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IN BRIEF is published three times a year by Skokie School District 68.

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Technology ‘transforming learning’ for students, teachers

Following a two-year research and evaluation process, District 68 is putting Apple iPad tablet computers into the hands of every student and teacher.

All students in grades 3-8 have received iPad Airls, which they take home at night and on weekends. Students in kindergarten through 2nd grade are sharing iPad Minis that remain in their classrooms. And each pre-K classroom has been issued two iPad Minis, so the youngest students have access to the devices.

Students received their iPads at orientation nights at the start of the year. “Getting iPads into the hands of 1,260 students and 180 teachers and administrators, not to mention another 180 or so for the K-2 classrooms, was an enormous logistical undertaking,” said Nancy Battaglia, the district technology director.

“This is about transforming learning, not technology for technology’s sake,” said Lisa Schwartz, assistant superintendent for curriculum.

Teachers received iPad training last school year, and more than half of the staff took optional training over the summer. Further training for all teachers was conducted at the beginning of the year.

Ms. Schwartz said, “I collected feedback after that first institute day in August. I got almost 100 percent participation, and it was overwhelmingly positive.”



District parents got basic computer instruction during free Saturday sessions at the Apple Store in Skokie.

“At all of our trainings, it was stressed to us that the computers weren’t there to drive the instruction, just support it,” said Anne Rutherford, a 6th grade science teacher. “As we become more knowledgeable, we will be able to redesign our curriculums around the devices so we are using them to their fullest and offering the best, most engaging curriculum to our students.”

“Curriculum is evolving slowly as we get better at using technology and learn more about what we can do with it,” Ms. Schwartz said. “For example, we’re now moving into

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Welcome, new staff members

Katy Barry is a special education teacher at Devonshire who received a bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois and a master's in special education from National Louis University. She taught for four years at the Chicago Math and Science Academy and at District 62 in Des Plaines.

Brandee Dolgin, a 7th grade math teacher at OOJH, has a bachelor's in secondary education and mathematics from Northwestern University. For three months after graduation she was a day-to-day substitute teacher in Chicago Public Schools.

Nicholas Joe is an 8th grade math teacher at OOJH with a B.S. in mathematics from the University of Illinois; he is currently working on a master's degree in mathematics at Eastern Illinois University. He has been a math teacher in Waukegan District 60 at both the middle school and high school levels for the past three years.

Catherine Lannert is the instructional technology coach at Devonshire. She has a bachelor's degree from Marietta College and a master's in education from DePaul University. She was a 5th grade teacher and technology coach at Kaneland Community Unit School District 302 for 11 years.

Sarah Larsen, an 8th grade language arts teacher at OOJH, taught there for five years before resigning last year when her family moved to Boston. The family has now returned to the Chicago area and she is resuming her position at the junior high.

Stephanie Marcus is a speech/language pathologist at Stenson. She received a bachelor's from the University of Wisconsin and a master's in speech/language pathology from Northwestern University. Before coming to District 68 she worked at Oak Tree Developmental Center in Chicago.

Diane Meske is an instructional reading coach at Devonshire with a bachelor's in early childhood education and a master's degree as a reading specialist from Dominican University. She was a teacher at St. Ferdinand School for the past nine years and has coached literacy educators at Dominican University for the past two summers.

Devin Morris, a 7th grade language arts teacher at OOJH, graduated from Loyola University with a bachelor's in elementary education. He taught for a year in the Chicago Public



From left: Stephanie Marcus, Kristine Murphy, Diane Meske, Katy Barry, Nicholas Joe, Brandee Dolgin, Ralph Petrella, Devin Morris, Catherine Lannert. Not pictured: Sarah Larsen.

Schools system and then came to District 68 as a special education teaching assistant at Devonshire School in 2013-14. He switched to OOJH last year, first as a teaching assistant and then as a long-term substitute teacher.

Kristine Murphy is an ELL preschool teacher at the Early Childhood Center. She has a bachelor's in early childhood education from Northern Illinois University and a master's from Concordia University. She also obtained a Certificate from the American College of Education to teach English as a second language. She was an early childhood special education teacher in Hawthorn District 73 for four years and spent four years in a similar position with the Southern Will County Cooperative for Special Education in Joliet.

Ralph Petrella, an instrumental music teacher at OOJH, graduated from the University of Illinois with both a bachelor's and a master's in music education. He was the director of bands at Aurora University for two years and then director of bands at East Richland High School in Olney, Ill., for the last four years.

Two new administrators added at OOJH

Greg Hanson is the new assistant principal at Old Orchard Junior High School. He has a B.A. in history and secondary education from Augustana College and a master's in education from UIC, where he is pursuing a doctorate. He studied education policy and curriculum and instruction at the University of Wisconsin, and was a research assistant on the Data-Driven Instructional Systems Project in the Wisconsin Center for Educational Research. He was a resident principal at the John Milton Gregory



Greg Hanson

Math & Science Academy in the Chicago Public Schools. He was a teacher and assistant principal at Pathways in Education High School in Chicago.

Ken Hommowun is the new dean of students at OOJH. He has a B.A. in music education from Illinois Wesleyan University and an M.A. in education from Olivet Nazarene University. He comes from Chippewa Middle School in Des Plaines, where he taught music and drama. Before that, he taught in Ridgeland District 122 in Oak Lawn.



Ken Hommowun

'Transforming learning'

Continued from page 1

the Next Generation Science Standards. That presents huge possibilities for teaching and learning.”

OOJH principal Robyn Huemmer said, “As we get more comfortable we’ll be able to take it to the next level. In many ways students will be directing their own learning.”

Teachers get help from instructional technology coaches at each school. Coaches talk to teachers during planning time about integrating technology into lessons, and they can co-teach with classroom teachers when appropriate. Ms. Rutherford said, “Our coach has helped me with everything from the basics of the programs we use to helping design lessons using apps our kids would find exciting.”

Teachers also get help from the iTeam, a group of 20 teachers who volunteered for intensive training and pass along their own insights and discoveries.

“At the first institute day, they demonstrated some apps that can be used in the classroom,” Ms. Huemmer said. “The [iTeam member] can say, ‘Here’s something I tried, this is what worked, this is what didn’t, this is how I tweaked it, check it out.’”

Ms. Rutherford also pointed out that she and other teachers are finding that “some of our best training comes from the kids!”

Many students are already familiar with digital devices. Others, however, have little or no experience with them. While many families have computers

For more information about TLI68—Transforming Learning in District 68—go to <http://www.skokie68.org/tli68-11-information.html>.

and Internet access at home, some have to get their online service elsewhere, such as the library.

“I was doing classroom observations and in one where the kids were working with their iPads the teacher asked if anyone would be more comfortable with paper and pencil,” Ms. Huemmer said. “Two students raised their hands and she let them go ahead and do their work on paper.” Also, the school keeps iPad keyboards for students who prefer to use them.

Teachers and administrators agree that students

are excited about the iPads. “One parent told me her child said, ‘Thank you, this makes homework so much easier to do,’” Ms. Battaglia said.

Ms. Rutherford said, “In years past, kids would come to school and watch us work. Now we watch them work. They are more engaged, excited and self-expressed.”

Students also learn digital citizenship: the idea that they need to be thoughtful, careful and responsible when using the Internet and social media.

“We did a survey last year and found that few parents knew much about digital citizenship,” Ms. Schwartz said. “Making parents aware is a way to get them to help make their kids more knowledgeable and responsible about how they use technology, and at the same get them more involved.”

District 68 has offered parent workshops, answers to FAQs and a parent-student handbook. The Apple Store in Skokie sent Apple representatives to the orientation nights and held two free Saturday seminars for parents who wanted basic training.

District gets ready for new teacher evaluations

District 68 is preparing to comply with state requirements that teacher performance evaluations “must include data and indicators of student growth as a ‘significant factor’” beginning in the 2016-2017 school year.

“Student growth has been part of teacher evaluations in our district for years. We’ve always talked about it during evaluations, asking teachers to show how their teaching is affecting their students’ progress,” said Sue O’Neil, principal of Jane Stenson School. “But now it’s more formal. Thirty percent of the evaluation is based on student growth and measuring that growth is based on state-mandated

assessments.”

“It’s a huge shift for the education system, and for teachers in the district,” said District 68 Supt. James Garwood. “It will help teachers look more at data and help us as a school system [give more consideration to] data and develop data-driven instruction.”

Like any change in the status quo, the prospect of a new evaluation process can be intimidating. To help alleviate anxiety among teachers and prepare for next year, a committee of 22 teachers and administrators put together a new evaluation model. It includes student growth coupled with the teacher

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IN BRIEF

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Board of Education meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month in the Educational Service Center at 9440 Kenton Ave. You are invited to attend.

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Thank you, Skokie Library!

District 68 and other Skokie districts have benefited from the generosity of the Skokie Public Library and its patrons.

For a week in August, the library asked patrons to donate school supplies in lieu of paying fines for overdue items. The library waived \$1 in fines for every school supply item patrons brought in. The schools suggested appropriate items for donation.

Donors brought items including pencils, crayons and markers, folders, paper, notebooks, glue sticks, tape, tissues and disinfecting wipes.

“Each of our schools got three boxes of assorted supplies to distribute to families who might need a little extra help obtaining them,” said Leslie Gordon, principal at Highland School.

“Our schools already have such a good relationship with the library, but this came as a complete surprise,” Ms. Gordon said. “It’s extremely generous and we deeply appreciate it.”

Teacher evaluations

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performance framework already in use.

The district will pilot the new model later this school year. Taking part in the pilot is optional and risk-free, “but we’ve had overwhelming interest from teachers who want to be part of it and see how it works,” Ms. O’Neil said.

Last year, working with a consultant, the Consortium for Educational Change, the committee gathered information, considered best practices and looked at evaluations in other states.

“We tried to figure out how to make it work to the advantage of our teachers,” Ms. O’Neil continued. “The purpose of the mandate is to focus on student growth, which is laudable—and we already do that. What’s new is the paperwork. It will be challenging to put the new protocols in place, but we’re prepared to evaluate as we go along.”

To help them prepare, teachers will receive student learning objectives (SLOs) they can use to set learning targets and track their students. The SLOs will help teachers make better use of student data over the course of the school year.

Dr. Garwood and Ms. O’Neil both stressed the importance of having teachers involved in developing the new protocols.

“The work we did together felt good,” Ms. O’Neil said. “The state gave us this mandate, we looked at it together and worked very hard to make what we came up with valuable. We treat this as more important than just filling out the requisite paperwork and checking the right boxes.”