

# Tech projects net teacher new gear for class

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For Grade 5 students at Aurora's Northern Lights Public School, using  technology to say "I love you" won computer equipment for the class.

For the past three years, Jay Major, 35, infused technology, craft and art together for student-created Mother's Day and Father's Day projects. He asked them to incorporate original poems, music and personal messages into a touching and personal video.

"You know the project is a success when, Monday morning, after the project went home, there's a few teary messages from mothers on the answering machine," Mr. Major said.

Instead of sending students home with a handmade card with creative limerick or two, Mr. Major's students created and edited their own movies using family photographs flashing or scrolling across the screen and set to their parents' favourite songs.

"You show them a sampling of what they can do and they just flourish with it," the Newmarket resident said.

Mr. Major submitted some of his students' projects to the Teaching with Technology contest, hosted by CDW Canada. Winners in the national contest offered to kindergarten to Grade 12 teachers took home computer hardware and software for their classrooms.

Teachers entering the contest have to describe how technology enhances the learning experience.

"Technology is different than writing things down with pencil on paper," Mr. Major said. "You can create things and integrate art, language, music and technology."

But technology doesn't replace pen and paper, he said.

"Pencil and paper are used in the rough stages, to start building," he said. "Technology only enhances the final product."

The projects garnered the runner-up classroom workshop bundle for Mr. Major's class, including a desktop computer, printer, four monitors, mice and keyboards.

His Mother's and Father's days projects are not the only way Mr. Major teaches using technology. He combines history and drama into an ancient Greek mythology green screen project, through which students act out monologues and are superimposed onto photographs.

"Technology offers another outlet of expression," Mr. Major said. "Not a single student has fallen flat on their face while using it."

Mr. Major was one of the first teachers at Northern Lights Public School when it opened in 2003 and he has helped build the school's focus on technology by hosting workshops for teachers during lunch hour.

"Leadership comes from the classroom," he said. "Technology is one of those inevitabilities of life. We're opening doors for these students."