

Open House Technology Walk

*Kennedy Junior High School
Lisle, Illinois*

The information page for parents at Kennedy Junior High's Open House Technology Walk headlined "Use your student as a resource. They are very knowledgeable!" The students took the lead at their school's annual Technology Walk, part of the school's February open house that focused on showing families how technology is used in the classroom.

Technology is a widely used, ever-changing resource. The faculty at Kennedy Junior High, however, noticed that the parents were often unaware of how technology helped their children learn. Teachers and administrators hoped to remedy this by demonstrating to parents the concrete ways in which Kennedy's teachers and students use technology in day-to-day lessons.

The idea for the 90-minute Technology Walk emerged from a brainstorming session at a School, Family, Community Partnership (SFCP) team meeting in 2005. Teachers and parents worked together to formulate the walk, designed and printed the brochures, recruited volunteers and advertised the event. Now in its third year, the event has evolved from principal- and staff-guided tours to a student-led walk.

On the evening of the event, teachers and parents gave passports and information sheets to every family. The parents then headed off on the journey through Kennedy, led by their children. The families visited the technology room, where they learned about flight simulators, graphic design, T-shirt screen printing and radio broadcasting. They also visited the science room, computer lab and physical education rooms. Students and teachers staffed the various technology stations and rooms along the tour. At the conclusion of each visit, families received a stamp in their passports.

When they had completed the walk, families turned in their passports for a drawing

at school the following day. The prizes were various "kid-friendly" gift cards, provided by parents. At the end of the evening, SFCP leaders collected more than 300 completed passports!

Every constituency involved in the walk benefited in some way. The practice allowed parents to understand the use of technology, to see what their children had learned and to interact with the teachers. Kennedy's faculty evaluated their students' knowledge by watching their demonstrations and presentations to their families. Finally, the students were excited to be the ones to teach. "It was fun to show my dad how the heart rate monitor worked," one student said proudly.

The SFCP team plans to conduct the Technology Walk for a fourth year and, based on participant feedback, will continue to have students lead the tours. "I liked the flexibility of going on the tech tour at our own pace and seeing what we were particularly interested in," said one parent.

The school hopes to improve next year's tour by enlisting the expertise of its Technology Club, made up of parents who work in technology fields and who are interested in increasing technology use and availability in the school.

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