

Newsletter
May 2009 Volume 7,
Issue 7

ENGAGE

"While listening to the genetics presentations, a sixth grade parent leaned over and told me how impressed he is with the students' use of technology at Menlo. I share this with you because the compliment is for all of us. Thank you for making technology a part of your everyday instruction..."
- Nancy Fortman

Problem-Based Learning

Cooperative Learning

Student Engagement

"Simply put, the greater the student's involvement or engagement in academic work or in the academic experience... the greater his or her level of knowledge acquisition and general cognitive development..."
- Pascarella and Terenzini's

MAY MEANS PRESENTATION

May means the MS is in presentation mode. Sixth graders have recently completed their study of the SF Baylands, Near East and Egypt Newscasts and Genetics presentations. Seventh graders created Drug presentations and Dude projects. Eighth graders' study of the Decades culminated with 90-minute presentations. This is just to highlight a few of the projects that have made use of technology in both their process and presentation.

One way to engage students in the classroom is to relate the material to real world situations or events. This has been a driving force behind the "Dude" project where students are asked to research and offer solutions to real world issues. During their study of genetic disorders, sixth graders research a topic and also present their findings to their classmates. Students are given the opportunity to choose topics for which they have an interest or passion. Amazing having a 12 year old teach you about horse slaughter farms and how she is working to pass legislation H.R. 503. To hear a student's voice quiver during her presentation not because she was nervous speaking, but because she was so emotionally connected to what she was saying, screams engagement to me. Do you know what the genetic disorder Xeroderma Pigmentosum is? There are two sixth grade experts on the subject. This year on June 12th, World Day Against Child Labor, 72 more young adults will be aware of the impact child labor plays in our world.

Another way to engage students is to give them choice and freedom of expression. Clearly during the "Decades" presentations, eighth graders have the freedom to make numerous decisions on how they will create the atmosphere, wear the clothes, sing the songs and dance the dance of their decade period. They select movie clips, create newscasts of historical events, find vocabulary to describe their decade. They find images, toys, food and drink of the past to help assemble their presentation. With choice comes engagement which reflects ownership, responsibility and pride.

Are all of the presentations stellar? Are all of our students excellent public speakers? Have they all mastered research skills and have no errors on their "works cited"? Do they all dig deep into their topics and get to the heart and soul of the content? The answer to all of those questions is absolutely not, but what matters more is that they are on their way to further developing those skills. They are provided opportunities to grow and growth comes from both success and failure.

So how did technology assist students in these endeavors? Over half of the seventh grade students brought in their own laptops for use during the "Dude" projects. It was much more efficient for them to have all their material in one location. They researched, took notes, gathered images and cited sources every day as they worked on their research.

Technology was not the reason that students could accomplish the requirements of these projects, but I can not imagine their accomplishing as much within the time period without the use of technology.

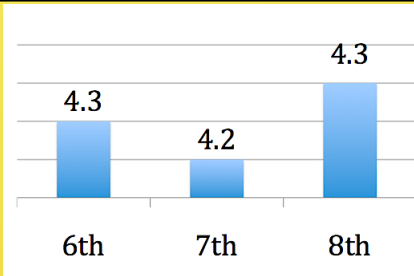
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The efficiency of its use allowed students to dig deeper and to focus on content, solutions, presentation and action. Seventh graders created and posted websites on their topic to educate others. Word was used to make attractive and informative pamphlets for distribution. Surveys were created in Moodle and Monkey Survey to collect data. Charting in Excel allowed for clear visual displays of information.

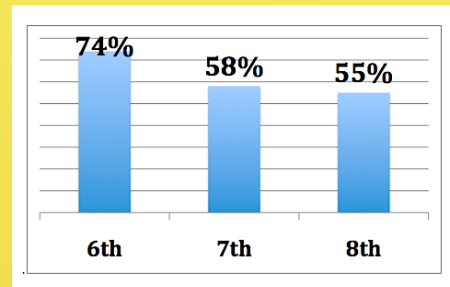
While listening to the genetics presentations, a sixth grade parent leaned over and told me how impressed he is with the students' use of technology at Menlo. I share this with you because the compliment is for all of us. Thank you for making technology a part of your everyday instruction and for allowing your students to use twenty-first century learning tools to further their education. Each year we continue to raise the bar and for that I am grateful.

STUDENTS SURVEY RESPONSES

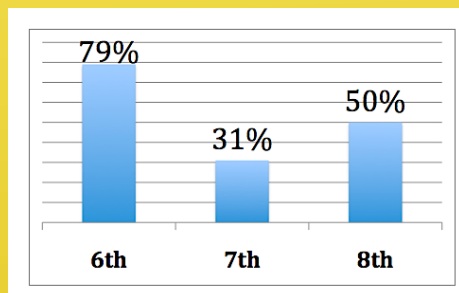
On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being low and 5 being high, how do you rate your ability to use the technology at Menlo?



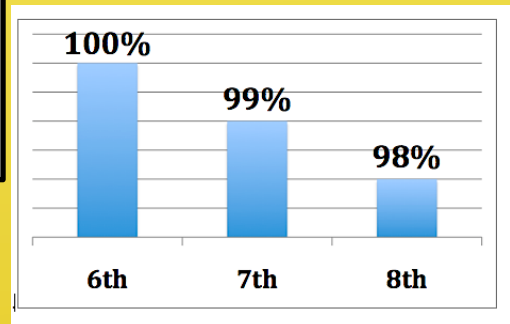
How many students often use their teachers' Moodle courses.



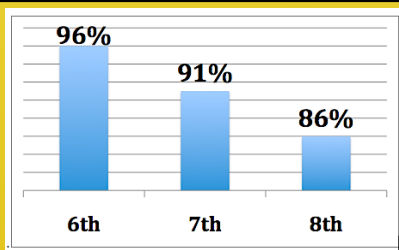
How many check Menlo e-mail daily?



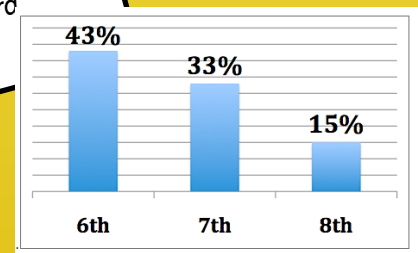
Are you, overall, pleased with the technology that Menlo provides for you in the Middle school?



Would you like all of your teachers to use Moodle?



How many of your teachers make good use of the Smartboard technology?



ATTACHED ARE QUOTES FROM THE STUDENT SURVEYS. EVERY COMMENT WAS WORTHY OF READING, BUT I DID NOT WANT TO OVERWHELM YOU WITH OVER 200 RESPONSES. SO I HAVE CAPTURED THE GIST OF THEIR RESPONSES. I HOPE THAT YOU WILL FIND TIME TO READ THEM BEFORE NEXT FALL.