



Life's a Beach for One East Tennessee School – Thanks to Broadband Technology

Name:

Luttrell Elementary School

Internet:

www.ucps.org

Technology Tools:

Internet video conferencing system that allows for virtual field trips and on-site training from remote locations

Location:

Luttrell/Union County

Leadership:

Marilyn Toppins, Union County Staff Development Facilitator

Innovative Insight: *“For 33 years I have had the job of facilitating professional development in Union County. I am a committee of one. Without broadband, I would not have been able to do it.”*

The Impact of Broadband:

“Instead of just cutting up the frog or the fish, as they usually would, technology allowed the kids to actually visit where the frog and fish live. It was one of those ‘Aha!’ moments for the kids.”

Feedback from the Students:

“The students talk about their experience at the ocean now – even though it was a virtual ocean. We are literally bringing the world to these kids’ doorsteps.”

Luttrell, TN – Kids in the small East Tennessee town of Luttrell, Tennessee got to take an early summer vacation to the beach this year, without ever leaving their classrooms! It’s all thanks to something called a “virtual field trip,” made possible by an increasingly popular two-way Internet video conferencing system that utilizes a high-speed, high-definition camera and connects via IP address to anywhere in the world. Using this system, the kids at Luttrell Elementary took a virtual field trip to an aquarium in South Carolina for an underwater lesson in marine biology, and according to Union County’s Staff Development Facilitator, Marilyn Toppins, it was an eye-opening experience for them. “Instead of just cutting up the frog or the fish, as they usually would, technology allowed the kids to actually visit where the frog and fish live,” says Marilyn. “It was one of those ‘Aha!’ moments for the kids.”

Prior to the field trip, the aquarium provided the school with supplies to make the experience as true-to-life and interactive as possible for the students. “The kids were able to feel the sand, even smell the seawater!” explains Marilyn. “For some of these children, this is as close as they’re ever going to get to actually going to the beach.” And the journey was a lot less expensive than an actual road trip! “It costs less than a hundred dollars to take some of these field trips,” says Marilyn. “You could never take 30 kids to South Carolina for a hundred dollars!”

Broadband is allowing for other new and improved methods of teaching, as well. Through the video conferencing equipment, Union County teachers were able to train for TCAP testing this year from their own schools, instead of having to travel to other locations, as in the past. “This system enabled us to leave teachers at four or five different sites throughout the county for the training,” says Marilyn. “We didn’t have to waste travel time. In this day and time, people don’t want you wasting their time. And now we don’t have to.”

For Marilyn and the students in Union County, the future of education is bright – thanks to broadband technology and the new interactive learning methods and convenience it entails. “For 33 years I have had the job of facilitating professional development in Union County,” she says. “I am a committee of one. Without broadband, I would not have been able to do it. The students talk about their experience at the ocean now – even though it was a virtual ocean. We are literally bringing the world to these kids’ doorsteps.”

About TN 95:

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