

STEM facilitator Rich Wastler details how Flexcat connects him to students throughout a 1,600-square-foot lab

A BIG SPACE IS A BIG CHALLENGE

When my school unveiled our new 1,600-square-foot STEM lab in October, I was very excited—and just a little overwhelmed.

After all, we combined two existing classrooms to create the space. It's big! And as the STEM facilitator at Martinez Elementary, it would be my job to make sure everything in the lab was always running smoothly.

To add another twist to the mix, we also had five different stations set up around the lab, each with a small student group working on a unique project. How can you personalize learning in a space that big when everybody's working on something different?

I realized very quickly that I was going to lose my voice if I attempted to run the lab like a normal classroom. I needed something to help.

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The students and I can have a conversation as if I was sitting right at their table.”

Rich Wastler, Teacher

After considering our options, my school purchased the Flexcat, a classroom audio system that allows me to flip between six audio “pods” placed throughout the room, listening to and participating in small-group discussions through a headset.

It's exactly what we needed. I placed a pod at every group's work station, and the sixth pod sits on our big work table in the middle of the room. Before we installed this system, I would have to hustle across the room if one of the groups was struggling with their project. This also meant abandoning my “Facilitator Zone,” where other students might be waiting with questions of their own.

Now, when I press a button on my remote, my voice is projected through the struggling group's audio pod, regardless of where I am physically in the lab. The students and I can have a conversation as if I was sitting right at their table.

I work with every grade level in K-5 throughout the course of the day, and the younger kids love



**MARTINEZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO**

CHALLENGE

Personalizing instruction in a large space with five different small-group stations.

LIGHTSPEED SOLUTION

Flexcat Small Group Collaboration



RESULTS

- The teacher can converse with any student, regardless of where they physically are in the lab
- Young students are excited by the “magic” black box that lets them talk to the teacher directly at any time
- Classes are more productive because students don't have to run all over the room to get the teacher's attention
- Checking in with impatient students to let them know he hears their concern and will be able to help soon helps the teacher alleviate student frustration and shutdown
- The teacher doesn't have to yell across the room to be heard

CASE STUDY

the Flexcat—they think it’s magic! It’s a lot of fun for them to talk to me through the “black box” and know that I’m listening, even if I’m on the other side of the room.

My older students aren’t as enthralled by the Flexcat’s “magical” abilities, but they definitely realize how much more productive we are because students don’t have to run all over the room to get my attention any more.

To add an extra personal touch, I’ll often check in with an impatient student while I’m working with another group, just to let them know I hear their concern and will be able to help soon. It has alleviated student frustration and shutdown so much, and it has completely changed the classroom dynamic.

But my favorite change of all?

I don’t have to yell across the room to be heard!

