



NEW ECHS Spotlight — The ASK Academy

“Emphasizing STEM”

Q: What was the draw to the EEDW Project for The Ask Academy?

A: As a STEM school, ASK is always searching for ways to ensure our curriculum meets the needs of students who are going into college, training programs, or the military. Information technology is prevalent across all training fields and will help our students develop the skills necessary for success in their post-secondary education.

Q: What value do you see in the EEDW project for The Ask Academy?

A: This project will help students become more aware of opportunities within and outside of ASK. While we have a robust enrollment in AP Computer Science and AP Computer Science Principles, this program will encourage more students to take IT classes at CNM via our dual enrollment program. We are also working to develop internships with some of the surrounding tech companies that will allow our students to practice those skills.

Q: The city of Rio Rancho is known for its IT business, especially Intel; how does IT apply to that pathway for your students who choose this as a career path? Also, how would IT

apply to your students who select healthcare, agriculture, law enforcement, education, civil service, etc.?

A: IT skills are critical for many of the employers in Rio Rancho and ASK is working to develop pathways for our graduates to fill those needs. However, IT is prevalent throughout all work areas and, with the advent and spread of AI, it will become even more ingrained within our culture and work. To be a savvy employee, our students will need to develop the critical thinking skills necessary to be productive in a future environment that we have yet to envision. Certainly, as teachers we use IT all the time--even if it is just to figure out if our students have used AI tools to write their essays. But that is the critical thinking I mentioned earlier--as we read essays, we have to ask ourselves, "I know this 10th grader. Would he use that word correctly as seamlessly in this sentence?" Teachers know when their students turn to the thesaurus because some big word magically and clunkily appears in the sentence. Or, we think "No one from this century writes that way." IT skills will help our students in every area they enter because the future will be infused with AI.

Q: How do you see IT growing as a pathway at The Ask Academy in the next five years?

A: Computer science classes have been a huge draw over the past few years. ASK would like to expand its offerings into the machine learning and cybersecurity realm. Striving to remain relevant will always be a struggle for schools because technology changes so rapidly. However, like learning the alphabet and basic arithmetic, basic computer and IT skills will very soon become an integral part of every students' educational experience from kindergarten through the 12th grade. ASK will capitalize on this premise and begin exposing its students earlier and weave it into the project-based curriculum.