



SUCCESS STORY

Computers Benefit Schools, Teachers

Integrating computers into education



Photo: USAID/Esther Backhaus

At Brendan Simbwaye Primary School, computer lab facilitator Alfred Mbidzo, second from right, shows donated computer equipment to USAID and school officials.

Teachers now come to the lab before their lessons to find suitable e-content to enhance their teaching.

Brendan Simbwaye Primary School has become a model of how to promote computers as both a teaching tool and an administrative aid. In 2003, the school was selected to participate in a pilot project to determine if information technology could help address teacher shortages. USAID donated 10 computers and provided initial training.

Alfred Mbidzo was appointed the school's computer lab facilitator — it was his first time at a computer. He received training and then in turn trained fellow teachers. By October 2004, Mbidzo was holding regular training courses on Microsoft Word and Excel for teachers. The demand for computers was so high that he also began holding open lab time after school. The number of teachers trained in basic computer skills went from three in 2004 to nine a year later.

Each term, Mbidzo trains a new group of teachers in the lab and gives exams to monitor their progress. He teaches them about basic computer skills and educational software. As a result, teachers have become aware of how computers can strengthen their teaching — they come to the lab to find e-content for the classroom. Many are now using Learning Online, a curriculum software for math, science, and English, and Microsoft Encarta, a multimedia encyclopedia, to enhance their lessons.

The school principal, Mr. Mutakalilumo, has helped integrate information technology into the school's daily routine by requiring teachers to record student grades on spreadsheets. To cover computer maintenance and lab expenses, Mutakalilumo agreed to charge a minimal fee for Internet use.

The teachers are grateful for the computer lab and training. They say lesson planning is easier with computers, since they can now save and change worksheets and exams efficiently. The school has become a workable and sustainable model for integrating information and communication technology into the classroom. With efforts like these, Namibian teachers are improving their teaching and better equipping their students for a productive future.