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Technology and the “Professional Dreamer” Vanda Dreyer, Brittany Fedus, and Selene Gatzonis

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Principal Ira Pernick calls himself a “Professional Dreamer” and the technology seen throughout the school does in fact, seem like a dream. at [Robert F. Kennedy High School](#) in Flushing, Queens rivals that of any private university.

The high school, located at 75-40 Parson Boulevard has undergone significant technological advances in the short eight years that Ira Pernick has been principal. The close knit school, with a population of a little over 600, has the feel of a college campus. Students lounge in the hallways enjoying Wi-Fi access on their free periods enabling them to do homework throughout the school.

[SMART board™](#) interactive whiteboards and projectors have been installed in each classroom to facilitate learning. SMART boards™ have the power to transform the once stale classroom into a “dynamic learning environment[1]”. SMART boards™ are connected to the internet, giving teachers and students boundless sources of information to work with. They allow students and teachers alike to become more technologically savvy.

When one thinks of a public high school, we do not necessarily think of a high tech computer lab. The main computer lab in RFK is uniquely a classroom and a lab, with computers sunk into each workstation. This allows students a desk surface to both take notes and work on the computer simultaneously. And just in case students get the sudden urge to MySpace or Facebook, teachers can monitor what each student is doing at their computer through a unique surveillance system.

Is a sophisticated computer lab not enough? Try adding a laptop lounge in the library complete with an LCD flat screen television. The idea behind this additional lab, according to Principal Pernick, is to create a comfortable space for students to access the internet or just relax and watch the Mets game during free periods.

Similar to the Blackboard Learning System™, used on many college campuses, a link for eChalk is available on the RFK website. The program, eChalk, allows students to submit assignments electronically as well as providing teachers with a resource for managing class assignments. With the growing use of Blackboard Learning System™ on college campuses students using eChalk can become comfortable with the online class interface prior to entering a university.

The school website is also a resource for parents to monitor their children’s progress. TeacherEase is a system that allows teachers, parents, and students to communicate about common goals. Students no longer have to stress so much about remembering exactly what they needed to complete for homework. All assignments are readily accessible to students via the TeacherEase system. Students can no longer hide behind the, “Mom, I have no homework” excuse.

Parents can collaborate with educators, and by accessing Teacherease they can help increase their children's productivity. In fact, statistics show that missed work has decreased by 40%, and average scores increased by 8%. Not only does it benefit parents and students, it forces teachers to be more vigilant about entering grades, posting lesson plans, and keeping up to date with overall work.

In order to further communication and the sense of community within RFK, Principal Pernick also has a blog. He uses the blog to inspire students, discuss issues in public education, school happenings, and even comments on local sports teams.

The vision that RFK and its innovative principal promotes is one of a new model of public education. It is geared towards the growing demands of the twenty-first century and the idea that the school is the center of the community.

[\[1\]](http://www2.smarttech.com/st/en-US/Products/SMART+Boards/Front+Projection/Default.htm) <http://www2.smarttech.com/st/en-US/Products/SMART+Boards/Front+Projection/Default.htm>