

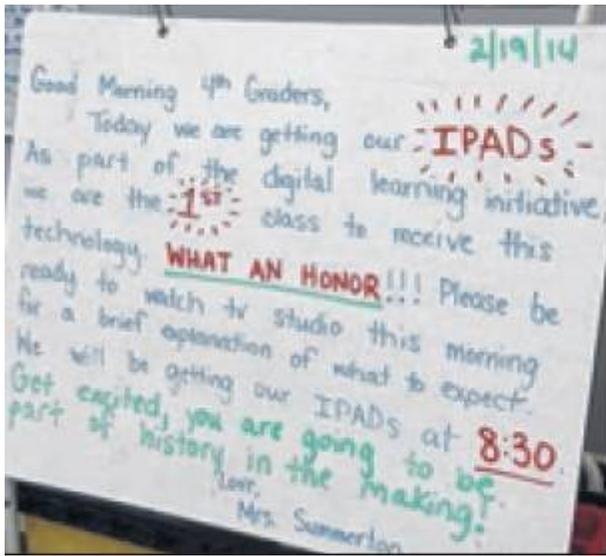
GREENWICH SCHOOL DISTRICT INTRODUCES DIGITAL LEARNING

Hamilton Avenue, Riverside students receive iPads

BY PAUL SCHOTT



Right, Fionnuala Browning, a media specialist at Riverside School, helps students to set up their new iPads.



Paul Schott/Staff photos

Above, Hamilton Avenue School fourth-grade teacher Tami Summerton left a morning message for her students.



Paul Schott/Staff photo

Eric Lane, a media specialist at Hamilton Avenue School, reviews digital-citizenship skills with first-grade students.

New iPads have been distributed to all students at Hamilton Avenue and Riverside schools, a milestone in the school district's new Digital Learning

Environment initiative.

“Thanks to the incredibly hard work of teachers, administrators and students and valuable feedback from parents and community leaders, Greenwich took another big step forward this week with Digital Learning,” said Superintendent of Schools William McKersie. “All students at Hamilton Avenue and Riverside now have iPad Airs and are demonstrating for the rest of the district how digital tools can be blended into learning on a schoolwide basis to help all our students excel.”

Eight-hundred iPads were handed out to students at the two schools. Each student’s iPad Air comes with an installed digital toolbox of apps. Related academic resources will be stored in Schoology, the district’s curriculum and instructional management system.

Kindergartners and first-graders will not take their iPads home. Pupils in grades two through five will be allowed to take the iPads home only after completing a digital citizenship course, which will “support students in the safe, ethical, legal and constructive” use of their iPads. Filters on the iPads will block students from accessing inappropriate sites. In addition, district officials say they expect parents to monitor their children’s iPad use.

The district is offering an opt-out provision for parents who do not want their child to bring their iPad home, but they will have to confirm their child will have access to the digital toolbox apps on an electronic device outside of school to complete assignments.

District officials have recommended parents take out third-party insurance to protect against damaged or lost iPads. Third-party plans are “generally” offered at a \$50 to \$70 premium for each year of coverage, with a \$50 deductible for each claim, according to the district’s website.

“Literally hundreds of hours of planning went into this one pivotal moment,” said Phillip Dunn, the district’s director of digital learning and technology. “It is humbling and rewarding to see all our efforts so well received. As the students begin their new digital citizenship unit, I am excited to watch them grow and light the way for how we can all be more supportive of one another in the digital space.”

The iPad deployment represents a crucial part of the Digital Learning initiative, a three-year districtwide project to increase the use of technology in the classroom. District officials say the heightened focus on technology will help teachers to shape lessons to reflect each student's academic progress and needs and aid pupils in adapting to the Common Core State Standards.

Implementation during the current school year at Hamilton Avenue and Riverside marks the project's first phase, costing \$1.2 million. Hamilton Avenue was chosen because it is a school seeking to improve general academic performance, while Riverside consistently leads the elementary schools in performance measures, such as standardized test scores.

In the next school year, Digital Learning will expand to sixth grade in the district's three middle schools. Then, in the 2015-16 school year, it will expand to the other middle-school grades, the other elementary schools and Greenwich High School.

Hamilton Avenue and Riverside students will use their iPads in a number of subjects and disciplines. Planned assignments involving the Apple devices include students creating a public service announcement for an environmental cause; making presentations with sound and video on colonial America and completing math problems on the equivalence of fractions.

"The children are thrilled to have this opportunity to experience an enhanced learning environment that allows for personalized learning, as well as interactive group learning," said Riverside Principal Christopher Weiss. "It will expand their opportunities for research, collaboration, creation and sharing with others in many different formats."

Cynthia Womack, Hamilton Avenue principal, expressed similar enthusiasm about the arrival of the iPads.

"The students at Hamilton Avenue were absolutely thrilled and had been anticipating this day for some time," she said. "As a staff, we are excited with the endless possibilities. We look forward to increased and improved student engagement and the ability to transform teaching and learning as we know it."

Digital Learning involves extensive teacher education. Hamilton Avenue and Riverside teachers are scheduled to complete about 43 hours of Digital Learning-

related professional development during this school year.

At the same time, the district is making major informational-technology upgrades. In addition to the general \$1.2 million allotment for the initiative's first phase, it has allocated this fiscal year about \$600,000 for Wi-Fi infrastructure improvements, which covers the expansion of Wi-Fi capability to all 11 elementary schools. pschott@scni.com; 203-625-4439; twitter: @paulschott