Class Discovers Power of the “Pen”

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For the 25 students in J.B. Wilson’s fourth grade class at Pottsville Elementary School, reading comprehension has recently taken on a whole new meaning in a partnership with Arkansas Tech University and CenturyTel to help fund a pilot reading project.

The grant made by CenturyTel for $3,300 completes a group effort to finance the study of a new technology as a learning tool for students.

The purpose of the project is to consider the feasibility of using Wizcom Technology Readingpens in public school classrooms.

The Reading pen helps students read by pronouncing and defining words that students may not understand or pronounce correctly.

Wilsons’ class was selected to pilot the project, and the progress and results will be compiled through the Arkansas Tech University School of Education. Dr. Byra Ramsey said she hopes the study will prove that the pens will increase student understanding in all areas across the curriculum.

The pens were initially funded through local P.E.O. chapters BM and CG, eight pens were given to the class at the beginning of the school year. The contribution made by CenturyTel allowed for enough pens to be purchased that allows every student in the class to have a pen.

The pens work by allowing a child to scan in a word that they can’t pronounce or don’t understand by running the pen slowly across the word.

The pen will then show the word on the built in screen, and the student can chose to have the device pronounce the word or display and pronounce the definition. The pen also stores the last 80 words scanned so that a teacher can look back and see what words need to be re-focused on for each individual child in the class.

If a particular word that a student can see or spell, but is unable to scan, the pen lets the child scan a bar code on the pen case letter by letter.

The goal of the project is to study the students progress several time throughout the year and measure that progress against students who don’t have the pens.

“We hope that these reading pens will provide the means for students to move forward in all subject matter regardless of their reading levels,” Ramsey said.

Wilson said that his students love using the pens. He said they are excited about reading and learning with this new tool.

Wilson went on to say that the pens have also helped his students with some Spanish and Indian words. “We’re really happy to be able to contribute to this project. The feedback from Mr. Wilson shows that he is already seeing the effects of these pens in the classroom,” said Jim Bradley, district manager for CenturyTel, who was on hand recently to present the check and meet the students.

Although more than 700,000 of the Wizcom Reading Pens have been sold world wide, this is the

first study using the reading pens in a regular education classroom, according to company spokesman Steve Heller.

The Russellville Kiwanis Club has recently agreed to provide two reading pens for a local kindergarten classroom, and has challenged other clubs in the area to join with them.

Ramsey said anyone who is interested in learning more about the pens can contact her at blramsey@cox-internet.com

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