Focus
on technology

Increasing students' abilities and productivity

Bigger, brighter, better: Thank you for reading the Issaquah School District's redesigned FOCUS Community Newsletter. The new FOCUS look comes with a new FOCUS—ahem—focus! Each issue this year will highlight one of our five "Ends"—categories of knowledge and skill that students must master to succeed in today's dynamic global environment. This month, we focus on technology; flip inside to discover how, in only a few decades, technology has revolutionized the way students learn and live.

The Issaquah School Board developed these Ends several years ago by linking with community members as well as business and education experts. The result: The Ends provide learning priorities that ensure that an Issaquah graduate not only has a strong foundation in core academic subjects—but also has developed personal passions and interests, competency in emerging technology, and an ethical compass to act as a responsible, healthy national and international citizen.

In other words: Watch out world—Issaquah grads ahead! Please enjoy this issue's sneak peek into End 4 (E-4), Technology.

Focus on technology

continued from front page

In other District news, parents and principals on the District-wide Boundary Review Committee finished their final recommendation in October. The superintendent will now officially adopt the new school boundaries and make a presentation to the School Board in December. The committee's recommendation achieves something remarkable: With one exception, there are no split schools from one level to the next (so almost all students will stay together from kindergarten through senior year!).

The boundaries will go into effect the fall of 2010, allowing a new elementary to open on the Sammamish Plateau, Skyline and Issaquah High to welcome back their freshmen following simultaneous remodels and expansions, and Pacific Cascade Freshman Campus to convert to a middle school.

Whew—and don't forget that significant construction projects will be underway or in planning stages at Maywood Middle School, Liberty High School, and Briarwood Elementary within the next few years. Our Capital Projects team is hoppin'! These modernized facilities will provide high-quality learning environments far into the future.

You can keep up with transition plans for the new school boundaries and timelines for construction projects at www.issaquah. wednet.edu. To delve a bit deeper into the District, click on "Learn more about us" for a community report with information about student achievement, programs and services, and finances.

No report, however, will ever tell the full story of the wonderful learning happening in our schools. Recently, students ran mock elections, built working models of plasma membranes embedded in three-receptor proteins out of marshmallows, did ecological Nature Mapping of their backyard woods to learn about biodiversity, performed at Jazz Alley in Seattle, talked to astronauts, and painted Monet-inspired murals while speaking French. Très chic!

Ends: What every grad needs to know

Mission (E-1)

Our students will be prepared for and eager to accept the academic, occupational, personal, and practical challenges of life in a dynamic global environment.

Ends

Academics and Foundations (E-2), Citizenship (E-3), Technology (E-4), Personal Awareness and Expression (E-5), and Life Management (E-6).

The School Board's mission and five Ends provide a roadmap of the skills and knowledge every graduate needs to succeed in today's global environment. It is the Board's primary responsibility, then, to ensure that the District makes progress toward achieving the Ends.

The Board has embarked on a yearlong process to monitor the mission and Ends by intensely reviewing student data at its meetings. This will culminate in a comprehensive evaluation in June, before the cycle begins anew. Everyone is invited to participate in person or to track the data—and read the full text of the Ends—at www.issaquah.wednet. edu/board.

To parallel the Board's work, the FOCUS newsletter will spotlight one End per issue for the school year, beginning with Technology (E-4).

Tech everywhere

Welcome to a 21st century school district

In a math class at Maywood Middle School, teacher Amy Keyne-Michaels uses her ACTIVBoard—a large, electronic whiteboard—to scroll through her digital notes and construct a perfect grid in front of students. As she explains the coordinate system, she moves forward and backward through her work with the click of an electronic pen as questions arise. Students come up to try their hand plotting coordinates on the digital board. At any time, Ms. Keyne-Michaels could stop the lesson and check for understanding with an electronic student response system (she asks a question and receives an instant tally of correct/incorrect answers when students respond using a device on their desks.)

As students pack up and leave, one asks his friend: "Was that coordinate worksheet our only assignment?"

His friend responds: "Maybe. Just check online on [Ms. Keyne-Michaels'] website tonight."

Welcome to a modern Issaquah classroom.

Less than two decades ago, a single telephone and a mimeograph machine in the main office represented the extent of technology in Issaquah schools. Today, teachers cover more material in greater depth reaching more students with their ACTIVboards, document cams, and projectors. Schools average one instructional computer for every two students. Families check grades and assignments from their home computer at any hour. Parents stay connected to education news through listservs and podcasts. Students take classes over the Internet, discuss topics via wikis, and interact online with complete textbooks that have enhanced lessons and curriculum games…

And the list of electronic opportunities expands daily.

"Technology is revolutionizing education and the world," says Colleen Dixon, Issaquah's Executive Director of Educational Technology. "Our students need to see and use technology in their classrooms. Not only does technology bring curriculum to life, but our students need to be prepared—there will not be one job in the future that will not involve the use of technology in one way or another."
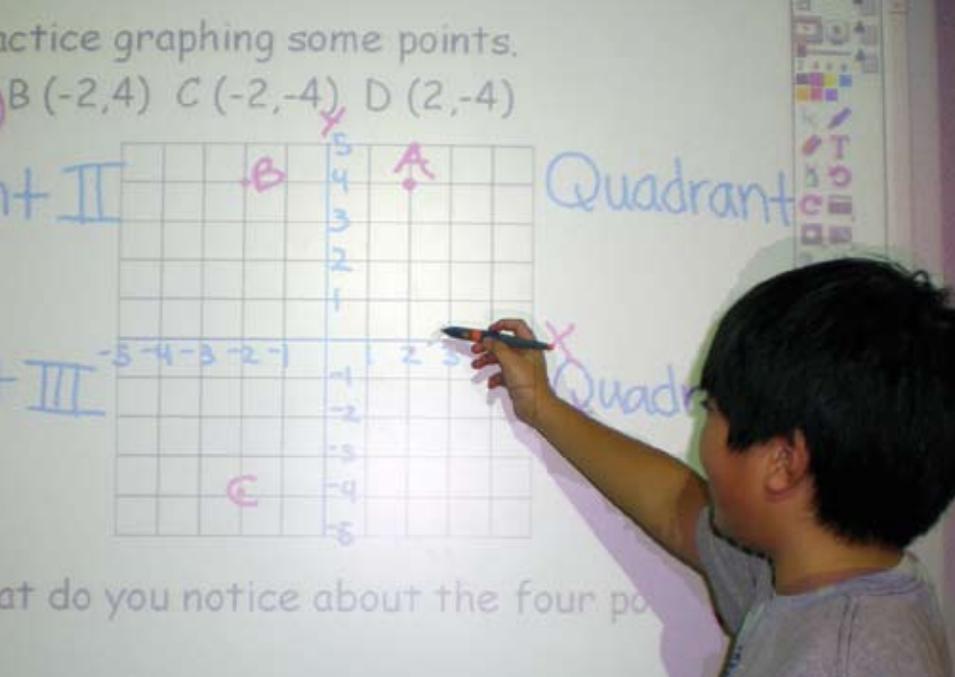
The guiding mission of the District Educational Technology Department is to enhance student learning by continually helping teachers to incorporate current technology into lessons. While all

E-4: Technology

Full Ends statement: Throughout life, students will understand and apply current and emerging technologies to extend their personal abilities and productivity.
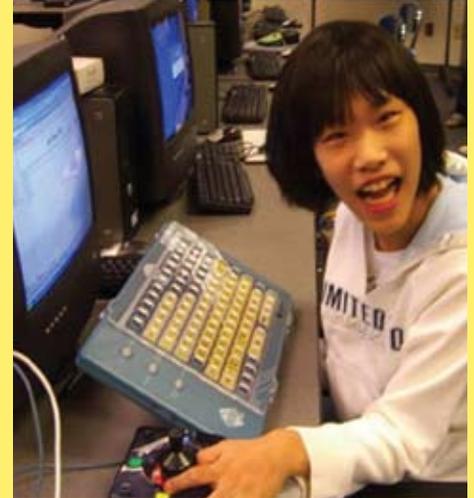
Facts:

• Number of instructional computers in schools: 7,280

• Number of document cams and projectors in classrooms: 1,940

• Number of ACTIVboards (electronic white boards): 377

• Sample of technology classes: Web Design; TV/Video Production; Digital Photography; Digital Animation; Software Applications; Graphic Design; Intro to Engineering; Multimedia

students must demonstrate mastery of basic skills through technology classes or a proficiency test before graduation, the real key is to expose students to technology throughout the school day so they understand that technology is a tool to make their lives more productive.

"The technology of today won't be the technology of tomorrow," Dixon says. "So it's critical that students graduate accustomed to using technology with an adaptive and fearless outlook about working with new technology in the future."

Did you know?

Most of the District's classroom technology is purchased through a levy generously supported by local taxpayers every four years. To ensure that equipment is used effectively, the Technology Department has developed a training system that includes support from a cadre of tech specialists and expert teachers in each building. Educators also have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a week-long summer workshop—called Issaquah Technology Project (ITP)—to learn to use technology to enhance core curriculum. Attendees follow up with more training during the school year. Out of about 900 teachers in the District, 564 have gone through ITP.

This summer for the first time, teachers from one content area attended the workshop together when more than 75 percent of middle-school math teachers signed up collectively. The result: A unified, District-wide department that is collaborating and incorporating technology like never before in core-content instruction.

Technology: A voice for those without one

For freshman Jae Kim, learning to build websites at Pine Lake Middle School allowed her true self to finally be heard. Jae has cerebral palsy, and often the outward manifestations—her erratic muscle control and inability to walk or talk—masks her active, vibrant mind and fun-loving personality. On her webpage, she explains: "It's hard for me to express my thoughts and feelings, and creating my own websites gives me a voice, one that I didn't have before. I never thought I would have a chance to tell people about myself. Sometimes I feel bad because people treat me like a four year old when I really am a young woman. I want to tell them I want to be treated like a normal person. Now I have a way to communicate all of these things. I am so happy!" As a current ninth grader, Jae's world continues to broaden through technology: She moves independently with her electric wheelchair, she interacts with friends on a blog, and she completes assignments and engages with teachers via a computer in each classroom.

High tech high schools

For District middle and high school students, technology is more than just an educational tool–it's an all pervasive way of life

The stamp of high technology is hard to miss in Skyline High School senior Jay Hergert's TV/Video Production Two course, where a daily news program is produced for internal broadcast throughout the school. The fully equipped TV production studio, complete with soundstage, multiple cameras, recording and broadcasting equipment, numerous workstations and editing suite, is clearly a learning space where technology takes center stage.

The spotlight is also on technology in other middle and high school course offerings throughout the District that serve thousands of students each year—courses like Software Applications, Graphic Design, Digital Photography and Multimedia.

But when he starts to think about technology as part of his learning experience, Hergert

realizes something interesting: technology in one form or another is part of every single course he's taking—and much of the time it's so seamlessly woven into the curriculum it's hardly noticeable.

There's "CinViz"—Cinematic Visualization, where students watch movies and analyze them for content and structure. Math makes heavy use of calculators. Yearbook is "all technology"—with digital cameras and graphic design software unheard of not too many years ago serving as essential tools to streamline the design process. In Biology, Hergert makes heavy use of Internet research, computer workstations and microscopes. Then there's Art, where research on famous artists is easier than ever thanks to the Internet, and where complex layering and manipulating of images and effects is facili-

tated by professional imaging software.

In fact, Hergert carries a key-sized flash drive to carry vital information from class to class—a tool that is becoming an indispensible accessory for District high schoolers.

And it doesn't stop when the school day ends. Hergert regularly checks out the District's Family Access to get updates on his grades, and checks calendars, assignments and study guides on the Skyline website.

And for fun? Hergert shoots and edits snowboarding movies, posting them online to share with his many tech-savvy friends. "It is really hard to keep up with all the technology," Hergert says. "Everything is progressing every day. But the school is doing a pretty good job of keeping up."

Points of Pride
A few of the reasons you have to be proud of your schools

Sunset "message in a bottle" found!
In 1998, second-graders at Sunset Elementary carefully crafted letters in bottles and asked ship captains to drop them in oceans throughout the world. This summer, more than a decade later, a family scuba diving in Florida recovered one of the bottles and contacted the student authors—all now high school graduates!

Apples, Microsoft, salmon, oh my!
Fourth-graders at Grand Ridge Elementary found a unique way to bring their in-depth lessons about Washington state's economy, businesses, geography, and natural resources to life. The "Washington Product Party" featured food such as apples and salmon and state-themed games.

Dalpez honored by Diamond Award
The Newcastle Chamber of Commerce celebrated the incredible inspiration and talent Maywood Middle School and Liberty High School orchestra teacher Jana Dalpez brings to schools' music program by awarding her the Diamond Award for Community Involvement in Education at a special luncheon on November 12.

Fish like you've never seen before
Endeavour Elementary student Nicholas Beatty has combined science, art, and technology to illustrate the salmon life cycle.

Complete stories at: www.issaquah.wednet.edu/news/pride