Designing Effective Projects: Lights, Camera, Reaction!

From the Classroom

Sing a Song of Chemistry
Teresa Kelley of Goddard High School in Roswell, New Mexico, will be the first to tell you that her chemistry classes are difficult. “Chemistry is a hard subject, and math-oriented,” she says, “so I do whatever I can to lighten the load and make it appealing.” Students new to her class may glance about in self-conscious trepidation when she first asks them to join her in song, but after some encouragement (and a promise of bonus points for volume) kids are soon heartily singing from The Songbook of Chemistry. The song “Mendelev--Who Told the Elements Where to Go” may never make the Billboard charts, but Teresa’s students won’t soon forget that Mendelevium is a radioactive earth metal, or that it was named for Dmitri Mendelev, father of the Periodic Table. Her class usually rises to the occasion. Teresa recalls one student’s memorable response, and wryly notes, “He said, ‘I still don’t like chemistry, but I like this class!’ I guess you take your compliments where you can get them!”

New Tools for Teaching
When the opportunity to take the Intel® Teach Program course arose, Teresa’s creativity found new outlets. “I’ve been given more tools for teaching, and I’ve been able to encourage creativity in students, too,” she says. “One group presented their chemical reactions project with a Smurf theme. It was sound work with a goofy twist.”

Six of Teresa’s science colleagues took the Intel course together. Teresa says, “My science department is a really sharing group of people. We like to use each other’s work and modify it for our own purposes.” The technology course gave the team members a chance to align their efforts. They set guidelines for dividing up content, and then developed their individual units. Teresa created the chemical reactions project, “Lights, Camera, Reaction.” Another teacher had students make a wall-sized periodic table, with a trifold pamphlet about each element mounted in its proper place. After the chart was finished, students could refer to the table, folding out a pamphlet as needed to find what they needed to know about an element’s properties.

Since taking the course, Teresa feels confident in her ability to teach with technology. She uses multimedia frequently, and has improved the manner in which she sequences instruction. Teresa says that her school’s science department is making a transition toward more project work with students, and she found using a project format to develop chemistry concepts was worthwhile. “Students were more interested because they were responsible for teaching the content to their classmates,” she notes, “Their creativity was outstanding, and the presentations were effective, much better than I expected. After they presented, students quizzed their classmates, and were pretty tough on each other!”