

NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



Office of Charter Schools
NC ACCESS PROGRAM
NC Department of Public Instruction

Family and Community Engagement

Technology

Thriving With New Technology

Implementation Description

Hobgood Charter School (HCS), located in Halifax County opened its doors to students in August 2019. Initially, the school did not have access to current technology; however, with the support of NC ACCESS funding, the school was able to make significant shifts to implement technology updates into their classrooms. The implementation process was twofold: purchasing equipment and empowering teachers to effectively utilize the technology for meaningful instruction.

Hobgood made two significant hardware purchases with NC ACCESS funding. They purchased iPad for primary students (kindergarten through third grade) and Exceptional Children (EC) students. These iPads were especially helpful with the sudden transition to virtual learning during COVID-19. School leadership commented that many students in their county did not have adequate access to technology when virtual learning began in the spring of 2020 (Juliana Harris, personal communication, June 12, 2021). Distributing technology to students mitigated the impact of potential learning loss, particularly for students in poverty who would not have access to a device otherwise. Additionally, the school purchased Promethean interactive whiteboards for every classroom in the fall of 2020. Interactive whiteboards have been shown to “*increase student engagement and promote collaboration*” through the use of teacher-created activities and participatory learning experiences (Martin, 2020). Hands-on learning has been shown to increase creativity and critical thinking in children, which results in better educational outcomes and well-rounded students (Martin, 2020).

Hobgood’s school leadership knew best practice for technology implementation involves teacher support. Therefore, the school collaborated with the manufacturer of the boards, Promethean, to train

August 3, 2021

About This School

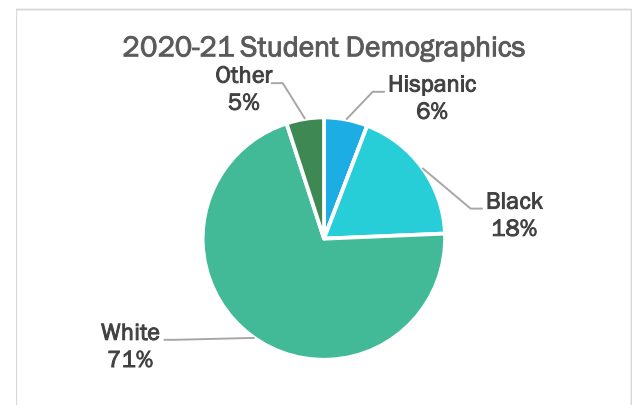
Hobgood Charter School

Hobgood Charter School is committed to a holistic approach to excellence: academically, physically, emotionally, and socially. We are committed to excellence by helping each student achieve his or her potential in a rigorous, supportive environment. Through small group instruction, multi-age collaboration, and community involvement students will establish patterns for healthy, lifelong learning.

Year School Opened: 2019-20

Grant Awarded: 2020-21

Initial Grade Levels Served: K-9



% ED Student Population: 54%

Urbanicity: Rural / Hobgood, NC

Persons in Poverty (Halifax County)⁴: 23.8%



staff to use this resource effectively. Hobgood's Technology Coordinator and other staff members with smartboard experience provided ongoing support for their colleagues throughout the year. Some teachers utilized the Promethean boards' spinning wheel application to increase student engagement through random questioning. This practice promotes equity by ensuring participation from all students. Additionally, studies have shown that waiting for a teacher to call on them can produce angst in students, which prevents learning (Ehmke, N.d.) Regularly calling on students at random, especially in a fun and interactive way, reduces students' anxiety (Sippel, 2018). Additionally, having smart boards installed in every room was also beneficial to the school Guidance Counselor who travels from class to class. In the past, she carried a laptop and materials with her to each classroom, but now she is able to log-in and access resources on each classroom's smart board, which

has significantly improved her efficiency, so she can spend more time interacting with students and less time managing equipment. Teachers responded positively to the smart boards, and even the self-proclaimed "dinosaur of the school," a veteran math teacher with 52 years of experience, utilized his Promethean board paired with his document camera to live stream his class and keep students connected and engaged throughout virtual learning (Juliana Harris, personal communication, June 12, 2021).

Results

Quantitative achievement and engagement data were difficult to capture during virtual learning, but school leaders observed high quality technology implementation during teacher observations. Lesson plans were more engaging, and student participation increased because of the new technology implementation. School leaders commented that this purchase was a "game changer" for their middle school students in particular, who saw it as an investment in their education (Juliana Harris, personal communication, June 12, 2021).

"It helped us be more interactive with the teachers instead of just sitting and watching." -- Dillon 8th grade

Challenges

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, HCS teachers were nervous about transitioning to virtual learning and utilizing new technology. To address their concerns, school leadership used available NC ACCESS funds to provide smart board training for teachers, and the staff supported one another as teacher's gained proficiency and confidence with the new technology. Teachers are now excited to learn more ways to utilize technology in their classrooms.

Future Modifications

Now that school staff feel more comfortable with technology, the school would like to expand on their knowledge and diversified application of these tools. The school also has plans to make Promethean boards a staple in every classroom as they begin to offer it to more grade levels.

Critical Components

Getting Started

School leaders commented that training for staff was an essential component to successfully implement new technology. HCS also purchased hardware from Promethean which allowed teachers to position the boards at a lower height, so younger students could reach them. This hardware took longer to ship than the boards themselves, but elementary school staff found it to be particularly helpful.

Ongoing Supports

The HCS administration intentionally schedules time within staff meetings for their “*tech gurus*” to highlight certain features and resources from which their staff may benefit (Juliana Harris, personal communication, June 12, 2021). They believe that as they encourage their staff to try new things and learn from one another, their knowledge and confidence will continue to increase.

Equity Connections

“*Infusing technology into schools*” has been shown to be a critical step in increasing equity in education (NEA Education Policy and Practice Department, N.d.). HCS used funds from their NC ACCESS subgrant to invest in their students’ education by purchasing smart boards for every classroom, which can be used to provide engaging, interactive lessons, and generate better outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students.

Research

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3. Martin, L. (August 21, 2020). “The Importance of Hands-On Learning in a Child’s Education”. Friends Central School. Accessed on June 16, 2021. Retrieved from <https://blog.friendscentral.org/benefits-of-hands-on-learning>
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5. Sippel, T. (July 28, 2018). “Managing anxiety in active learning classrooms”. Science Teaching Experience Program. Accessed on June 16, 2021. Retrieved from https://depts.washington.edu/stepuw/managing_anxiety/
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