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'Rockin' Classrooms of the Future' Give Every Student a Voice

An assistant superintendent shares how a technology-rich environment has improved student engagement and achievement.

Since 2015, teachers at Rockingham County Schools have completely revolutionized the way they teach by embracing the power digital technology has for students. "By taking a step back and looking at how we can change the learning environment, we have greatly impacted student achievements," says Sonja Parks, Rockingham's assistant superintendent. "Children are using new equipment and moving around during classes, talking to teachers, sharing their ideas, and ultimately, learning at a higher level than ever before."

> **"Teachers are facilitators, moving at a brisk pace. Transition time between lessons has dramatically decreased and classroom management is stronger now that we have moved away from the lecture-style classroom."**
>
> *Sonja Parks*
> *Assistant Superintendent at Rockingham County Schools*

REDESIGN AND REDEFINE

While best practices in the classroom continue to evolve over time, three years ago, Rockingham started shifting away from the one-size-fits-all instruction model based on lecture-style teaching. The district created a handful of "Rockin' Classrooms of the Future," which include floor-to-ceiling whiteboard walls, mobile furniture, 1:1 mobile devices, and Lightspeed's new **Activate classroom audio system**. The audio system includes two-way pods the size of a glasses case that student groups can take with them anywhere they are working. The teachers use a mobile app to connect to the pods, listen in to the student groups, and gain insights to the learning process so they can deliver the right support at the right moment.

Now, Parks says, if someone were to walk into one of the rockin' classrooms, they would see students interacting with each other, using technology to collaborate, and owning their learning.

Today, there is little to no group instruction, and no 45-minute lectures. Classes start with a small, 8- to 10-minute mini-lesson, then students set off into small groups for most of the class to work on activities that align with standards. When working in groups, students bring their Activate pods with them so the teacher can listen in on organic student conversations and provide feedback at any given moment.

Parks says that classrooms look different every day and students also love the new technology. "Children can quickly talk with the teacher and share out loud with their group on a microphone, giving them the confidence to share their input," she says.

ROCKIN' CLASSROOMS INCREASE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

During a 2015–2016 dissertation study, 63% of classrooms at Rockingham Schools were arranged in rows, 39% of teachers utilized technology to display information, and less than 16% of students used technology for problem-solving.

SCHOOL
ROCKINGHAM COUNTY SCHOOLS

LOCATION
ROCKINGHAM COUNTY,
NORTH CAROLINA

INDUSTRY
EDUCATION

THE CHALLENGE
Rockingham County Schools saw a need to change the instructional environment to better support learners. Teachers become facilitators by using Lightspeed's Activate System in the classroom, giving students the ability to collaborate and learn together, ultimately improving student achievement.

LIGHTSPEED SOLUTION
Activate Audio System and App

BENEFITS
Students talk more and learn at a higher level.

The mobility of the technology gives teachers insights into "ah-ha" moments during peer-to-peer collaboration.

No more lectures: teachers are now facilitators of student learning.

Test scores and student engagement have both increased.

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"What makes this change so impactful is the high student achievement that has come out of changing the traditional classroom format," Parks says. "Students need to process information in their own way, and by providing different ways to digest the material, everyone can learn at their own pace."

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Parks says that although they are seeing stellar results, the transition to Rockin' Classrooms is still in the early stages. "We have discovered what works and what doesn't. In the future, we aim to have tools like Activate in all the schools in the county. We want to spread this opportunity to every student. Classrooms are changing, and we need resources and support to make that happen."

Investing in technology has proven to be well worth the time and money for Rockingham. It provides a new way to support learning by allowing students to find their own voice and have a **chance to be heard**.

"Because of the implementation of the Activate System and mobile technology, our teachers have become better teachers."

Sonja Parks

In a short time after the Rockin' Classroom implementation, teachers in both high and low poverty groups saw math and reading assessment scores improve. Please see below data. This data compares traditional classrooms in fifth grade to Rockin' fifth grade classrooms.

Math Scores for High-Poverty Students
Students in the Rockin' Classrooms scores were
13.1% higher *than those in a traditional classroom.*

Math Scores for Low-Poverty Students
Students in the Rockin' Classrooms scores were
13.6% higher *than those in a traditional classroom.*

Reading Scores for High-Poverty Students
Students in the Rockin' Classrooms scores were
1.87% higher *than those in a traditional classroom.*

Reading Scores for Low-Poverty Students
Students in the Rockin' Classrooms scores were
4.87% higher *than those in a traditional classroom.*