



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Ethan Tingler, left, and Danyelle O'Homeier work with a reading program in Teresa Larios' class on Thursday.

TECH IN THE CLASSROOM

LaCreole teachers, students see results with 'bring your own device'

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — The bell rings, marking the end of Teresa Larios' reading support class at LaCreole Middle School.

A student piped up: "I don't have to leave, do I?"

Larios smiles. She's heard similar comments from students since the beginning of the school year, when the school embraced a larger use of technology.

"See that? They don't want to leave," she said.

The source of their enthusiasm? A program called Reading 180, which is helping many of her students improve their reading skills in a familiar way.

"They are engaged with technology," Larios said. "That's the way they like to learn."

Larios said the program is only one third of the instruction in the class, but it's pro-

ducing results.

"Some of these students who are working on their reading have made a year's worth of progress in two months," she said. "I don't know that that is always going to happen or typical, but it's definitely had a positive impact."

Larios' students are using Chromebooks purchased by Dallas School District for student use, but in an innovative move, the school also is encouraging a "bring your own device" culture.

Principal Jamie Richardson said school staff recognized that using technology like cellphones and tablets as a tool for work, not just for entertainment, is an essential skill.

He said, surprisingly, many students didn't know how to do that.

"It sparked our interest in trying to prepare our kids a little bit better for the futures

they going to have," Richardson said. "That's the reason, I think, that we've been more willing to step out there because we understand that the skills the kids are going to need, we have some gaps in that, especially when it comes to technology."

All students at LaCreole are taught how to use their personal devices for learning, as well as how to be a "good digital citizen" and digital literacy.

"BYOD" comes with some guidelines, as cellphones could be a distraction, but there is a tradeoff: Richardson said one of the program's biggest successes is student engagement.

"There's that shiny screen," he said. "It's typically a little bit more enticing than a textbook."

Larios can attest to that. "It's changed my teaching," she said. "The kids are more motivated. They are

more self-directed and they are more creative."

As if on cue, Ethan Tingler raised his hand to give a report on his progress. He was on his way to meeting his next goal.

"I like this period," he said, smiling as he packed up at the end of class. "It's my favorite period of all."

He said using technology makes reaching his reading goals easier — and more fun.

"Sometimes, if we have enough time, we get to play games," he said.

Larios said those aren't just games, they are replacing traditional methods of reviewing material.

"It's a lot more fun than sitting there filling out a worksheet," she said.

She added technology is helping with the age-old teacher's challenge of engaging all students.

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SCHOOL NOTES

Dallas Lions to offer scholarship

DALLAS — Dallas Lions Club is offering a \$1,000 scholarship to one graduating high school student who is a Dallas resident. The funds are to be used for tuition at an accredited university, college or vocational school.

Students graduating from Dallas High School, Morrison Campus, an accredited home-school or online school program are eligible to apply.

Applications are available at the Dallas High School Guidance Office.

Check www.polkio.com for an online link to an application.

All applications must be received by April 1 and may be submitted to the DHS Guidance Office or Teresa Ozias at Shetterly Irick and Ozias, 189 SW Academy St., Dallas.

For more information: 503-623-6695.

Kings Valley thanks garden donors

KINGS VALLEY — Kings Valley Charter School's garden program is off to a busy year with a new garden to chart out, grants to write and apply for, donations to pick up and structures to build, said Lua Siegel, gardening teacher.

Students in the class have been learning how to find and identify insects, build garden boxes, plant trees and how to use cardboard to kill weeds and prepare for spring planting.

Donations have been coming in, Siegel said.

Oregon State University 4-H Wilderness donated \$200 for Kings Valley Charter School's garden program. Philomath Shonard's Nursery donated \$1,500 in ornamental plants; Seed-Money collected \$400 in donations and a lavender sale organized by students raised \$7.

The program still needs volunteers, Siegel said. Also, as people split plants in spring, she said the garden program could make use of the excess.

"We'd love your edibles or insect-attracting plants," she said. For more information: lsiegel@kvschool.org.

Literacy focuses on close reading

INDEPENDENCE — Dori Vickery, in charge of curriculum for Central School District, and three elementary school teachers presented information at Monday's school board meeting on how fourth-graders are learning to read.

The teachers said they are using "close reading" techniques, where students take a short text and read it three times: once for understanding, once to analyze the author's craft, and once for vocabulary.

Students are presented with "stop signs," which trigger discussion points: contrasts and contradictions, "ah-ha" moments, tough questions, words of the wiser, again and again (repeated words and phrases), and memory moment.

Looking for those "stop signs" helps students make intelligent predictions and foreshadowing, the teachers noted.

Central budget on target for fiscal year

INDEPENDENCE — Central School District business manager Cec Koontz said the district is right where it should be at this point in the year, with about 50 percent of expenditures and 50 percent of revenue.

She noted that a new freezer had been purchased for Talmadge Middle School.

The budget committee has vacancies in zones 2, 3 and 6. Applications are due by Jan. 22 at 4:30 p.m. The first budget committee meeting is scheduled for April 18.

Koontz said the current budget committee will be reconvened to make an additional transfer from the curriculum reserve to the curriculum fund, so that it can be spent on curriculum.

Also, the committee will need to approve an unanticipated grant from Oregon Department of Education to purchase more local foods from farmers.



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