

Banks School Board hears update on district technology plan

Superintendent Marilyn McGlasson told the Banks school board, at their meeting March 10th, that Banks Christian Academy (BCA) has requested an extension of their contract with the district. BCA would like to extend their contract and continue to pay on a monthly basis after July 1, 2004, when a balloon payment of \$317,910 is due. The board briefly discussed the possibility of capital projects, such as school expansion or remodeling, in the next ten years. McGlasson said that the BCA request should be looked at as part of a larger frame of reference. She recommended that the contract be extended one year at a time and revisited annually. Money received from BCA is protected in a capital improvement fund and is not part of the general fund. The contract will be discussed at the April board meeting.

Technology Plan Updated

The board was presented

with the latest update of the district's Technology Plan. The committee, chaired by Director of Information Technology Gary Hartman, included elementary teachers Rob Frank and Tammy Schrader, junior high teacher Linda Kiehl, high school teachers Karla Clark, Brad Henegar and Donna Niessner, principals Marty Vogel, Mark Everett and Jim Foster and parents Scott Bradley, Stuart Douglas and Duane Lundsten.

A district computer plan, developed in 1985, has been rewritten several times. The report says that the district views technology as an integral part of the curriculum and that technology greatly enhances the learning process for students. By utilizing technology, the report says, we enable students to be active participants in the information age. The report says that all students deserve the opportunity to learn more about their world through technology. The report concludes that "the district has been steadily moving toward educat-

ing our students for the Information Age. One way or another, our dedicated staff has found ways to give all our students exposure to the Information Age. They just haven't been able to provide the technology-rich education the students deserve."

Technology is integrated into instruction in a way that requires students to use technology to learn some of the curriculum. At the high school level, technology skills are taught to allow students to enter careers in technology.

Another goal is the use of technology to aid district staff with their duties and enhance communication. Technology is widely used by the staff to manage grading and attendance, information which can be accessed by students and administrators through the Internet. Technology is also used to track progress toward the CIM and for many administrative tasks. The district web page provides daily information and monthly updates, but Hartman said that the Internet could be

better used to facilitate communication between school and home. In addition, though opening school technology infrastructure to the community has been, and remains, a goal of the plan the school has been unable provide leadership to make this possible.

Lundsten gave the board a quick lesson in computer speed. Lundsten, who redeploys used computers as part of his job, explained that computers slower than 500MHz are not re-used in the industry. He presented an inventory of the age and speed of all computers currently in use in the district; none of them meet the industry standard for re-use, and all are well below the speed of a new computer. The committee decided that computers should be replaced every five years.

The plan developed to meet district technology goals includes an annual budget to replace outdated computers, infrastructure equipment and software on a rotating basis. Approximately \$75,000 per year is needed to meet the plan's five-year rotation goal. Though the full amount was budgeted for the 2002-2003 school year, it has been cut to \$10,000, creating a need for \$140,000 in next year's budget in order to replace two years worth of equipment. Lundsten and Hartman said the committee recognizes the difficulty of accomplishing this in a time of

budget crisis, but teachers and students are frustrated by having to work with slow computers. Students are sometimes unable to complete certain tasks and, Hartman said, some of the technology standards – set to define what students should be able to accomplish at each benchmark level – may have to be scaled back.

If computer replacement is not funded, Hartman said, it will limit the number of computers available and make it difficult for students to reach a technology benchmark without computers to work on. The plan also defines a process to be used by the technology coordinator and superintendent if additional grant money becomes available.

Progress toward achieving the goals can be seen in a number of areas, Hartman said. Both the junior high and high school have applied technology standards across their curriculum and identified areas where the integration of technology is weak or nonexistent. Teachers have identified units of study where standards could be integrated, and required classes where instruction on technology standards could take place in order to meet the needs of all students.

McGlasson said the district wants to graduate students prepared for today, and nearly all jobs require some level of expertise with technology.

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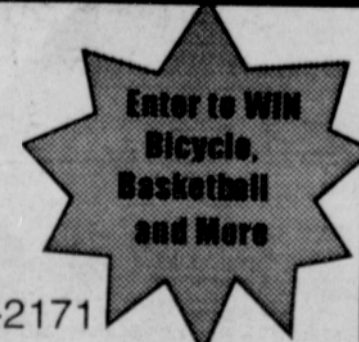
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