When she sees teachers using technology in innovative and effective ways, Bankston arranges for them to demonstrate it to the full staff.



Patience and Pushing

Bankston has used a variety of methods to raise technology literacy among her staff. She incorporates PowerPoint* presentations into her staff meetings, and uses technology as a motivator. A local business donates a laptop to the student who earns the highest levels of achievement on the statewide tests each year, as well as to the teacher whose students earn the most money at the school’s annual fund-raiser. The school’s student of the week is highlighted on the parish school system’s Web site. Crain, a former classroom science teacher who is earning her doctorate in educational leadership from Southeastern Louisiana University, checks in with teachers every week to discuss how they can incorporate technology into the coming week’s lessons.

Bankston says principals need to go slow, but she’ll also admit she pushes her teachers to their limits. “You can’t force technology down anyone’s throat,” she says. “When someone is reluctant, I’ll say, ‘Let me show you, or let Sheryl show you.’ But once they get turned on, it’s unbelievable. Then, Lord help me if the network goes down!”

FJH teachers store lesson plans at OnCourseSystems.com, record grade and attendance online, and are beginning to use Blackboard Academic Suite* for creating, storing, and managing content. Teachers, administrators, and many parents use e-mail and the school system’s Web site to communicate. Bankston points to a 73-year-old teacher as one of her most enthusiastic technology users. And, says Crain, “I’m going to have to go to another school if I want to work with teachers who aren’t tech savvy.”

Superintendent Fairburn lauds their efforts—and their results. “When you have regular education students who want to get into special education, you know they’re doing something special,” he says. “They really have done an excellent job.”

Curriculum

"We're not focusing on skill-and-drill, isolated learning. You might use some of that to reinforce what you just taught, but we're much more into using technology to foster critical thinking and collaborative projects. That's what enhances learning and prepares kids to be 21st century citizens and workers."

Teri Lawrence, Ph.D.
Curriculum Specialist
Detel Computer Solutions

Louisiana's special-needs children are expected to master the same curriculum and pass the same standardized tests as other children. Laptops and other interactive technologies give special education teachers a variety of ways to help their students master the curriculum, according to the teachers chosen to pioneer the technology-enriched classrooms at Franklinton Junior High this year. Rhonda Van Winkle teaches reading, writing, and English to sixth and seventh graders, and Donna Ponthieux teaches social studies to sixth and seventh graders and reading and English to eighth graders. Both say they were thrilled to get the new technologies. "I felt like I had won the lottery," remembers Van Winkle. "I'm still excited."

Ponthieux and Van Winkle say their middle school students may read at as low as the second-grade level and typically have limited reading comprehension. Many have trouble concentrating, which makes written expression especially difficult. "They're good kids and they try hard, but they have these extra challenges," says Ponthieux. "The classroom technologies are wonderful for them. Anything that uses more of their senses and helps them stay focused is huge."

Neither Ponthieux nor Van Winkle claim to be technology experts, but inspired by Bankston's enthusiasm, they have felt empowered to take risks with the new technologies. "Basically, we just jumped in and ran with it, because we knew it would help our kids," says Van Winkle.

Finding New Ways to Teach

Both teachers put in hours of their own time exploring resources and figuring out how to best incorporate the new systems into their lesson plans. "When I'm home, I'm constantly looking on the Web for anything I can bring into our lessons," Van Winkle says. "I'm putting in extra time because I'm hooked." Both are quick to share their discoveries—an advantage of having two early adopters in the same school. When Van Winkle found a Web site that made it easy to create a blog, it wasn't long before she and Ponthieux were writing blog

entries and having students read them and write responses. Another favorite is a Web site where kids who need extra help with reading can play games that enhance comprehension.

Rather than focusing on straightforward drills, Ponthieux and Van Winkle use the laptops to have students conduct research, write, and create materials that document what they've learned. "Written expression is hard for these kids, and they write slowly," says Van Winkle. "When they get on the laptop, they get more excited and are willing to put out more effort. They express themselves better."

To teach a lesson, the teachers often create a PowerPoint presentation that covers key facts and ideas, and then use the interactive whiteboard to have students take turns interacting with the materials, or the laptop to write about the lesson. "When we studied point of view, I had students assume the persona of a class mascot and write about the things that have happened in our room," Ponthieux says. "When we studied idioms, we used the SMART Board to look at different categories of idioms, and visited a Web site where kids could respond to a quiz on idioms."

Reinforcing the Learning

Following a lesson, Van Winkle and Ponthieux often use the SMART Board* or Laptops for interactive review. "You can make it so much more meaningful than just open the book and let's review," says Van Winkle. Once the review is complete, the teachers may use the interactive classroom response system to see how well students mastered the material. This helps them immediately identify which students need further assistance, and reteach any parts of the lesson that a significant number of students failed to grasp.

Van Winkle recently presented a lesson on homonyms that included a PowerPoint slide that featured a fairy tale that contained numerous homonyms. "We looked at it together on the SMART Board, and then did a Bingo game with homonyms," she says. "We used the response system—the clickers—at the end to test ourselves, and the kids loved it." The digital cameras are being used to take photos of each child that kids can incorporate into their reports, and the camcorders will be used for upcoming units on propaganda, in which students will write and produce their own advertisements.

Adaptive Technologies

Parish teachers have considerable flexibility in adapting the technologies to their students' needs. "I have one student who is sight impaired, and the SMART Board and PowerPoint presentations are very beneficial to her," says Van Winkle. "We set the fonts bigger on the laptop for her, and I can easily enlarge the fonts of a test as I print it out for her."

"Washington Parish has a lot of possibilities for adaptive technologies," says Dr. Lawrence. "The Microsoft suite includes speech-to-text capability, which teachers can use to accommodate children who cannot learn to type. They can adjust the speaker volume for hearing-impaired students. The SMART Board can be hung lower for students in wheelchairs. At Washington Parish, we're at the beginning of exploring what all can be done."



Results

“A lot of special needs kids struggle with keyboarding. They need a lot of help to remember how to find, save, or print their files. But they still light up when the laptops come out.”

**Donna Ponthieux
Teacher
Franklinton Junior High**

While it’s too early to have quantitative data on the impact the teachers are producing with their interactive technologies, one thing is clear: Children are engaged and excited, and that generally translates to increased achievement. “They’re excited when they come into class,” says Ponthieux. “They can’t wait to get started. They’ll get so involved in a lesson they’ll be jumping up and down, wanting a turn to come up and interact with the SMART Board.”

Those associated with the program are particularly happy with the improvements they’re seeing in children’s writing. “The laptops seem to help them organize their thoughts, maintain concentration, and master the details of writing,” says Ponthieux. “They want to write, which they definitely did not want to do before.”

Even with years of experience working with teachers and technology, Dr. Lawrence is impressed. “I’ve never seen classrooms as engaged as these kids are,” she says. “We have to believe we’re going to see increased learning. It’s also possible that over time, we’ll see lower dropout rates.” Dr. Williford adds, “Some children may raise their achievement enough to move into more mainstream classes.”

Washington Parish teachers say the in-room technologies foster achievement by giving them more time to teach, as well as by providing the chance to use technology whenever it is appropriate, not just when they can schedule time in the computer lab. “Our labs are always booked up,” says Van Winkle. “Because I have all the technologies in my classroom, we can go right to work. We don’t waste time going back and forth to the lab and getting settled. I give them the laptops, tell them what they’re doing, and they get to work—and it’s so much fun!”

Ponthieux and Van Winkle say the technologies are helping raise their students’ self-esteem—in part because the children are achieving more, but also because their peers are envious. “Kids come to visit my room and they want to stay,” reports Van Winkle. “That’s definitely a boost to my kids’ self-esteem.”

Dr. Williford believes the program has also boosted teachers’ self-esteem. “My teachers are admired because of what they’ve received compared to other districts and other classrooms,” she says. “Everyone is interested in what they are doing and wanting to do more themselves.”

Parents are enthusiastic about the program. “They’re thrilled that their children are getting these opportunities,” says Dr. Williford. “They see it as a very positive thing for their children. Usually special education is the stepchild, but we have kids begging to get into our special education classrooms, and our special-needs students are so excited they can hardly stand it. Teachers are excited too. I have never seen anything that jazzed us up so much.”

Looking Ahead

“Research has proven time and time again that the use of technology motivates students and improves academic achievement. There are times when paper and pencil are appropriate, but there’s a tremendous amount of teaching you can do with technology.”

Sheryl Crain
Technology Facilitator
Franklinton Junior High

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Washington Parish had significant damage but little publicity. “We were a black hole—all our communications were knocked out,” Dr. Williford recalls. Recovery became a do-it-yourself community project. “People looked out for themselves and each other,” she says. “They got on their tractors, got out their chain saws, and went out and helped each other. People’s spirit helped us come back.”

The school system added nearly 200 children who were displaced from other parishes and states. Most came because they had family or friends in the parish, and Dr. Williford says they assimilated quickly into their new communities and schools.

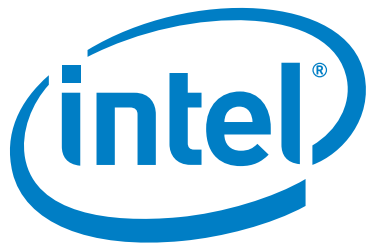
That same spirit of initiative, determination, and cooperation plays a big role in the parish’s technology initiative for special-needs children. “This program is the result of grassroots leadership to meet a grassroots need,” Dr. Williford says. “We are all committed to raising our children’s achievement, and when we saw that technology could help us do that, everyone went to work figuring out how to make that happen.”

There’s also a pervasive sense of excitement at Washington Parish Schools—and a commitment to continue learning, growing, and changing. “The more you can do with technology and the more you stay abreast of what’s new, the better it is for teaching and for student achievement,” Pauline Bankston says. “We take every opportunity to attend state and national technology conferences—to learn more and share what we’re learning.”

School system personnel and Detel staff alike are eager to analyze the results of the program’s first year, with the goal of creating a replicable model of an effective, electronically enabled special education classroom. They took “before” surveys of students, parents, and teachers, and plan to repeat the surveys at the end of the year to assess change.

“We’ve got a good control group of special-needs children who have not had the deep exposure to technology,” says Dr. Lawrence. “We’re particularly interested in which technologies the teachers use most frequently and how standardized test scores are affected.”

With the six interactive classrooms in place, the teachers trained this year will become mentors for other teachers as the program expands. Dr. Williford plans to add another six such classrooms next year, continuing until all special-needs students are covered. Meanwhile, she keeps making retirement plans—and postponing them. “I’m too excited about this program,” she says. “I’ve got to see it through.”



For more information about the effective use of technology to support learning, visit:

- www.intel.com/go/education
- www.k12blueprint.com

To learn more about the Hurricane Education Leadership Program, visit: www.educationhelpteam.org

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