

Field Observation Report
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<http://www.caldwellhigh.org/>

Submitted by Betsy Price
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This is the second observation in the school this school year. Three biology teachers in the school are using the program. One is an experienced teacher who has been with the system for three years, and the other is a first year teacher. The teachers decided that they would teach the curriculum together at the same pace and same content. There is some allowance for the teachers to use teaching styles they are comfortable with. Every week or so the teachers meet to go over the curriculum for the next couple weeks. This system has been working well with the teachers. The first year teacher has been having the usual problems first year teachers have with discipline. Classroom management is easier with this system.

A couple years ago, Tami wrote a grant to purchase computers. She received the grant, however a fight ensued with the Systems people about how they would be installed and maintained. As a result of this battle, Tami would not participate with the district technology committee who gave money to individual departments and teachers. Since that time, Tami and the other science



teachers have used grant money to get the needed technology into the classroom. Although the battle is losing institutional memory, and they are working closer with the systems people.



The science classrooms were remodeled to have a lab area and a traditional classroom area. The classroom area has a television for Channel One, a LCD projector, a teacher's computer, and pull down screen. There is an Elmo projector in place of the traditional overhead. In the back, the lab benches each have a computer for the students to use. As previously mentioned, the computers in the lab area were not part of the

remodeling, but added after the remodeling was finished. The original design had a long desk that could fit 5 computers in a line. Tami and the other teacher had the remodelers come back to put the computers in the back lab area on the lab benches. This resulted in some adjustments because the benches were not designed for the computers. It also brings us back to wires. They may always be an internal problem to teachers.



It was at the end of the school year and all the seniors, the golf team and another team were off for the day. When I arrived, the students were doing an exercise simulating the production of sugar in cells. I was late and missed the production. (Late planes got me in at 2 a.m.) The students voted and did it again so I could see. They voted also to bring in the other teacher's class to watch them perform.

The students remembered me from the first input on how the textbook is developed. They certainly enjoyed this activity. After it was over, Tami reviewed the process with them. When they didn't get the process correctly, she would say, "What was Sue doing?" "What was Anthony doing?" They could better understand what a student was doing. After the activity, Tami had the students read the Chapter and answer the questions in the back.



In between classes, Tami showed me a letter she and all the other teachers and administrators received from the State Board of Education offices. Beginning in 2002 -03 school year, the students will be required to take a state achievement test. Schools that do not achieve a certain test score will be subjected to discipline from the state. The letter was not at all friendly. This letter was a result of the state almost losing federal funding. <http://portland.bizjournals.com/portland/stories/2002/01/21/daily20.html>

The testing is a serious issue because Caldwell has mostly educationally challenged children. Caldwell District is a puzzle piece that has been carved out to segregate the lower socioeconomic areas between Boise and Oregon from the more affluent farmland and related industries. If you look at the state map attached in the report, you can see the unusual configuration. Caldwell Districts includes the inner city area of Caldwell. The two areas that jet out at the bottom are the migrant camps.

Caldwell schools have much lower achievement scores than the surrounding districts. The chart below shows the difference in scores between Caldwell and Boise Schools. Boise is only 27 miles away, but culturally 500 miles. Boise is the state capital, the largest city, and has a major university, Boise State.

	Percentile of Average SS	
Caldwell Schools	Caldwell Schools	Boise Schools
Reading	45.5	63
Reading Total	43.5	64
Usage & Expression	48.5	67
Language Total	44	61
Math Problems & Data Inter.	49	61
Math Total (with Math Comp)	55	63.5
Core Total (with Math Comp)	46.5	63

Caldwell schools have a large dropout rate and minority population. Nampa is one of the districts next to Caldwell. According to the Nampa District and Caldwell District Report Information Sheets compiled by the state, Nampa has 24% Hispanic students and Caldwell has 47%. The drop-out rate for Caldwell is 14% at the 11th grade and Nampa is 5%. Not included on the chart is the fact that Caldwell has a large population of students who come and go into the district because migrant work is very transitory.

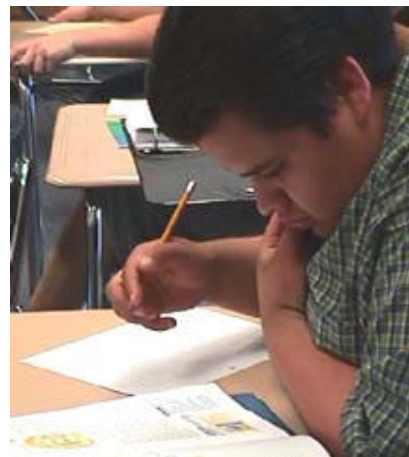
Although, the school serves the lower socioeconomic areas, the quality of school facilities and technology is very good. The school is neat, organized and very upbeat. They have a strong principal who is Hispanic and has an excellent rapport with the community. However, because they have a large transient population, the school may always have low test scores and a high drop-out rate. This is a serious concern to Tami and her peers. The Principal interview indicated that she also is concerned.

During this break, Tami and I reviewed Chapter 9. The same problems that occurred in the other schools were happening here. Some of the computers worked and some did not. The computers that were working were the ones that used Netscape.

Q. How have your relations been with the systems people?

A. They have improved greatly. This year they hired a new person who was a classroom teacher. It is much easier to work with her since she understands us better. I've had them come in to help with problems more. They still don't want to support us like we would like though.

Many of the students in the next group were English as a second language students. In the fall, they were having difficulty speaking English. The school provided a tutor who came to class with the students. Tami requested that the tutor not attend since the students were getting the tutor to do the work. I was pleased to discover that the students were all speaking English quite well.



One of the students was from the migrant camp and told me a bit about their schooling and the support they received there. There is an educational center or school that is open when they get back to the camp. Teachers and/or tutors are there to help them with their homework. They also have computers that the students can use. He said they were not on the Internet.

Nationwide, there is a loosely organized network for migrant workers via computers. In some states like Kentucky, the students can leave school to go to another camp and still be able to continue on with their lessons via the Internet. If Tami were a pilot tester for Year 3, this would be an interesting population to explore.



The next day the students worked on the computers. The students were able to choose the group they wanted to work with. Tami has to log on the computers using her school account. The school doesn't give students individual accounts. This means that she has to get the computers up before the students get into class. This gives the web site plenty of time to open. Because she can only log on one computer at a time, there is not the jam that occurs when students log on individually. The computers are fast and the students do not have any trouble

navigating quickly.

The students did the activities on Chapter 36. They stand at the lab tables or sit on top of them. The student who has control of the mouse is the person who reads the site to the others. This made me think that perhaps some of the Hispanic students are now relying on their peers to help with the English. I heard them speaking Spanish occasionally, but it was more for gossip than explaining the lessons.

To make sure that the students are on task and answering the self-help questions correctly, Tami has the students call her when they have typed the answer. She checks it and then the students can check their answers. This system works very well. Tami is right there if they get the wrong answer and she is able to explain why another answer is correct.



Interview with Peer Teacher



The other science teachers were using Exploring Life at the same time. Today they were a bit off schedule, Tami had adjusted her schedule to accommodate my visit.

Q. How do you like Exploring Life?

A. I like it. I especially like using computers. About 85% of my lectures are now done with PowerPoint. I just started using it this year. This works out well, because we work together and we can share PowerPoint lectures. I even bought a camera and I use pictures of the students in the lectures.



The computers we have are the old ones from Tami's room. They are not as fast as the ones that she has now. It takes a long time for some of the activities to come up. (I didn't check, but he may have plug-in problems also.)

Interview with systems people

The systems people serve all the Caldwell District Schools and are centrally located in a district building. It is in a complex of service buildings that look like an old army barracks. To get to the systems administrators' offices, you go down a long hall. On the right are large rooms with storage space for new computers that need to be imaged and networked. The hall was lined from floor almost to the ceiling with graveyard computers waiting to be fixed, parted out, or discarded.



Tami set up my appointment with the systems person who is an ex-math teacher. Tami has built a good relationship with this woman over the last 6 months.

Q. How many systems people does the district employ?

A. We have nine buildings that we service and we have five staff persons. There are 5,800 students in the district. One person is the system administrator and does all the grant writing and budgets. We have two technicians who do most of the hardware maintenance. We have an elementary administrator for the lower level schools. We do have some teachers who are paid extra to work on computers and the web page. One of them is a vocational education teacher. His office is in the next building.



Q. Do you fix the computers?

A. Sometimes. Only half of my job is tech support and the other half is training teachers. I was a math teacher and decided to go into technology. I worked for another district. When this job came open I applied for it. I believe that the tech departments should employ teachers. They can relate better to the needs of the teachers. The computer phobic teachers do better with me. I work with them

mostly.

Q. Do you know what Tami is doing in her classroom?

A. No, I have never seen the site. (We got on a computer and I showed her the site.)

Q. What is the priority of the work orders?

A. We do them by building. When the tech person goes into a building they do all the computers there then they go on to another building. The priority is mostly by building rather than individual computer. This saves us time and money because they (techs) do not have to drive around all day from school to school. We do have phone support. When teachers call, we try and walk them through the problem on the phone. The office manager answers the phone and she can do some of it. If not, it gets passed on to whoever is in the office.



Q. Is there a computer plan on how you purchase new equipment?

A. No, we seem to always be catching up. There is not enough time to look ahead.

Q. Where do you get the money to purchase new computers?



A. Grants are where we get most of the money. The systems administrator does all of those. Next year the state is requiring that we have the students do all the testing on-line. We are going to have to get state money in order to get all the computers we will need.

Q. Exploring Life is just the first textbook like this, but there will be more. What would happen if the history teachers needed to have computers?

A. I don't know. One history teacher has 5 computers in his classroom. He already has enough I guess. I don't think the district has the money to get computers to all the classrooms.

At this time the systems administrator joined us. He has been with the department from the beginning and is one of the people that were in the feud between Tami and the IT department. The difference between his mannerisms and demeanor is very much more techie and sharp. It is understandable that he and Tami went head-to-head.

General conversation

Systems administrator: A lot of money goes towards funding computers. However that is just a small part of the money. For every user of Microsoft and other software we have to pay an additional fee. If a teacher brings in new computers, we have to make sure we have licenses for the software. Then we have to network them and put them online. This takes money and time.



We put most of the computers in the elementary school. Almost all the teachers have more than one computer in their classroom. They are used mostly to get the reading scores up.

Q. Have you looked into the wireless computers?

A. We have, but it is not cost effective for our newer buildings. We have looked at it for some of our older buildings. Some of them have two floors and do not have an elevator. It makes moving equipment around very difficult. We also can't wire the

old buildings as easily. When we do renovations now, we have to bring the buildings up to code and that includes the cost of wiring all the rooms.

The administrators want us to put in lots of computers, however they didn't understand the cost. They are just beginning to realize that now because they have to purchase licenses for all the software. We want them to begin thinking about resource adoption, not just textbook adoption.

We had one teacher who got a grant to get an LCD projector. He didn't consult us and when he purchased the projector, he spent extra money to get it installed. He knew we would not be able to do it right away. He came in to use the projector and there it was, up in the ceiling ready to be plugged in. However the projector company doesn't do the electrical wiring. He had all that money invested and couldn't use the projector until we could get electricians out there to run a new line. That took weeks. It is a major project to run wires over kids' heads and it was a major remodel for the room.

Q. Are you a member of any professional organizations?

A. Yes, we have a statewide organization and all the systems people meet once a year. When I first started we were a small organization. Now we are much larger. There are also some regional and national organizations we belong to. I keep up with most of them. We have a SASSY user group that is just local people.

Q. What grants do you apply for?

A. We apply for Title 5 funds because we have a large population of minority students. That is mostly the Mexicans. They come here to work the farms. When I first began applying for the funds, we received a great deal of money. It is divided among all the schools that send in the grant and request money. It is some kind of formula for how many students you have that are on free lunch. We are almost 50% free lunch. The trick is that you have to complete the forms perfectly. They are very long and lengthy. If you make a mistake they send it back and that can knock you out of the running for the year. I learned that very quickly and we complete the forms correctly. Now there are many more schools that have figured out how to get money. Our share is very low now. But we did get a head start. One of the reasons we have so much equipment is that we were in early.

Twenty five percent of that money must be used for professional development and 50% of it must be used for hardware. The rest can be software or what every else you want. We did most of our wiring with that money at the beginning.

Oh, we also get grants from Albertsons. Their main office is here in Idaho.

Q. What other costs do you occur?

A. Servers. Servers are delicate and don't last long. We try and get servers to last two years. Anytime after that, they go down easily. Our software is Novell and every two years it has to have an upgrade. Right now Group Wise (network system) and 1 Zenworks is free. But that will change.

People are expensive. Five years ago we had 100 PCs and two persons on staff. Now we have hundreds of computers to maintain. Most of the maintenance and re-imaging work is done in the summer. We just maintain the computers during the year. We really can't do too many major repairs. We put the orders in for the next year computers in the spring. They get delivered in July and we can get them ready. (In the next room, a hundred or so new computers that were waiting for summer. They will be in the district for 3 months or more before a student or teacher ever uses them. A teacher would have to be well organized to have his/her room wired, computers installed, and then networked. There are no rewards for spontaneity here).

Too many individual teachers getting computers makes it difficult for us to support. Most of the teachers don't know about the licenses. Even the Internet. We need licenses for every computer. They may not be able to get on the Internet if they didn't get the money for the additional licenses. You buy the licenses by a range. You could buy for 50 – 100 users. If a teacher gets 10 new computers and you go over 100 users, you have to go to the next level. Many schools would not be able to pay for a new level in the middle of the budget year.

Q. The students in this school are able to log on easier than other schools. Do you see more students using the Internet slowing down the system?

A. No, we have very large servers. Once the website is cached in the servers, it will go even faster. I don't see any problems, but we have really good equipment here. (I believe him. This was the most professional set-up I have seen.)

While I was leaving a salesman came in to show them classroom management software. They sent someone to get his card. That person didn't even bother to deliver the card to them.

Interview with the Principal.

The principal is Hispanic and speaks Spanish fluently. Spanish is her second language because she speaks English flawlessly. She is very serious.

Q. Have you seen the program that Tami and the other teachers are using?

A. No, I have not seen the CD. The teachers decided what they want to do. If they think it is worth it, I'll invest in it.

Q. What would happen if all the textbooks were web-based. Could the school accommodate that?

Q. (From the principal) What are you here for? Tami and I already talked about purchasing the books. My concern is that is it worth it? Next year all the students will be tested by the state and we have to pass these tests. (She showed me the principal's version of the letter Tami received.) I have \$10,000 in my budget for the books. I'll go with whatever the teachers decide. You are going to have to give me some proof that this will work. Electronic books take more time. These students have to pass these tests. I could lose my job.

Betsy: I'm not the salesperson. I am here just to get feedback from the teachers while they use the program. I pass on the information to the authors.

Principal: (She is positive this is a sales trick.) As soon as I talk to Tami, we will tell you what we are going to do. We have the money budgeted.

At this time I was really tempted on closing the sale and getting my commission. I managed to end the conversation favorably, but she still thinks I am the salesperson.