

## St. Charles Borromeo Selects Discovery Education Science Techbook

I am pleased to announce that St. Charles has selected Discovery Education Science Techbook program for our primary science resource in grades 4-6. After considerable evaluation and analysis by our teachers, science specialists, and administrators, we have selected a new program that looks to the future and is designed to match how today's students learn with a resource that fits that need. I wanted to send you a short note to: 1) Highlight some of the basics of this exciting program; 2) Let you know what you can do to support your child in science and 3) Answer some of the questions you and your child may have.

- **Discovery Education Science Techbook is a virtual textbook.** That means your students won't be lugging around that big, heavy book in their backpacks. Instead, they'll access most of their science curriculum online and by doing hands-on labs or activities in their classroom. Developed after years of research by Discovery Education (part of the Discovery Channel organization), this comprehensive program includes exciting content from resources such as MythBusters (middle school,) Sid the Science Kid (K-2) and videos from Animal Planet, to name just a few. We are confident that Techbook's multi-media approach will excite students about the wonders of science and immerse them in the process of scientific inquiry.
- **While there are similarities with traditional science textbooks, including reading passages that are leveled to a student's proficiency, there are some important differences.** To begin with, Techbook is primarily a virtual or online resource. Your student will still have printed reading material for selected content, but the vast majority of the program's content is delivered online. While it is certainly advantageous for a student to have a home computer that has internet access, that is not a program requirement. We will make access available at school, both in their science classroom and through the computer labs.
- **As you know, students learn quite differently today than they did twenty or even ten years ago.** In a world of multimedia experiences, many of today's students are visual learners. They are comfortable with a laptop computer and love to collect information to solve challenging problems. And isn't that a good description of a scientist? Each week, students will be asked to address a few essential questions that are part of the 2010 Indiana State Standards. To answer these questions, they'll do fascinating virtual labs and hands-on activities, watch engaging videos to better understand earth, life or physical science, or read about real-world events and scientific breakthroughs. Of course, teachers will continue to do occasional whole-class lectures using resources from Discovery and elsewhere. But the focus will shift from the teacher as a lecturer to the student as an active learner.
- **Your teacher will periodically pre-select key, relevant resources that specifically address the essential science questions being studied within that unit.** Students will access these resources— and only these resources —through the student's own online access page, called the Student Center. Your child will have the opportunity to select the information resource(s) that best fits his or her learning style in order to answer the essential science questions posed. In this way, they become active participants in their own learning. Through this process, St. Charles' students will become immersed in the process of scientific inquiry and be well prepared for science in higher grades and beyond.
- **We hope that you will be an active partner with your student as they enter this exciting new world.** Periodically, you may want to log-on to your student's Techbook page to see what material is being covered. (Your student will have the website and access code.) But be careful. You may find yourself totally absorbed in the new world of science!

Thank you and welcome aboard to an exciting science adventure that will prepare your student for future success in school and to a life-long interest in science. Periodically I will be sending home updates about our experience with Discovery Education Science Techbook. But please don't hesitate to contact me or your teacher to provide feedback and to ask any questions you may have.