

The power of one

Written by Deb Egenberger

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Brady High School students go global with One-to-One.

Brady High School students now hold the whole world in their hands.

With one laptop computer for each student in grades 9-12, Brady teachers can broaden their classrooms from four walls and a few desks to an entire global learning environment.

“It’s mind-blowing,” said technology coordinator Robbi McKenney.

Every high school student received a MacBook computer on Friday. The laptops are loaded with programs designed to help take learning to a higher level.

“Technology is just a tool,” McKenney said. “By giving each student a computer, we’re providing everyone with access to the tools all the time.”

It’s known throughout the educational community as a One-to-One Initiative: One computer for each student.

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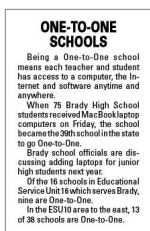
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The Brady school district's quest to put a computer in the hands of every child began about a year and a half ago when a group of teachers and school board members attended Apple Days in Arnold.

Arnold Public School was one of the first districts in the area to implement a one-to-one program. Theirs began with a senior class pilot in the spring of 2006.

The rest of Arnold's high school students received computers the next fall and middle schoolers were added the following year.

In 2008, laptops were added in the elementary.



“It was very exciting to see how it worked,” McKenney said of that initial visit. “Then we came back to Brady and it seems like after just a few meetings we went from ‘If we decide to do this ...’ to ‘When we do this ...’ Really, it all happened very quickly.”

The district is lucky, she said, that there is support for the program from the teachers, the administration, the school board and the technology committee.

“If one of those pieces isn’t on board, it holds a school back,” she said.

Giving each student a computer may appear to some to be too expensive or unnecessary.

McKenney says it’s one way the district can level the playing field between students.

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“Some kids don’t have access to a computer at home or don’t have the Internet so they might not be able to do the same kinds of projects or research as everyone else,” she said.

It also expands the opportunity to reach students in the individual ways they learn best.

For instance, McKenney said, the old-fashioned teaching style expected every student to memorize material from a book and regurgitate it on a test.

“Not everyone learns that way,” she said.

With the laptops and access to a variety of computer programs and global information, students can prove their knowledge of various subjects through creation of a podcast, a PowerPoint presentation or even a movie.

“It gets kids to think and analyze at a much deeper level,” she said.

Rather than handing out a worksheet to complete, teachers might ask students to watch an online video and assign an e-mail summary or do an online journal discussing what’s been covered in class.

“Kids become much more engaged in the learning process,” McKenney said, “and it opens things up for the different styles of learning.”

Teachers have had the MacBook Pro computers since December of last year.

“Overall, I think we have a really good team spirit,” McKenney said. “The teachers realize we

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need to be moving forward.”

Most, she said, will start small with their projects and assignments through the transitional phase but several students already worked on the laptops in the first quarter of the school year.

Seniors used theirs in careers class for college and scholarship applications.

“They were kind of our guinea pigs,” McKenney said.

Others who are enrolled in online courses have checked out the computers daily but it wasn't until the students and parents completed a

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