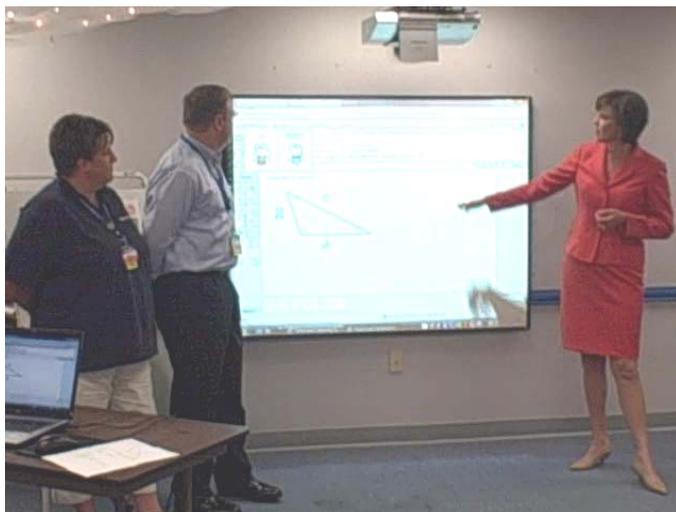


Wal-Mart Grant Expands Student Learning Resources at Ada Community Library

With school just around the corner, [Ada Community Library](#) came to the rescue with high-tech tutoring tools. Thanks to a \$10,000 Wal-Mart grant, students are able to problem-solve using an interactive black board and a real, live tutor from cyberspace or get answers and information “on the go” by texting a librarian. First Lady Lori Otter, Wal-Mart Manager Brad Spitz, and area teens helped the library kick off their project with a hands-on lesson from Jennifer Hinton from Tutor.com. The library’s “Learning Resources for Tweens and Teens” project has proved extremely popular with the targeted age group.



Teens and tweens can now link up to a tutor with the click of a mouse using Tutor.com. Whether for a school assignment or just out of curiosity, students are connected to the appropriate tutor inside the secure online classroom. Together they can chat, draw problems on an interactive whiteboard, share a file to review papers, and more. The service is available to anyone within the Ada Community Library service area. Those with Ada Community Library cards can access it through the library’s website, www.adalib.org.

“This is the kind of resource that engages today’s students,” said First Lady Lori Otter, a former educator. “They’ve grown up using the computer and the internet and are comfortable using technology to learn.”

Library Director Mary DeWalt said her staff has also noticed technology taking a lead in student presentations and part of the grant was used to purchase flip video camcorders to be checked out by tweens and teens. In addition they have developed strong partnerships through collaborations with 4-H of Ada County and Boise State University.

Another program the library offered was a Text Basics class which taught patrons how to compose text messages. They introduced the library’s ‘Ask It’ service, which allows patrons to ask library reference questions via text messaging for on the go answers and assistance. Text-A-Librarian™ was a text reference service funded through the project and offered to all Ada Community Library patrons free of charge.

The library had several specific outcomes for the project and each of them was fulfilled through its implementation. The library saw a 27 percent increase in LiLI database usage between FY08 and FY09, Tutor.com had an average of 45 visits per month on average, and they had an 186 percent increase in the use of the Study Room. The

FlipCams were also extremely popular with teens. They were checked out a total of 75 times during the grant period, a rate that has been consistent to date.

“We are at capacity for the monthly allotment of Tutor.com sessions we contracted for,” said Youth Services Librarian Erin Hasler. “It’s been a great service for our students and we’re getting very positive feedback.”

The kids provided some of the best feedback through online comments. “I LOVE this program. When I don’t know what to do or how to start an assignment, I always get on and ask for help. This is helping my grades SO much,” is just one of the many comments submitted regarding the Tutor.com service. Surveys were also conducted at the end of each tutoring session to ensure quality and the responses to these surveys demonstrated the value of the service. Over 90 percent of the respondents said “Yes” to the following questions: *Would you recommend this service to a friend? Is Live Homework Help helping you complete your homework assignments? Is Live Homework Help helping you improve our grades?* Such great results ensured that the library would continue offering this service to their patrons once the grant period ended.

The library completed the final phase of their project through a partnership with 4-H Extension Services. They offered a free six week program called “Get a Job, Keep a Job” in two of their branch libraries. In one exercise, the FlipCams were used to record mock interviews with participants. The students were then able to review their performance and receive feedback on ways to improve their interview skills. 4H offers a wide variety of quality programming in areas such as healthy living, babysitting, citizenship, and science, engineering, and technology. The library is thrilled to have found such a good partner and resource through this grant and plan to work with them in the future to present additional programs for tweens and teens.



Given the overall success of the program, the library has budgeted money for FY10 and FY11 to continue the subscription to Tutor.com. They realize the 500 sessions that they receive for this subscription may not be sufficient and are committed to finding additional funding if necessary. The library also plans to offer some form of a text reference tool. They felt that the service they originally chose for the project was not cost effective and are researching other options.

Funding for an interactive whiteboard for the new branch library has been budgeted and plans to purchase whiteboards for the two other branch locations are in the works. Due to their popularity, ease of use, and versatility, more FlipCams are on the wish list for each library branch. Ada staff are confident that teens will find educational, creative, and fun ways to use the video cameras.