

# Times-Herald

## St. Catherine making most of high-tech tools, projects

By Tony Burchyns/Times-Herald staff writer

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It's getting harder to say "The dog ate my homework" - unless he ate your laptop.

No students know that better than those at St.



STUDENTS in Steven Federle's eighth-grade class at St. Catherine of Siena School gather around a computer to upload a podcast to the school's Web site, <http://scstars.net/#>. (Stacey J. Miller/Times-Herald)

Catherine of Siena School in Vallejo - where technology and learning go hand in hand.

Over the last eight years or so, the Catholic school for kindergarten through grade eight has integrated technology throughout the curriculum in an effort to reflect the real world job market, said second-year Principal Linda Mazzei.

"We knew it was a necessary tool," Mazzei said. "And it shows what the students can really do."

Classrooms are equip-ped with liquid-crystal display projectors and sound systems, which upper-grade students use to present group projects in different academic subjects.

"The technology



Raia Garcia, left, and Arvin Valmonte use the computer to bring up a political advertisement for their class presentation. (Stacey J. Miller/Times-Herald)

makes it so they can work on (projects) anywhere," said language arts teacher Steven Federle. "They are doing a tremendous amount at home. They all have Internet-equipped computers. It makes the projects more accessible to them."

Federle's eighth-graders just finished reading "The Diary of Anne Frank," which led to a project on how nations can use propaganda to go to war. The

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class divided into two sides and created wiki's - Web sites that anyone can edit.

The students also made videos of mock trials that they stored on a computer.

"It's easy," said eighth-grader Rachelle Yambao on Friday. "Before the project, Mr. Federle explained what we needed to do. Everybody's using computers now and everybody's depending on it."

Students in sixth, seventh and eighth grades have access to laptops, and some classrooms have wireless Internet portals.

"The technology itself isn't the point. It's a tool," Federle said. "Before this, it would have been encyclopedias, paper and rulers. Today it's computers ... and these kids are naturals."

Inside religion and science teacher Donna Phelps' classroom sit six new computers. A nearby lab houses an additional 19, where students recently learned how earthquake shock waves spread, Phelps said.

"We're using a Web site that corresponds with our text book," Phelps said. "Certainly, in the workplace, this is what they'll end up doing. And using computers is something they'll have to know (in college)."

Even moms and dads and teachers are getting into the high-tech groove. Teachers have their own Web pages, where they post homework assignments. Parents can also use the school's Web site to check grades and watch class videos, Federle said.

Of course, it's getting harder to come up with an excuse for not doing your homework.

"It makes it easy to remember," Yambao said, adding her parents sometimes peek online. "If we forget, we can just go online."

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