



Arkansas and New Tech Network

New Tech Network (NTN) is a non-profit organization that helps students gain the knowledge and deeper learning skills they need to succeed in life, college, and the careers of tomorrow. We work nationwide with schools, districts, states and communities to provide services and support that enable schools to fundamentally re-imagine teaching and learning.

The State of Arkansas selected New Tech Network as the foundation of its statewide STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) initiative, STEM Works. It has identified New Tech Network as a strategy to increase graduation rates and spur academic achievement. By 2014, 15 schools will be in operation throughout Arkansas.

In 2011, the program was announced by Governor Mike Beebe. "The STEM fields offer stable, well-paying careers for the 21st century, and the demand continues to grow at a rapid pace," Governor Mike Beebe said upon announcing the program in 2011. "These are positions that companies are struggling to fill, even in tough economic times. If we are to continue to attract these types of companies to Arkansas, we must prepare our young people with high-tech skills and build a workforce that will help our state prosper."

The New Tech Network 2013 Student Outcome Report offers compelling evidence that the public school innovation envisioned by New Tech Network can, and does, lead to success for students from diverse backgrounds, in rural, urban and suburban schools across the U.S.

New Tech Network Students:

- **Graduate at a rate 6% greater than the national average**
- **Enroll in college at a rate 9% greater than the national average**
- **Persist in 4-year colleges at a rate 17% greater than the national average and in 2-year colleges at a rate 46% greater than the national average**
- **Grow 75% more in higher order thinking skills between freshman and senior years than comparison groups**

New Tech works with districts and communities to integrate its transformative approach to learning in public schools nationwide. Teachers in New Tech schools design rigorous, real-world projects tied to state and district standards that are deeply integrated with technology to create a learning environment that is relevant and engaging for students with a culture that is based on trust, respect and responsibility. In a recent study, educators who received professional development and training from NTN tested higher in teaching deeper learning skills like communication, collaboration, creativity and innovation skills, self-direction skills, use of technology, local connections and global connections.

"To work together as a team has been challenging. When I work, I am not going to be in a solitary cubicle; I am going to have to work with others when I start my career."

– MacKenzie Suggs, 10th Grader

The participating group had greater means for frequency and extensiveness of teaching practices in the following skills: critical thinking skills, collaboration skills, communication skills, creativity and innovative thinking skills, self-direction skills, and use of technology skills. The participating group also had greater means for frequency and extensiveness of teaching practices of making local connections and global connections, yet there was not a significant difference between the group means.

Arkadelphia High School was recently ranked in the top 1 percent of the nation's high schools, and No. 4 in Arkansas by the Washington Post. Earlier this month, the Washington Post published the annual High School Challenge Index, which rates the nation's high schools in terms of each school's academic rigor. According to the article's author, Jay Mathews, "The Challenge Index is designed to identify schools that have done the best job in persuading average students to take college-level courses and tests."

"It is outstanding for AHS to be recognized in this manner," said Donnie Whitten, Superintendent at the Arkadelphia Public Schools. "We are proud of our faculty, staff and administration for their hard work and dedication to excellence." Whitten continued, saying, "AHS's rankings as No. 213 in the nation and No. 4 in Arkansas demonstrate a commitment to challenging our students with the most rigorous curriculum possible."

Project-based learning (PBL) is at the heart of the NTN instructional approach. In PBL, learning is contextual, creative, and shared. Students collaborate on meaningful projects that require critical thinking, creativity, and communication in order for them to answer challenging questions or solve complex problems. By making learning relevant to them in this way, students see a purpose for mastering state-required skills and content concepts.

Principal David Clark said, "What it means to be a part of the New Tech Network is that we are committed to 100 percent project-based learning. Rather than a teacher standing in front of a classroom and delivering information and students spitting it back on a test, what we try to do is present a situation students want to know the answer to."

"I think Communications is the most important skill I am learning in presentations and in the community. I know I will be more comfortable for job applications."

– Alexandria, 10th Grader at Arkadelphia

This summer, New Tech Network will host an Arkansas specific professional development event focused on PBL that will provide comprehensive training with a specific focus on PBL planning, facilitation, and differentiation. The event will take place at Arkadelphia High School and will introduce NTN College Ready Assessments (CRAs) to small school teams interested in advancing PBL practices and quality.

To learn more about New Tech Network, please visit:
www.newtechnetwork.org

