

# Supporting the arts with technology

**Barry Johnson**

**W**hile walking the halls at Shanghai Community International School

Pudong, one can't miss seeing

teachers and students using technology in creative and meaningful ways. You'll notice

pockets of students gathering around a computer creating a movie presentation or col-

laborating on an assignment. Teachers are seen demonstrat-

ing how to digitize a piece of art or musical score. The whir

of a 3D printer can be heard as it processes a replica of a student's CAD drawing. It's

fascinating to see the variety of ways that technology is supporting the arts.

SCIS prides itself on provid-

ing ubiquitous access to many forms of technology with the main purpose of enhanc-

ing and supporting student achievement. It also excels at using this technology in an

integrated manner rather than making it the prime focus of learning. Technology as a tool can help teachers differenti-

ate their instruction and help meet the needs of various

learning styles. As the world of technology rapidly expands, our students and teachers are exposed to many exciting resources making each day an opportunity for new learning.

My journey through our campus begins in our Music department where on any given day, melodies can be heard echoing through the halls long before you reach the classroom door. Today,

though, things are silent. Instead of holding their instruments, I see high school students, laptops out, writ-

ing music aided by the use of computer software. Sibelius is the program and students are using it to learn about music theory. The immediate

feedback that the software provides promotes the learning process by giving students a sense of where their progress is and allows them

to quickly make necessary adjustments so they can reach their goal.

Next door, middle school music students use their laptops to record their practice sessions at home and are saving their audio files to the server. While this approach

may seem like a simple use of technology, the benefits are great. Garageband produces a waveform that gives students a visual representation of their sound recording allow-

ing them to not only hear themselves play but to visually compare their recording against the metronome to judge how well their timing is.

In addition, the student may not be satisfied with his or her recording, self-critiquing it as they listen, and may record it until they are. This leads to the student spend-

ing more time practicing. Having students turn in their digital recording also gives the teacher the opportunity to hear and give feedback to each student, freeing up class time for new learning.

Creativity becomes visible as I head upstairs to the Visual Arts Department. What catches my eye isn't the dazzling array of student work decorating the walls, but the ways kids are using technology to create it. Take digital photography for example, where students' exploration of the camera settings leads to new discoveries and



**An SCIS High School student utilizes technology in Visual Art class.**

learning resulting in some amazing shots. Editing software programs like Adobe's Photoshop or Lightroom are used to take the creativity

to the next level but isn't the focus of their learning, nor is the drawing tablet they are writing on. The technology is

seamlessly integrated into the learning process and acts as just another tool, like a pencil or brush, and a means to

completing their assignment. Technology has the power to redefine students' creative

expression and SCIS is poised to support it and see it grow.

Down the hall, 3D objects are being digitally designed and printed in Modular Technology class. 3D printing has seen exponential growth in popularity in all sorts of industries. At SCIS, we feel that exposing students to 3D design gives them not only another avenue to creatively express their ideas, but it

builds higher-level thinking skills, preparing them for a future filled with innovative technologies.

*(Barry Johnson is SCIS Pudong campus technology coordinator.)*