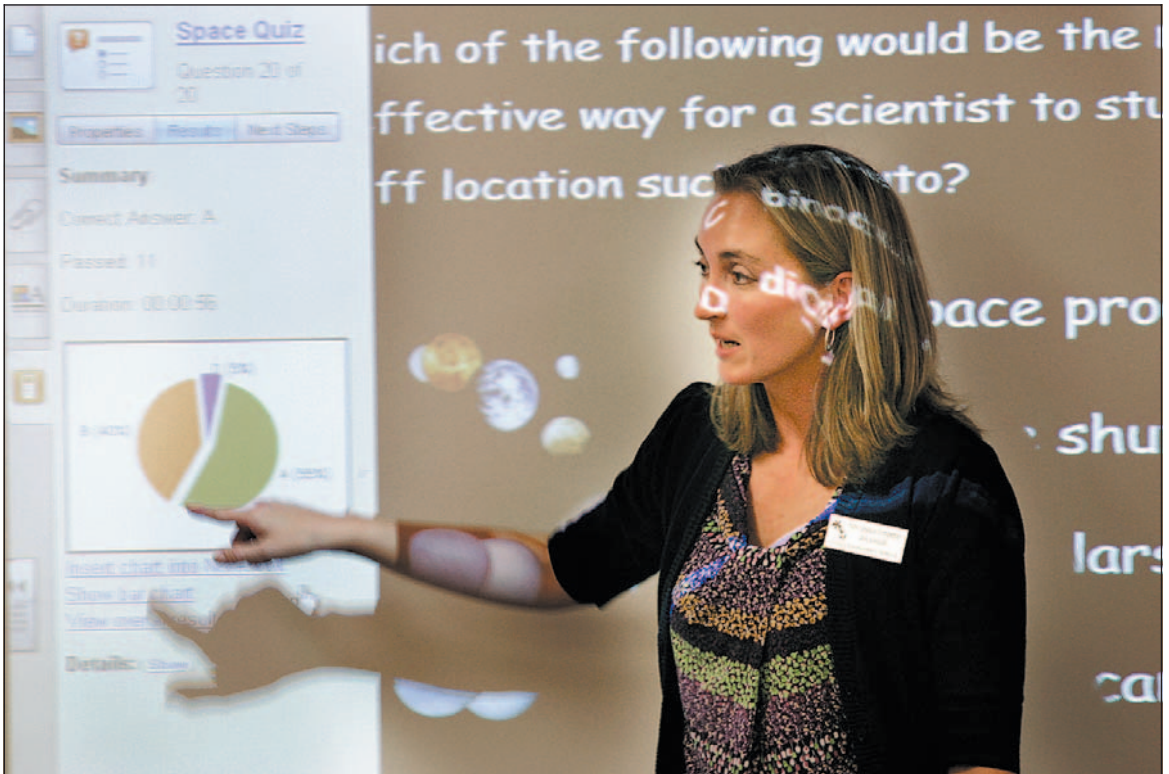


21st Century Classrooms

Local schools get more technology



Photos by VICTOR CALHOUN/Staff Photographer

Jessica Tomberlin, a fourth-grade teacher at Griggs Elementary School in Tillman's Corner, uses an electronic Smartboard to give a quiz Thursday. Eleven of Mobile County's 96 schools are fully equipped with what are known as 21st Century Classrooms.

INSIDE: List of Mobile County schools with 21st Century Classrooms technology/4A

By RENA HAVNER PHILIPS
Staff Reporter

There are no chalkboards, and in some cases, no textbooks. The high-tech classroom has arrived in Mobile County:

Increasingly, teachers are giving lessons on electronic Smartboards.

Students are answering math, science and grammar questions with hand-held devices that allow their teachers to immediately see who got it right.

In some schools, students are working on laptops at their desks, using a wireless Internet connection.

At high schools and middle schools, students are taking classes offered from other sites via Web cameras.

Soon, absent students may be able to watch a video recording of their missed classes so they don't fall behind.



Christopher Bowler, a third-grade music teacher at Griggs, uses a Smartboard during a music lesson.



VICTOR CALHOUN/Staff Photographer

Jordan Miller, foreground, and other fourth-grade students answer questions on a quiz by using a wireless remote called a Senteo in Jessica Tomberlin's class Thursday at Griggs Elementary School in Tillman's Corner.

Mobile classrooms get technology

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"We have made some amazing strides in the last 18 months," said David K. Akridge, executive director of technology for the Mobile County Public School System.

Schools have been buying these new technologies with various sources of grant money.

Eleven of Mobile County's 96 schools are fully equipped with what are known as 21st Century Classrooms, and another 30 are getting portions of the technology this year.

About 1,000 of the county's 4,000 classrooms have been equipped with Smartboards.

Getting all of the equipment for a classroom — minus the distance-learning technology — costs \$7,500.

Smartboards, which run about \$3,400 apiece, are touch-sensitive projection screens that allow teachers to give lessons similar to a PowerPoint presentation.

They can lead students in interactive learning games, show videos and even call them to the front of the class

ON THE LIST

The following Mobile County schools have 100 percent 21st Century Classrooms, while other schools have some of the technology in some classrooms:

George Hall, Griggs, Hollinger's Island, Holloway, Mary B. Austin, McDavid-Jones, Meadowlake, Pearl Haskew elementary schools

Clark-Shaw Magnet School (middle school)

Citronelle and Theodore high schools

Thirty more schools are getting portions of the technology this year.

to work out a problem using their finger.

At some schools, teachers can pull out electronic notebooks to write on their Smartboard from the back of the room, so they're not blocking students' views.

"Kids are used to being entertained. They've got television and special effects everywhere," said Dynette Ballard, a math and technology teacher at Griggs Elementary in Tillman's Corner, where all the classrooms are 21st Century Classrooms.

"They can't leave that and sit with a textbook and be motivated to learn," she added. "Most of the time, with this technology, they

don't think they're learning. They're playing a game."

Akridge noted a national study showing that an experienced teacher who applies such technology for two years can deliver a 30 percent gain in standardized test scores.

In Baldwin County's public schools, nearly half of the classrooms have a Smartboard or similar board, said Derek Roh, director of information technology for that district. Roh said the district would like to have them in every classroom, but funding is an issue.

On a recent day at Griggs, the fourth-graders in Jessica Tomberlin's classroom took

a science quiz using handheld "clickers."

Tomberlin would pop a question up on the board.

"A piece of rock or metal that has entered the earth's atmosphere is called ..."

Her 20 students would think about it for a few seconds and punched in either "A" for meteor, "B" for comet, "C" for planet, or "D" for asteroid.

Several patted themselves on the back when the clicker notified them that they'd selected the correct answer.

At the end of the quiz, Tomberlin was immediately able to see that half the class earned A's, many students made B's and one student had a D.

"I'll find out who you are and give you some extra help," Tomberlin said of the D student.

Nine-year-old C.J. Hopkins scored a 100.

"I thought that quiz was awesome. I haven't seen anything like that before," C.J. said. "It was like a calculator, but it was a test. Some of the questions were hard, but I knew I got them right."