

Learning tech from the inside

Students save school money by learning to repair iPad screens

By SEAN HART
Staff Writer

Local students are learning practical applications of technology and saving their school money in the process.

Andrew Engelhart, school board chairman for Hermiston Junior Academy, said students are not only using iPads in the classroom, they are also learning how to repair them. It's part of a new emphasis on technology this year.

After members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with which the school is affiliated, raised funds to enhance exposure to technology at the school, Engelhart said he suggested the school purchase iPads with cracked screens to save money and teach the students hands-on skills.

While a new iPad may cost close to \$500, Engelhart said, the school procured about 30 of the tablets for \$100 to \$150 each. With 34 students enrolled in the school for kindergartners through eighth-graders, the goal was to incorporate technology into each of the three classes, he said.

He said students in the fifth- through eighth-grade class have been alternating between iPad repair and other technology classes each Thursday.

"It's a real-life skill," he



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Sixth-grader Hannah Williams connects an iPad screen to the motherboard while repairing the tablet Thursday at Hermiston Junior Academy.

said. "Once we have the iPads (repaired), then we want to branch out into how we can use the iPads."

Before disassembling the broken tablets, the students check the functionality of the devices to ensure it was worth it to repair the screen. They then heat the glue around the edge of the cracked screens and pry them off before replacing them with a new screen. Some students can complete the repairs in about an hour. Engelhart said the experience has opened their eyes to possible future jobs.

"The students put technology beyond video games," he said. "They put technology into career ideas."

Seventh-grader Nathan Baltazar said the project was fun and made him consider pursuing a career in a tech-

nology field. "I never really knew what the inside of an iPad looked like. I thought it was cool to see it," he said. "I like working with technology."

Monica Figueroa, a fifth-grader, agreed that seeing the inner workings of the device was interesting. She said she expected to see "a lot of wires and stuff" inside but was surprised to see how "empty" and clutter-free it looked.

Sixth-grader Jeremy Blanco said the other topics in the technology class were fun as well. On Oct. 1, representatives from GSH Farms explained how they use technology in agriculture and also donated a Wi-Fi weather station to the school for the students to install.

"That was fun too," Blanco said.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Seventh-grader Keyla Guardado and fifth-grader Monica Figueroa work on removing the monitor from an iPad they were repairing Thursday at the Hermiston Junior Academy.



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Sixth-grader Jeremy Blanco places a monitor back in an iPad as fifth-grader Roarke Smith holds the touch screen out of the way as they repair an iPad on Thursday at the Hermiston Junior Academy.

Homeless students difficult to tally, but numbers are up

By SEAN HART
Staff Writer

Despite a statewide increase in homeless students last school year, most local districts enrolled fewer students known to be without a permanent residence.

According to a recently released report from Oregon Housing and Community Services, the total number of homeless people counted in the state during the last week of January fell from 13,822 in 2013 to 13,176 in 2015 — with 19 percent this year under the age of 18. The report shows 52 of these people resided in Umatilla County, with 24 living in homeless shelters or transitional housing and 28 living outside.

A Department of Education count also reflects the number of students living in motels or sharing housing with others due to economic hardship. Including the 15,298 students in doubled-up housing, 20,524 Oregon students, 3.6 percent, were considered homeless last school year — up from 18,902 the previous year and 18,165 in 2012-13.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 requires school districts to provide homeless students with comparable educational services to those provided to other students, including transportation arrangements if requested and immediate enrollment despite the lack of documents showing a permanent address.

Bryn Browning, Hermiston School District assistant superintendent, said the district attempts to determine McKinney-Vento qualification by making contact with families of students who have sudden irregular attendance, behavioral issues or changes in address. A student who

qualifies is counted for the remainder of the school year, she said, and the count resets at the beginning of the next year. Although fewer homeless students were recorded last year — 33 compared to 73 the previous year and 46 in 2012-13 — Browning said she anticipates the number to grow this year.

"A trend we are seeing is the length of time a student is homeless has increased from temporary to a carrying over from school year to school year," she said. "In the past, we've never really carried over very many families, but this year we've identified 17 students who are already homeless, whereas last year we identified four at this time of the school year. As students move in or move out and counselors keep doing their research, that number will grow from here."

In addition to the federal requirements, Hermiston school district works with a Umatilla County CARE coordinator, who helps connect students and families with available social services, meals, clothing and medical care. Morrow County School District also uses a CARE coordinator from the Inter-Mountain Education Service District.

Morrow County assistant superintendent George Mendoza said homeless students experience a variety of difficult situations that affect their education.

"In schools we often see an impact due to poor nutrition, sleep deprivation and irritability," he said. "Also, homeless youth encounter health issues because they lack attention from doctors, wellness agencies and in general lack resources that can help them maintain their health."

Although the housing and community services point-in-time report from January counted no homeless people in Morrow County, the school district counted 42 homeless students — 1.9 percent — last year, including 32 in doubled-up housing. The district also recorded 42 students the previous year and 30 in 2012-13.

Mendoza said working with other agencies to provide "wraparound services" helps support homeless students and families in need. The goal, he said, is "to ensure homeless students have equal access ... and opportunities to meet the same challenging academic achievement standards."

For more information about school district homeless programs for Hermiston contact Lisa Depew, 541-667-6016; or for Morrow County contact Mendoza, 541-422-7012.

For more information about CARE coordinators contact Jenni Galloway for Umatilla County, 541-379-3575, or Peggy Ann Doherty for Morrow County, 541-256-0429.

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