

Tech Lab FAQ's

Or, a conversation with myself...

What's this class called?

On a student's schedule, it's called "Investigating Technologies", the administration call it "Pathways", and the teacher and most students call it "Tech Lab".

So, this is a computer course, right?

Not exactly. Although students interact on a daily basis with the computers, these forms of technology are used to deliver content. They are not the content.

Okay...so then how is it a "technology" class?

Technology is, literally, applied science. In this class, students are tutored by the computers in a variety of scientific topic. They are then challenged to use this knowledge to solve real-world problems. Instead of mastering one or a few specific technologies, students are given a problem to solve and are then allowed to pick from a wide variety of information and technologies that are available to them.

But isn't it also a science class?

Absolutely. During the course of a full school year, students will be exposed to a wide variety of scientific topics ranging from genetics, to microbiology, to forensic science, physics, chemistry, meteorology, molecular biology, botany, engineering, nutrition, computer programming, and robotics. Students in the tech lab conduct experiments, analyze data, and write lab reports just like they do in a "normal" science class.

Do students do anything besides science?

A huge range of topics are covered at different points during a full year's rotation. These include physics, history, trigonometry, health and nutrition, formal and informal writing, illustrating, logical thinking, and construction techniques. In addition, students are able to work on their leadership and teamwork skills, organization, time management, and speaking skills.

Is it true that this class is easy?

That depends on how you define easy. Almost every student who takes this class will pass it. Most of them will get a "B" or better. There are a couple of reasons for this. First of all, most students who struggle to pass classes do so simply because they don't turn in their work. This course does not involve homework, so one of the biggest obstacles to a student's success is removed. Additionally, the small-group work environment means that each student is accountable to a small and comfortable group of their peers. Students within the groups are able to support each other, or give each other a gentle nudge when needed.

You mentioned group work...I thought you said students work on the computers.

Students begin each rotation by working individually or in pairs on the computers. During this time, they are acquiring knowledge and skill in a specific area of science. After about a week, though, students meet with others in their area and are presented with a common project or challenge. Each student must contribute his or her individual knowledge in order for the group to successfully meet their challenge goals.

That sounds really interesting...how can I learn more?

The tech lab facilitator has worked very hard to develop it into a legitimate academic class. He is more than happy to answer any questions. Or, if you really want to have some fun with it, come on down sometime and log on as a student. Working through a rotation as a student is really the best way to get an idea of how the tech lab operates.

