

Calculators Tell Teachers Which Pupils Need Help

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Texas Instruments, whose calculators helped make the company a household name, has found a way to help teachers quickly identify students who may be failing math, CEO Rich Templeton said on May 14.

The so-called TI-Navigator sends wireless signals from pupils' handheld calculators to a personal-computer screen that lets instructors correct and analyze errors in real time.

"The teacher can understand who's not getting it" by assessing which functions students keyed into their calculators, Templeton said at the Reuters Global Technology, Media and Telecoms Summit in New York.

Texas Instruments' graphing calculators and other educational devices accounted for only 2.4 percent of the Dallas, Texas-based company's \$3.2 billion of revenue in the three months ended March 31. The rest came from sales of semiconductors used in cell phones. Texas Instruments is the world's largest maker of chips for mobile phones.

But calculators, long a fixture in college mathematics and engineering classrooms, are more profitable than semiconductors and the company sees them as a core part of the business, Templeton said.

With TI-Navigator, even shy students get a say in the classroom as teachers can review their calculations streamed wirelessly, and quietly, to the instructor's monitor, according to the company's Web site.

The system lets teachers "get answers from every student, not just the vocal ones," says TI's Web site. Instructors also can identify and correct common mistakes as they occur and, if necessary, adjust lessons as they go along.

Templeton was quick to note that the system, introduced about two years ago, is not designed to spy on students, but is meant to be used as a learning tool.

"It's about how do you help teachers understand the effectiveness of how they are teaching lessons and how their students are following along," Templeton said.

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