

Collaborative Study Questions and Responses
Rita Gipp – Tech Ed Teacher, Marshall Middle School

1. How do you currently use test data to improve your classroom instruction?

I use test data results to look for common areas of weakness with my students, and I make adaptations accordingly. Sometimes this means altering the test questions, other times it means altering the instruction or complementing the material with reinforcements. One example of this is the guiding worksheet I've developed for each module. Test results have improved nearly 20% on the average since the complementary material has been implemented.

2. What instructional strategies do you currently employ to address the varied abilities, interests, and experiences of your students (e.g. students with disabilities, at-risk, and your most capable students?)

The instructional delivery in the Technology classroom accommodates the needs of types of learners; auditory, visual, and tactile. Students can have lessons read to them with the aide of computer synthesized "text to speech" capabilities. All modules incorporate videos and hands-on projects into the instruction. There are challenges available at all of the stations to extend the learner beyond the planned instruction, while there are also adaptations for the less capable learner.

3. How do state and national standards impact your daily instruction?

I use standardized testing results of our 8th graders to look for areas of weakness and try to emphasize those areas in my instruction. For instance, student have shown weakness in problem-solving on the standardized tests, therefore I try to invoke critical thinking by asking probing questions of the students while they run their experiments or plan their designs.

4. What specific current short-term plans do you have for your own professional development?

I am in a graduate program at UW-Platteville and expect to complete my Master's degree next semester. I will continue taking classes in order to satisfy the state requirements for regular certification in Tech. Ed, as I am teaching under a one-year renewal certificate currently. Beyond classroom instruction, I continually satisfy my own interest in the area of computer technology, which has become a personal hobby as well as personal business venture. I have a company called MasterMind Computer Technologies (www.mastermindcomputertech.com) that I've just started.

5. What are some activities you currently do that encourage parent and community involvement?

Students study career opportunities with each area of technology they study. Gender and racial equity are consciously included in the examples provided, and in the videos chosen, exemplifying the application of technology in working society among all groups. We have our own class website for parents to access to get current

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information on what is going on in our classroom. There is also frequent and continual parent contact where deemed necessary for the success of a struggling student.

6. How are you promoting a sense of community and providing students with a positive learning environment?

A positive learning environment is heavily stressed at the beginning of each school year as I talk to the students about how we all have strengths and weaknesses, using myself as an example, stating my strengths in Mathematics while I “stink” at Social Studies. In the process, I encourage the children to ask questions without fear of ridicule, as we have zero tolerance for such behavior in this learning environment where “no one knows everything.” If students forget that they are not to “put down” others, they engage in a “reminder” activity of complimenting each member of the class in written form on a class roster provided by the instructor.

7. How are you promoting a sense of community and providing staff with a positive teaching environment?

I participate in Site Council, where I’m able to bring concerns of our department to the group for discussion. In this way, we are given a voice and empowerment in solving any problems we feel the need to hurdle.

8. Writing and literacy are district-wide areas of emphasis. What things are you doing to increase writing and literacy opportunities for students?

Students make Journal entries with each technology module, identifying environmental impacts of that technology on society. They are also asked to make Journal entries identifying observations made with many of the hands-on projects and experiments.

9. How are you using technology with your students in the classroom and in your instruction?

My classroom is managed through a computerized management system. Students are taught via computerized delivery of instruction. They study and work with technology continually throughout the year.

10. How do you promote an acceptance and appreciation of diversity and sensitivity towards others in your classes, and in your school?

I’m quite deliberate about the exercise of the Golden Rule in my classroom, as mentioned earlier. In addition, the lessons in the module display diversity in the role modeling of people in technological careers.