

Connections Public Charter School, giving students a sense of purpose.

Students create links between culture, technology, and learning using Adobe software donated through the White House ConnectED program.



'A'ole pau ka 'ike i ka hula ho'ohahi

"Members of Studio Shaka develop skills in Adobe's industry-standard software that are essential to their success in a technology-driven world."

*John Thatcher, Principal and CEO,
Connections Public Charter School*



SOLUTION

Adobe Captivate, Adobe Photoshop Elements, Adobe Premiere Elements, and Adobe Presenter

RESULTS



EMPOWERED

Helped students take charge of their own learning, explore interests, and develop new skills



CONFIDENT

Through newfound skills and inventive after-school program, students gained confidence in their ability to achieve



TECH-SAVVY

Students learned valuable skills needed to propel their success in college and careers



RELEVANT

Students took pride in projects that explore their unique cultures and interests

Connections Public Charter School

Established in 2000

Students: 351

Hilo, Hawaii

www.connectionscharterschool.org

CHALLENGES

- Foster technology skills essential for college and career success
- Help students stay in school and overcome poverty risks
- Give students the opportunity to proactively explore their interests and talents
- Provide positive reinforcement in a supportive environment

Helping students achieve

A sense of empowerment and the determination to excel are vital for students wanting to pursue further education and move on to successful careers. But for students living in poverty, motivation and self-confidence can be elusive, leading to lower chances of success. This outlook is changing at Connections Public Charter School (CPCS), where students are finding renewed enthusiasm for learning through an inventive after-school program, Studio Shaka, and the availability of Adobe creative software, granted through the White House's ConnectED initiative.

"More than three quarters of our students live in poverty and opportunities for positive social connections are critical," says John Thatcher, Principal and CEO of Connections Public Charter School. "We need to provide our youth with the additional support they need to believe in themselves and become intrinsically motivated to learn and succeed in life."

Linking cultural knowledge with technology

Located in the East Hawaii community of Hilo, CPCS is a K-12 public charter school with a diverse student population. Many of the students are of mixed ancestry with heritages as varied as Hawaiian, Tahitian, and Native American. The value and influence of culture and ethnicity on student growth and development are essential components of teaching and learning at the school.

As part of its commitment to help students appreciate the value of their unique cultures, CPCS joined the High Tech Youth Network (HTYN), a learning community focused on empowering young people in hard-to-reach and underserved communities throughout the Pacific. The goal is to help them become more confident, resilient, and creative lifelong learners by linking their unique cultural knowledge with technology.

Fostering expression and learning

CPCS joined HTYN in 2014 and formed Studio Shaka—the first HTYN program established in Hawaii and in the United States. Student-members participating in the studio immediately took to the program. Most secondary students at CPCS have cell phones with cameras. They are highly motivated to learn how to edit photos and video they have captured. Studio Shaka gives them the perfect opportunity.

In Studio Shaka, student-members can express themselves and become more excited about learning. Some students apply technology to school-related projects; others explore their personal interests. Their choices have a positive influence on achievement and result in student-generated knowledge.

"The strategic vision for Studio Shaka is to encourage members to think creatively, critically, and strategically to make effective decisions, solve problems, and achieve goals in their academic, personal, and social lives," says Thatcher. "Technology is a cornerstone of the program."



“Students are eager to stay in school and participate in Studio Shaka, both because it’s a supportive ‘ohana,’ and because they have a chance to use industry-standard Adobe creative software.”

*John Thatcher, Principal and CEO,
Connections Public Charter School*

A much needed expansion

As Studio Shaka became increasingly popular, Thatcher recognized the need for more software—but not just any applications. He wanted more licenses of Adobe creative software to augment his limited supply so his students could learn industry-standard tools and develop marketable skills. Securing funds to acquire the software, however, was a challenge.

“Through the years, we have struggled to afford many of the teaching tools we need,” says Thatcher. “This has made it difficult for us to equip students with technologies that can help ignite their enthusiasm and develop workforce and college readiness skills.”

Then Thatcher heard through HTYN about Adobe software grants donated through the ConnectED initiative. He applied and secured the grant that included Adobe Captivate, Adobe Photoshop Elements, Adobe Premiere Elements, and Adobe Presenter software for the school.

Technology-powered enthusiasm

Today, using Adobe software, students in grades 5 through 12 participating in Studio Shaka are involved in project-based learning, an approach that allows them to take ownership of their education. Students have multiple options. They can film, edit, and produce short videos, design websites or social media sites, and more—all contributing to their ability to succeed in technology-driven education and careers.

One student took pictures of Historic Downtown Hilo, edited and composed them using Adobe Photoshop software, and created a website. He also used Adobe Premiere Elements to produce a stunning time-lapsed video of the Hawaiian shoreline, scenery, and night sky for his senior project “Day and Night.” He became so enthused that he took an Adobe Youth Voices mentoring class online, and now helps other students in Studio Shaka tell stories and bring meaning to concepts.

Another student whose mother is an artist and weaver became interested in weaving herself. After learning a specific style of loom weaving through videos on YouTube, she used Adobe Premiere Elements to create a time-lapsed video of herself engaging in the weaving technique.

In addition to giving students access to software, Studio Shaka offers leadership and community service opportunities that let members know that their contributions are important. Strong leaders who demonstrate a commitment to their community are rewarded with employment and travel opportunities that are enticing for students.

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*John Thatcher, Principal and CEO,
Connections Public Charter School*

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

- Adobe Captivate
- Adobe Photoshop Elements
- Adobe Premiere Elements
- Adobe Presenter

For more information

www.adobe.com/products/captivate.html

www.adobe.com/products/photoshop-elements.html

www.adobe.com/products/premiere-elements.html

www.adobe.com/products/presenter.html



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Making a difference

Empowered with the right tools and opportunities to demonstrate their talents, Studio Shaka's students are more motivated and proactive in guiding their own learning and making discoveries. They also gain marketable technology acumen. “Members of Studio Shaka develop skills in Adobe’s industry-standard software that are essential to their success in a technology-driven world,” says Thatcher.

Staff and mentors participate in, rather than simply supervising, learning activities. They actively reach out to youth and their families, encouraging them to visit the studio to increase local interest and participation. Their close involvement and use of technology side-by-side with member-students foster trusted, caring relationships that provide much-needed support for their students.

Through nurturing and newfound skills, students get positive reinforcement and gain confidence that helps them become more responsible members of their families, work groups, and communities. They learn to think more creatively and critically and to write, speak, and listen more effectively. All of these abilities provide a stronger foundation for future success.

“In a small community such as Hilo, youth run higher risks of losing interest and leaving school,” says Thatcher. “Students are eager to stay in school and participate in Studio Shaka, both because it’s a supportive ‘ohana,’ or family, and because they have a chance to use high-quality tools like Adobe creative software. Adobe’s donation to us through ConnectED has made a genuine difference in many students’ lives.”

About the White House ConnectED initiative

In 2013, President Barack Obama launched the ConnectED initiative, designed to enrich K-12 education for every student in America. ConnectED provides teachers with the best technology and the training to make the most of it, and empowers students through individualized learning and rich, digital content. To support this important initiative, Adobe is donating more than \$300 million in software and professional development services to K-12 Title I schools over four years.