

Milligan explores cutting-edge classroom technology with area teachers

MILLIGAN COLLEGE, Tenn. (June 21, 2016) – Plickers. Edmodo. Brain Pop.

Strange names, but these new classroom technologies are just a few of the exciting innovations that several Milligan College Master of Education students presented at Technology Academy, an inaugural conference held Thursday at Science Hill High School. Attended by over 220 area teachers, the conference was started by Dr. David Timbs, a 1994 Milligan M.Ed. graduate, who serves as supervisor of instructional technology in the Johnson City Schools and adjunct education instructor at Milligan.

"This conference is unlike anything else in the region," said Dr. Greg Matthias, Milligan's assistant professor of education. "It's important for our students to help local teachers become more familiar with changing technological trends, because a lot of these technologies engage the whole brain and can help meet students where they're at."

Milligan M.Ed. student Daniel Couper, from Blountville, Tennessee, talked about several new programs, including a formative assessment tool called Poll Everywhere, which allows students to use their phones or laptops to answer questions in class, the results of which are instantly displayed on the projector at the front of the classroom.

"Everyone sees results in real time," said Couper, who plans to teach English and physics at the secondary level in the Johnson City area. "It allows teachers to see where their students are at while they're in the classroom."

Jackie Smith, a ninth grade honors biology teacher at Science Hill who attended the conference, said she has already been using Poll Everywhere in her class. "It helps me get 100% participation and know what's going on with my students," she said.

While she already considers herself tech-savvy and uses technology on a daily basis in her classroom, the Milligan-led session helped her learn about other new programs like ZipGrade, which turns a smartphone into an optical grading machine similar to a Scantron, and could shorten her time spent grading.

"I'm very excited to try that," said Smith, who has taught for 13 years. "Students want feedback right then, and this truly gives them instant feedback."

Couper said technology like Poll Everywhere does open up the issue about whether students should have cell phones in the classroom, and programs like this could be restricted depending on school policy.

"Technology does have drawbacks, but it's the world that students grow up in," said Couper. "Our goal at the conference was to provide the knowledge for teachers to be well-informed and let them make their own decision."

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