Focusrite Vocaster Two used at Torrington High School



Being asked to write a formal 500-word essay is sure to elicit groans from generations of high school students. But when Wayne Splettstoeszer, Director of Instrumental Music/Music Technology at Torrington High School in Torrington, CT, asks his students to create a five-minute podcast, they're eager to get going. Splettstoeszer, a 29-year veteran educator who was nominated for the 2023 GRAMMY Music Educator Award (for which he became one of just 25 semifinalists from a group of 1,500 educators), and who was awarded the Mike Kovins TI:ME Teacher of the Year award in 2008, says he saw the value of podcasting as an educational tool early on. "It's really the next vehicle through which to reach kids," he says. "It really gets them engaged. You can ask them to talk about anything – favorite music, playlists, and so on – and they take it from there. They can be themselves. It opens up their communications skills. One student talked about her mental health journey. They'll really do some deep dives. Instead of feeling like doing an assignment, it feels like having a conversation."

The reason those conversations are taking place is due in large part to the school investment in Focusrite's Vocaster Two Studio bundle. Four Vocaster Two units, acquired through MusicFirst in January 2023, enabled Splettstoeszer's department to set up a podcasting environment quickly, efficiently and reliably. "It's so simple to use – most of the kids are up and running in five minutes," he says. "No learning

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curve, no technology issues – just plug in and go. That’s the beauty of the Vocaster operationally, but what also makes a huge difference is that what the kids come up with sounds incredibly professional.”

The Focusrite Vocaster Two offers two mic inputs and two headphone outputs, with auto-gain, enhance and mute function. The unit also includes Bluetooth connectivity for bringing in audio from another device such as a mobile phone. If that device supports bi-directional Bluetooth audio, the Bluetooth connectivity can act as an alternative for, or addition to, the wired phone connector. The mic inputs of both units have +48v phantom power available, so they can be used with dynamic or condenser mics, and include an “Enhance” feature that can quickly create unique tonalities. Small and lightweight, it’s all any school needs to make podcasting part of their educational format. “It’s a totally transparent way to engage kids and get them talking to each other instead of to their screens,” says Splettstoeszer. “It’s a great piece of gear at a great price.”

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