



## Students and Teachers Take Control of Standardized Tests, Classroom Assignments



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**Lourdes Correa, Principal  
Graebner Elementary School**

### Solution Summary

- Teachers administer standardized tests faster and easier than before.
- Students are exposed to technology they will encounter outside school.
- Teachers and students explore new ways to learn collaboratively with technology.
- Teachers and administrators save time carrying out routine data management tasks.
- Principals and assistant principals get a better handle on managing their institutions.

### Challenge

The state of Texas requires all K-12 students to take a battery of standardized assessment tests every year, with the third, seventh and eleventh grades required to pass in order to reach the next grade level; the final series determines whether a student graduates from high school. Reading skills are critical indicators of success on these tests, and campus teachers must use just-in-time assessments to ascertain student reading proficiency. Quick assessments allow teachers to modify instruction so as to impact student learning.

While these benchmark assessments—popularly known as “reading or running records”—were traditionally delivered on paper, the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) wanted a method for replicating them electronically that would make administering the tests, as well as collecting data from them, easier.

In addition, SAISD wanted to integrate technology into general curriculum and use it to make general administration tasks easier and less time-consuming for teachers, principals and assistant principals.

### Solution

In a pair of waves beginning two years ago, SAISD rolled out 900 Palm® m515 handhelds and, more recently, 500 Palm® Zire handhelds to all the K-3 teachers in its approximately 70 elementary schools. According to Miguel Guhlin, Director of Instructional Technology for the district, “it was amazing how the Reading and Instructional Technology Departments were able to train 800 teachers in one week the summer before school started.”

SAISD uses Wireless Generation's electronic tests known as mCLASS, which replicate the exams according to the state's standards. They currently employ the mCLASS: TPRI, Tejas Lee, DIBELS, CIRCLE and Math assessments electronically. The state assigns each school a rating based on the results, and Graebner Elementary School principal Lourdes Correa, whose school was one of 16 in the district rated “Exemplary” last year, notes that feedback from the exams also “drives instruction in the classroom. Teachers can benchmark the students and chart their growth.”

K-3 students take the standardized tests on computers in the classrooms and then their teachers sync the Palm® handhelds to upload the results, where they're available on the Web immediately. Correa explains that, despite the challenging backgrounds many of her students hail from, Graebner Elementary “is performing as well as or better than other schools with better socio-economic situations.”



## Solution (cont.)

With quantitative results in hand, and to move from assessment to hands-on, inquiry-based learning, Guhlin—in collaboration with Mathematics Department Director Joseph Montano—created a new technology initiative that saw approximately 100 fifth grade students at Graebner Elementary receive Tungsten handhelds in February 2005. The children in all five classrooms use them for science and math assignments, including a representation of the water cycle with the application Sketchy and the creation of documents and graphs with Microsoft Word and Excel through Documents To Go.

Using LearnTrac Pro, teachers wirelessly transmit assignments to students and they beam their work back when it's done. The Instructional Technology Department's James Baldoni and the Mathematics Department's Patti Carvajal collaborate on modeling inquiry-based lessons for teachers and students. The lessons could not be completed without the Palm® Tungsten™ handheld.

As the school year ends, a select group of fifth graders is training several incoming fourth graders in the technology so that they can continue the experiment this fall. Guhlin hopes that this new initiative will spark a move to "inquiry-based learning, instead of traditional teacher lectures," he explains. "I expect to see a lot of changes in how the teachers work with the students this fall." If everything goes according to his plans, he will pursue funding in the spring of 2006, with an eye on rolling out the technology to more SAISD students the following fall.

"This has been a rite of passage for the fifth graders," says Correa. "It's an awakening for them. The world of tomorrow embraces technology, and this exposes many students to a tool they wouldn't have come in contact with otherwise."

Finally, Guhlin recently distributed another 100 Tungsten handhelds to principals and assistant principals at elementary, middle and high schools across the district. They, as well as all the teachers who have received the devices, employ Media-X Systems' ePrincipal to access and manage student data and eWalk to complete classroom walkthroughs, student observations and other tasks.

Looking down the road, Guhlin wants to roll out wireless technology across SAISD, with mobile carts loaded with handhelds that are used in wider areas of the curriculum.

## Technical Summary

- Palm® m-series, Zire™ and Tungsten™ handhelds
- Wireless Generation mCLASS assessment software
- Media-X Systems' eWalk, ePrincipal
- Documents To Go from DataViz
- Sketchy from GoKnow
- LearnTrac Pro by The Readiness Company

## More Information

Wireless Generation  
[www.wgen.net](http://www.wgen.net)

Media-X Systems  
[www.media-x.com](http://www.media-x.com)

DataViz  
[www.dataviz.com](http://www.dataviz.com)

Go Know  
[www.goknow.com](http://www.goknow.com)

LearnTrac Pro  
[www.readinessco.com](http://www.readinessco.com)