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New High tech classroom prepares teachers to work with technology

KOKOMO, Ind. — Need to teach your fifth graders vocabulary words?

There's an app for that.

Future teachers in the Indiana University Kokomo School of Education prepare to use the latest educational websites, apps, and devices in their classrooms, in the school's new high tech classroom, which opened this semester.

"So many local school districts are using one-to-one technology now, and having this available to our students mean they will be prepared to teach using technology from their first day in the classroom," said Tara Kingsley, assistant professor of education, who teaches her methods of teaching reading in elementary school class in the lab.

"Most college students are well-versed in using technology for social media, but we are showing them how to use it as a tool, to promote higher level thinking," she said. "When our students interview for teaching jobs, they will have a good answer, and experience to discuss, when asked how they will use technology in their classrooms."

The first tool included in the classroom is a cart of iPads, loaded with educational applications. On this day, Kingsley demonstrates how to use the Aurusma app, which uses the tablets camera to recognize real world images, and overlays media on top of them to add hidden digital content.

One way teachers can use this is to take pictures of pages in books used in the classroom. When a child scans the page with a tablet, it can give him or her questions about that particular page, or provide extra information.

Students in her class use the app to create interactive flashcards for vocabulary words. Emily Watkins' group takes a picture of the flashcard for "opposite," and then they film two classmates — one saying she is sad because she earned a bad grade, the other saying she is happy because it's her birthday — and upload the video to the app.

Moments later, Kingsley uses the app to scan the flashcard, and the video plays on her screen, demonstrating the meaning of the word.

"I am amazed by all the tools children can learn in our classrooms," said Watkins, from Galveston. "I'm doing an early teaching experience in a fourth grade class, and they are using iPads to teach in a lot of their subjects. At IU Kokomo, I am learning tools to use as a teacher."

She thinks having hands-on experience with educational technology will help her when she looks for her first teaching job.

"A lot of superintendents are looking for people who can integrate technology into their classrooms," she said. "What I am learning here will put me ahead of the game."

Abby Zipperian, Bunker Hill, is glad to learn to try the technology she sees teachers using when she is in their classrooms.

"Technology is a big influence in education right now, and it's important that we know how to use it," she said. "The kids love it, and they are more engaged in learning because of it."

The high tech classroom replaces the curriculum lab, which Dean Paul Paese said was being used as a student lounge, with curriculum resources and "books that were totally outdated and not used much at all." It meets a need for local school districts, for educators ready to teach using technology.

"Teachers and administrators from our Center for Educational Partnerships suggested that we give our students as much experience as possible with different kinds of technology during their preparation," he said. "With all the one-to-one technology schools in north central Indiana, we will provide teachers experienced and ready to teach in those schools."

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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