

Comal Independent School District

NEWS RELEASE

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SVHS teacher, students loving new Mac lab

When Terry Rossio spoke at the Austin Film Festival last year, Smithson Valley High teacher Chris Nisley listened.

Rossio, whose impressive screenwriting portfolio includes “Shrek”, “Aladdin” and “Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl,” was in a round table discussion with Nisley and several of his students at the Austin Film Festival when he asked whether they were using Macs or PCs.

When the students answered PCs, Rossio shook his head – that’s when Nisley knew it was time to make a serious bid for a Mac lab.

“He explained that almost all of the film production today is done in (Mac video editing software) Final Cut Pro,” Nisley said. “I knew my students needed to be able to work with that program.”

Before Nisley could get a Mac lab, two things had to happen first. He had to get certified to teach Final Cut Pro, and SVHS needed funding for a the lab.

The first came after Nisley was one of only 20 teachers statewide awarded a grant from Apple to take a Final Cut Pro 6 teaching certification course given online through the University of North Texas.

After four months of courses and study, Nisley had four days of on-site training at Apple’s Austin campus, where he received his certification.

The funding for the Mac labs came when Comal ISD Career and Technical Education Director Becky Walker decided to put Nisley’s class under CTE’s umbrella because of the value it presented for students.

“This training will give students so many new opportunities when they come out of this class,” Waker said. “We ultimately want to make this not only a certification class but one where students earn dual credit for college.”

When Comal ISD Assistant Network Administrator Travis Hinman set up the SVHS Mac lab right before school started, Nisley couldn’t contain his joy.

“He was like a kid in a candy store,” Hinman said. “He had just learned all this exciting information, and now he was going to get to share it with his students.”

Nisley, who teaches Computer Multimedia and Animation Technology, Web Mastering, and Multimedia (Film Class), said his students were a little bit shocked to walk into a room full of Macs on the first day of school.

“I heard a couple of people say they hated Macs on the first day of school,” Nisley said. “By the time open house came around on Sept. 14, all I heard was parent after parent telling me their child had already asked for a Mac for Christmas.”

Senior Regan Manning takes all three of Nisley’s classes.

“I was reluctant to use Macs at first because I was so used to PCs and it was a bit awkward,” Manning said. “But it didn’t take me long to realize the Macs were a lot faster, and we could do a lot more on them. Mr. Nisley told us we’d fall in love with them and we did.”

Manning said he definitely sees the benefit of getting Final Cut Pro certification.

“My cousin owns a production company,” he said. “Coming out of high school with certification would mean at the very least you’d be able to get an internship making pretty good money. With so many places using this technology right now, you’re pretty much guaranteed a job.”

Nisley agrees that the students who take what will be Final Cut Pro 7 certification this spring will have a huge head start on fellow high school graduates without the same kind of training.

“Everyone in the industry is using this right now – from film, to television, to recording,” he said. “Also, all of the universities are using the software we’re learning for graphic design, so our students are going to have many different choices on where to utilize these skills and that’s very exciting.”

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IN PHOTO: Smithson Valley High students Regan Manning (left, sitting) and Cade Zenner are busy working on editing film during teacher Chris Nisley’s multimedia class in the school’s new Mac lab.