

The children of UT Elementary School are benefiting from an exemplary educational program that is grounded in scientific research and guided by educators at the University of Texas at Austin. An important aspect of this model program is its integration of technology into the school's curriculum, instruction, assessment, diagnosis, and intervention. Appropriate use of technology is one of the foundational elements that support success at UT Elementary, as evidenced by the achievement of our students on report cards and state-wide assessments. Beyond grades and test scores, however, technology integration in the classroom is important in helping students learn technological skills along with academic content. As a result, our students, many of whom come from economically-disadvantaged families, are able to bridge the "digital divide" that too often segregates our society and limits opportunity for people without effective access to the digital tools of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

UT Elementary has been the grateful recipient of the Connected Communities grant from the Dell Foundation for three grant cycles.

In the 2004-06 Connected Communities grant cycle, the Dell Foundation provided the funding necessary to equip our school with desktop computers, printers, laptop computers, projectors, digital cameras, and handheld PCs for 145 students. This helped to integrate technology into curriculum at every grade level and classroom, to help diverse learners excel in school. UT Elementary continued to benefit from the technology provided by Dell after the grant cycle ended, and we built on that foundation to help bridge the digital divide to the students' families in the next grant cycle. We then planned to build on this program by introducing "take home technology," which would put computers into the hands of students outside the classroom and, potentially, introduce preschoolers to technology prior to their enrollment at UT Elementary.



In 2006-08, continued support from the Dell Foundation through its Connected Communities program was instrumental in expanding access to technology resources that UT Elementary families need through a laptop loaner program. With access to these laptops, family members are able to seek out information, access community resources, find job opportunities or education options, and learn about local events. Our social worker provided one-on-one technology literacy training to those parents who requested it, and helped them to access community resources. The laptop loaner program was so successful that demand for laptops was high and the waiting list was often long.

In 2008-10, the Dell Foundation again awarded UT Elementary the Connected Communities grant in order to replace some of the aging technology in the classrooms and expand the laptop loaner program. Now the number of laptops available to families has doubled from the previous academic year. With this grant we extended technology equipment such as document cameras and LCD projectors into more classrooms, including special areas such as art, music and Spanish.



Our goals with the Connected Communities program are to:

- Assist students in crossing the digital divide by making them, at an early age, technology-literate.
- Integrate technology fully with curriculum, instruction, and assessment in order to increase student achievement by making upgraded computers and technology available in all classrooms.
- Assist parents in crossing the digital divide by providing access to technology for our families who would not otherwise have this opportunity and softening the barriers between home and the classroom.