



Palm Projects 2003-2004

Frankford Middle School

Description of Project:

The goal of these projects was to afford students the opportunity to use the Palm Handheld devices to enhance their academic progress in a variety of subject areas and in the area of study skills.

The empirical data evidenced by teachers, administrative and the West Cluster IT staff have resulted in the formulation of several objectives to be implemented when the projects continue next August. At that time, it is the plan that project designs, which support legitimate comparative studies of student progress will be in place.

Summary:

Eighth grade students at Frankford who participated in the Palm Project used Docs to Go Word on the Palms in their English class. The teacher used her Palm to beam handouts and instructions to the students and the students used their handheld with the portable keyboard to complete the assignment. The students saved their work on the network on the O:/ drive in specifically assigned folders and they also used Print to Go to print their work to turn in a hard-copy to the teacher.

One teacher tested using the Palm to enter grades into Pinnacle grade book. The teacher used GradeBook Assistant on her Palm to enter grades in real-time, note student progress as classroom observations were made and sync the grades back to the network.

Eighth grade science students planned to use the Palm to collect, record, and transfer data from labs and experiments. However, time constraints imposed by the spring assessment schedule hindered this. The project design called for students to use the Imagi Probe software to enhance their experimental labs. The probes used to collect data were apparently very motivating, but their use with the Palms was limited. Though their use was limited this year, the probes coupled with the handheld devices provided highly interactive, quality learning experiences. Students could immediately see multiple representations of data during the experiment or see a displayed graph in real-time. After the students gathered the data it was entered into the spreadsheet program in Docs to Go.

Next year the eighth grade math classes are planning to use ImagiWorks' ImagiMath suite of applications for calculation and graphing.

In conclusion, the limited length of the projects hindered the collection of objective data comparing groups of students and their progress in the various academic areas. However, some of the observations made by the teachers, administrators and Instructional Technology staff are worth noting.

- Students appeared to show increased interest and motivation in their class work when they were using the Palm.
- Students demonstrated the ability to generalize between features of Docs to Go spreadsheet and Excel on the network. At both fifth the grade and eight grade levels, students were highly motivated to design their own spreadsheets.
- Students rapidly became comfortable with handheld technology and the associated terminology and operations.

Summary (cont.):

- Peer-to-peer support and collaboration increased among students in the project groups.
- Elementary students gained independence and took ownership of the learning process as a result of their enthusiasm for using a handheld device.
- The music teachers felt strongly that their curriculum could be enhanced by the availability of colored Palms with audio recording capabilities.
- Less expensive Palms might be considered “consumable items” after one year of use in elementary schools. It was difficult or not at all possible to use many of the Palms employed during the previous school years’ projects.
- At the elementary schools, a surprising degree of support and time in the classroom was necessary on the part of the IT staff. They modeled lessons for teachers, assisted in training the students, helped set up the devices on the network, and provided trouble-shooting for hardware problems. The inordinate amount of time was necessitated by some of the teachers’ lack of technology experience in general and no experience in using a Palm prior to the implementation of the project.
- It was observed that students demonstrated an increased sense of responsibility in taking excellent care of their handhelds.
- All of the teachers in the projects at the three schools were enthusiastic about continuing their projects in the fall.