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NEWS BRIEFS

Students benefit from technology initiatives

In a concerted effort to keep students “powered up” as they enter the classroom every day, Comal ISD has dedicated a substantial chunk, about \$8 million, of the 2008 bond package to technology.

“With the technology funds from the 2008 bond package, we intentionally found great teaching tools,” said Sandra Shelton, Comal ISD chief technology officer. “Our goal was to get the technology in the hands of the teachers and students to increase learning.”

For example, every teacher in the district was issued a Macintosh laptop. Computers on Wheels (COWs) have been issued to every campus, three at each of the 16 elementary schools, four at each of the five middle schools and five at each of the three comprehensive high schools.

“We are increasing those numbers too,” Shelton said, “because we want to make sure every student in the district has the ability to access a computer when he/she needs it.”

One of the more successful initiatives is the lending of digital library books to students at the secondary level, she said. Students may “load” a chosen book onto the device, check it out for a period of time and read it at home. For the Alamo Colleges-Memorial Early Colleges High School, nearly the entire library is digital, she said.

The 2nd grade writing project involves portable computers for students to learn how to type and to begin honing their writing skills.

“These computers are durable and by bringing them into the classroom, we’re not taking up a lab or a COW,” Shelton said.

Finally, distance learning and video conferencing equipment enables students and teachers to connect with fellow students and teachers all over the world.

“Our students can visit other students anywhere in the world,” Shelton said. “Students can collaborate between campuses in our district, ‘go’ to NASA, or tap into the lessons by teachers in other districts.”

A link on the district’s website, www.comalisd.org, called “iConnect with Technology” details all of the online opportunities and services for students, parents and staff through the district technology.

Included are: txConnect, the parent portal to their child’s grades and attendance; Studywiz, an online learning management system that allows for ease of access to classroom content and communication between teachers, students, and parents; and most recently added: Atomic Learning. Atomic Learning is a new online training resource available to all students, parents, teachers and staff that provides training tutorials on more

than 110 of the most commonly used software applications and other technology resources.

Through a comprehensive array of technology, teachers and students in Comal ISD have the tools at their fingertips to advance learning and student performance.

District meets requirements of IDEA

Comal ISD has received notification by the Texas Education Agency that it meets the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Determination elements include: compliance with the state performance plan; valid, reliable and timely data; status of uncorrected noncompliance; financial audits; and program effectiveness.

To achieve a “meets requirements” designations, the district must earn a “0” on each of the determination elements, which Comal ISD accomplished for the 2010-11 school year.