

**From Wagon Wheels to the Digital Highway: The Cougar Cast Network  
Project Narrative  
Utah Teachers and Technology Mini-Grant**

**Project Narrative**

Students of Washington County's Santa Clara Elementary School live technology. At home, they use iPods, computers, HDTV, cell phones, and Guitar Hero. Their lives are powered by the innovations and tools of technology—until they come to school.

As they walk through the doors of the school, they power down to VHS, paper, pencils, and print. At Santa Clara, we are doing all we can to keep that from happening. Over the past few years, we have worked with our school district's technology department, local businesses, and parent organizations to bring some of the technology into our school.

Thanks to help from these support organizations, we now have digital projectors in every classroom. Those same organizations are now working on placing interactive whiteboards in each classroom. But the process is slow—four to five classrooms a year. I would like to direct a project that uses technology to affect every student in our school. Here is my plan:

Santa Clara students are destined to become the leaders of their communities. At the local high school and middle school, they are the student body officers, the team captains, and the editors of the school paper and the yearbooks. Their heritage moves them toward leadership.

If they are to be the strong leaders of tomorrow, they need to learn, in elementary school, the leadership qualities of teamwork, empathy, organization, respect for diversity, and how to use the tools of technology for work. I would like to direct a technology project that would give my students those experiences.

As an adviser to the elementary school student council and the yearbook staff, I would like to direct a technology project where these students would collect the school news, build a storyboard, and broadcast the news and editorial specials over a school network each morning. Currently, the student council does daily announcements over a voice intercom. I would like to replace that with a digital video broadcast that includes not only announcements of the lunch menu and student birthdays but also information about student events and activities, as well as other more relevant information, such as

- short commercials on social skills, antibullying, and healthy lifestyles.
- Human-interest stories.
- results of contests and school-to-school challenges.
- highlights of service projects.
- reports on field trips.
- specials on school staff.
- community news.

This information will integrate school curriculum study into life situations with meaning and understanding beyond textbooks and class assignments. **Students will use writing and speaking skills, calculations, time fractions, and current social experiences** as they plan and prepare the broadcasts.

I believe that this project would benefit the **34 fourth-grade and fifth-grade student-body officers and yearbook staff** who research and develop the broadcasts by bringing their attention to the people around them. As they look for stories, they will become more aware of the needs of other students. They will be watching for the good in others. They will focus on what social skills are needed and why. They will learn to respect each other and the population of students they represent.

In addition, they will benefit as they work in teams to digitally produce the daily broadcasts. They will use their prior knowledge of technology at school and learn new ways that technology can serve their needs. They will prepare as the leaders of tomorrow by leading with technology and teamwork today.

This project will benefit the wider K–5 student population as they serve as the audience for this information. They will be the subjects and participants in the activities and projects reported on the Cougar Cast Network.

They will learn how their behaviors and the actions of those outside the school affect their lives. Through the magic of digital video and photography, they will see how their service projects benefit the residents of the homeless shelter. They will see what their donation of toys and books has done for the orphans in Ecuador. They will see their classmates at district and state competitions, and they will see themselves as the change agents on the playground and in their school.

This broader audience of **560 students will learn from the Cougar Cast stories** and look forward to the time when they can be a part of that leadership team.

Technologies to be used will include

- digital cameras, digital video and mics.
- computers for editing.
- digital editing software.
- broadcast equipment.
- school wiring.

This project will integrate the training students have had in writing, organizing, planning, calculating, and prioritizing into a meaningful project. Although the broadcasts will be prepared in the before-school and after-school forums the student leadership teams already use, they will be applying, in a meaningful way, the things they learn in their classrooms. In addition, if funded, my students would use this equipment for classroom project learning for writing, social studies, and science.

This project is sustainable because the school will bear the large initial cost. Using our school's technology budget, we will purchase the broadcast equipment and pull the wires to connect each classroom. The grant will purchase one computer, three cameras, and the editing software. As technology advances, we will seek other funding to update our recording and editing equipment.

If funded, this project will impact students for good. All students will learn from the information digitally delivered to their classrooms daily. Those preparing the broadcasts will see technologies as tools (not just entertainment) that can be used for applying the information and skills they learn every day in their classrooms. They will see school as an extension of their digital world and their digital world as a part of their classroom.

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