

Case Study

Holy Spirit School

The Holy Spirit School in San Jose, California has always been receptive to new technologies. Since 2005, the school (which teaches Pre-K to the 8th grade) has been using Studywiz Spark to manage their online communications and learning through the use of the internet. The Studywiz Spark dynamic learnspace allows for all classes to be posted online, and for the students to use the system to access assignments, download homework, take tests and quizzes, and participate in discussions and chat forums – all from their computer, iPod or iPhone when they want, where they want.

A new breed of digital citizens

“What we had before was, students would walk into the classroom and there would be a question on the board. We would ask students and only two or three of them, and usually the same ones, would answer the question,” says Jonathan MacArt, Director of Technology at Holy Spirit School.

“Now you have all thirty of the students participating and actually going back and reading other answers, and gaining knowledge from that same question. So you have a tremendous amount of participation in a classroom to a discussion, and we’re also teaching them the basic skills of being a digital citizen.”

And it’s this notion of digital citizenry which has taken the Studywiz Spark technology to the next level with the advent of the Studywiz Spark Mobile. This new software allows students, teachers and parents to access this online learning environment on their personal mobile devices. With the boom and general advancement of mobile technologies over the last couple of years, the concept of learning through portable devices such as iPhones and iPods Touches is a new and exciting innovation, and one that Holy Spirit has fully embraced.

Connected parents tap into new learning opportunities

“We do have a portion of our parents that use some type of PDA device, usually an iPhone. They’re pulling information right off Studywiz Spark on their system, so they can look at their calendars and all that is right there on their PDA” says MacArt. “We have the school schedule posted with all the relevant events, so parents can be out in the community and they can just log in using their PDA or iPhone and they can get the schedule. They’ll know what type of day it is, be it a test day or whatever it might be. The PDA comes in real handy when it has to do with administration in regards to the structure of the day.”

Aside from allowing parents to directly interact with their kids and gain intimate and up-to-date knowledge of their school schedule, the eLocker software allows students to access schoolwork on or off line, upload and download files, record audio and store photos all from a compatible mobile device. The objective is to make learning accessible, portable, and affordable, but more importantly support the two-way learning interaction through a technology which young people have whole-heartedly embraced.

Making the transition

Through the Studywiz Spark Mobile, Holy Spirit School have created a secure online community with unlimited possibilities. But does this translate to improved academic results? "It's really the \$64 million question when it comes to technology- how do we measure if our students are doing better in school because of it? I think you have to ask 'Are they more engaged?' And the answer is, yes they are." admits MacArt. "We're talking about twenty first century classrooms in which they learn the way they live. I can't remember the last time I lived in a textbook, and we're moving out of that...I can just tell you that when you walk into a classroom it's just a totally different environment now."

For further information on Studywiz Spark visit www.studywiz.com