

Preparing Greenwood Students for Successful Futures: Innovative Applications of Technology

Recognizing the rapid integration of technology into all aspects of daily life, and embracing the responsibility we have to prepare our students for a successful future, Greenwood School has made a significant capital and intellectual investment in technology. With the evolved speed and cultural expectations of digesting, processing, and sharing information both socially and in professional life, Assistive Technologies (AT) provide increasingly valuable tools to all of us. Speech-to-Text and Text-to-Speech software are no longer only at the cutting edge of instruction for the student who faces learning challenges; these assistive tools are routinely utilized by high level professionals who seek increased speed and fluency of information processing and production. With the right instruction and opportunities, assistive tools can offer invaluable bypass strategies that unlock potential for students who face specific challenges with decoding, organizing, processing, and producing information.

Information Technology (IT) and Assistive Technology (AT) resources are integral components of the Greenwood's academic program. Through experience and research, we have achieved an effective and important balance of direct, explicit and multi-sensory remedial instruction in language, literacy, and mathematics with IT and AT tools to support instruction, information processing, and work production. The key is finding the best for individual students and for different instructional interventions.

At Greenwood School every student and every teacher is provided with a laptop, and assistive technologies and educational software packages are loaded on each laptop or accessible through the school's server. This provides each student and each teacher with powerful AT and skills-based instructional software at their fingertips.

Specific technologies that support instruction that are integrated through the curriculum, foster the development of reading and written production, and allow students to access information and produce work at their intellectual capacity include *Kurzweil* for text reading and study skills, *Inspiration* for graphic mapping and outlining, and *Nuance Natural Speaking Professional* (Dragon) for speech-to-text capability.

Educational, skills-based practice software packages include *Lexia* for decoding, *Fasttmath* for mastery of math facts, and *Word Workout* for multi-syllable analysis and decoding. Content rich applications including *Inspire Data* help students analyze data and produce tables, charts, and graphs, while *Symphony Math* fosters number conceptualization.

Many classrooms at Greenwood are equipped with SmartBoard technology, which allows teachers and students to use the white board as an interactive touch-screen—this has proven to be a powerful and versatile tool that offers dynamic visual support for learning. SmartBoards help create an interactive classroom that allows large-scale projection and live-interface with documents, as well as large-scale display of video clips and web pages. Students and teachers are also able to utilize the SmartBoard to import documents to, for example, share student writing and/or edit documents as a class.

Greenwood School employs an Educational Technologist who works closely with the Academic Dean to conduct staff and student trainings. While most direct instruction in AT application for students occurs in the classroom, all graduates receive specific trainings to build upon their foundational technology skills to ensure they are best prepared for the transition to higher education.

Greenwood is continually seeking innovative ways to provide teachers and students with the most effective educational tools available, and in doing so, we are taking huge strides forward in maximizing student potential and preparing our students for successful futures.