**9/20/2010 – Email response to a parent at Holmes who asked questions about the media/technology at the PTA Association meeting:**

Thanks for your questions.  It is always a good idea to review where we are with Media/Tech at Holmes, and where we can make improvements.

**Infrastructure:**  All classrooms have at least 6 computers.  Some rooms have significantly more, such as Ms. Muller’s 2nd Grade with 16 computers.  Every classroom has a document camera connected to a digital projector.  Most of the rooms have a computer connected to the projector as well.  Six classrooms use the IT-21 audio-visual system including netbooks for every student.  Two more classrooms will soon get this system.  The campus is fully networked, both wired and wireless.  Every computer is connected to the network for internet access and central file storage on district servers and our own PTA purchased servers.  The computer lab has 38 computers and every class has weekly scheduled lab time.

**Teacher Involvement:** Teachers constantly use their digital projection equipment.  They have said that they couldn’t imagine teaching without that resource.  I know that to be true because anytime it’s not working I hear about it right away.  A few years ago some of the teachers were somewhat reluctant to use technology in the classroom and preferred to just bring their students to the Computer Lab where others were often available to help.  Not the case anymore.  The “reluctant” teachers are becoming proficient in integrating internet and other electronic content in the classroom, and have pretty much caught up with teachers who embraced technology from the beginning.

**Current Tech Use:**  Kindergarten and 1st grade students concentrate on Basic Skills such as keyboarding using Type to Learn, reading programs such as Letterbugs, and math programs like Numbers Recovered.  We like these programs because they track student progress.  Second grade students prepare Powerpoint presentations complete with animation and sound.  Third grade and up continue to build on this with Web research, word processing, and spreadsheet work.  Math programs appropriate to grade level are also available.  The PTA purchased BrainPop, an internet based content delivery system which is tied to CA standards, and Kidspiration where students can develop vocabulary, comprehension, and reasoning skills.  Students also use internet sites like [starfall.com](http://starfall.com) and [raz-kids.com](http://raz-kids.com) to improve reading skills.  We haven’t had students work on Web Page design although that is an interesting idea.  One effort this year is to have classroom pages as part of the Holmes site so maybe we should try to involve the students.  Are the students technologically prepared for middle and high school?  Good question – I’m not the one to answer that based on any data but I’d bet the average 5th or 6th grader at Holmes measures up well to middle school expectations.

**Other:** The Tech Committee polls teachers every year for their “wish list”.  The committee recommends some or all of that to the PTA for possible funding.  We have a pretty good track record of filling teacher wishes.  Therefore I was surprised at your statement “that a kindergarten teacher used her own money to pay for an online reading program……..”  I’ll try to find out more about this.  If the program is applicable to all the kindergarten classrooms, and not just a particular special interest of the teacher, then we should look into possible PTA support.

I hope I’ve answered your questions.  This year we would like to continue our current effort as well as adding more audio-visual capability to the school.  Maybe we can get to some students doing video productions yet!  There is so much more that could be done but I know that the time teachers can devote to tech curriculum is limited.  Too bad every school doesn’t have a full-time tech teacher.

Thanks,

Ray Swanson