

# Using VR technology to foster learning in middle school

zSpace learning experience inspires curiosity and accelerates understanding of content

**W**hen Teasley Middle School in Cherokee County, Georgia, opened for the 2013-14 school year, teachers and administrators were looking for an opportunity to help students in grades 6 through 8 better understand STEM learning content.

Teasley is a Title I school with more than half of its students receiving free or reduced lunch. It also has the highest percentage of English language learners and students with disabilities among middle schools in Cherokee County School District, which has 41,800 students and is 40 minutes north of Atlanta.

Bobby Blount, assistant superintendent for technology and information services for CCSD, first heard about zSpace through a conference. Blount considered Teasley a great candidate for a zSpace pilot program. Students at the school already had laptops, and teachers were trained on technology and enthusiastic about it.

"Training went very well as we had a teacher who took the reins on the lab and helped the other teachers along, and that's just the perfect model," says Blount. "We are trying to replicate that in our other schools and I have dedicated staff that will focus on zSpace professional development next year."

Sue Zinkil, principal at Teasley, says "We really needed to try something different there and this gave us a chance to really step outside of our comfort zone" in terms of engaging the students.

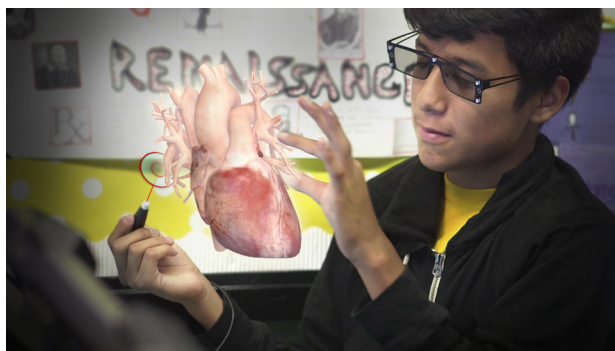
zSpace, which is now in three middle schools and one high school in the district, takes the popularity of 3D technology and merges it with standards-based content to create a dynamic, and interactive content-delivery environment. The zSpace 3D lab puts DNA, land structures, chemical reactions, cells, body systems and countless other things at students' fingertips.

"zSpace provides students with an exciting and authentic learning experience," says Blount. "Teachers are able to seamlessly enhance the delivery of their content using zSpace as a supplement to their lesson plans."

Blount adds, "zSpace spoke to how our students now interact with technology. They want to be immersed in it and have control over it."

Blount says the qualitative return on investment for the district is easy to see when he watches the students in the zSpace lab.

"For me it's watching students using the technology and seeing how focused they are, working in collaboration with one another as they alternate the role of navigator and ob-



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server," says Blount. "They are excited about learning and being totally engaged and invested in mastering the lesson. I love walking into the lab and seeing how excited the students are as they interact with the technology, while they are learning the content. That's my kind of my return on investment."

As for the quantitative return on investment, Blount says there has been a growth in science test scores. Blount adds that he can see students' excitement using zSpace, plus the opportunity for students to be invested in mastering their own academic outcomes.

"You have the students taking an active role in their learning and teachers are more of a facilitator. One of the quantifiable pieces of data I can share is when we have those students in the zSpace lab they are active, engaged learners and this is reflected in their scores," says Blount. "Teasley's score on Georgia's College and Career Ready Performance Index showed a 10-point gain over the previous year. I attribute that to good teaching, strong leadership and access to great supplemental technology such as zSpace."



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