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GVHS Students Are Set For Laptop Learning

Each Student To Have Laptop Computer For School Year

BY TRAVIS GULBRANDSON
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GAYVILLE — The students at Gayville-Volin High School will be more well-connected when they start classes again later this month.

That's because the school has begun a laptop initiative that will provide each of them with a school-owned laptop computer throughout the year.

"The reason for that is to increase their accessibility to Internet resources, and also to try and increase technology skills," said Superintendent Jason Selchert. "We've been thinking about doing this for a couple years, and it just seemed like a good time to make the jump."

TRAVIS GULBRANDSON/P&D

Grant Rice, 11, helps to unpack the approximately 80 Gateway laptops that were recently delivered to Gayville-Volin School. Once classes begin, each student in grades 9-12 will receive one of the school-owned laptops to use throughout the upcoming year.

Approximately 80 Gateway laptops for use during the upcoming year are already being stored at the school.

"We have more than 200 machines in the building — some of them laptops, some of them desktops — but these 80 are specifically for the high school students," Selchert said.

The school's move toward a more technologically-relevent learning environment is part of a push that has been building across the state during the past few years. The program is similar in design to the state-funded 2010 Laptop Initiative, which provided schools with matching grants to purchase laptops.

Selchert said the local program has much in common with the state initiative, apart from the type of computers and wireless connections used.

"Pretty much everything is being followed except the hardware side of it," he said.

Two of the biggest advantages to the students will be in access to technology and the relevance of that technology, he added.

"You may have needed to schedule (computer) access to your class," Selchert said. "That's not going to be a problem anymore. When you schedule a lab, you might not necessarily get the hardware that's the most recent. Everything that we have now is the latest … so our students are going to be exposed to all the latest software as it becomes available."

At the beginning of the year, each high school student will enter into an agreement with the district regarding the use of the machines.

"The agreement we'll have with students is that the laptop remains the property of the school district, and that they will have use of that (promptly) during the school year," Selchert said. "They will sign an acceptable-use policy, which is what they do every year anyway. It just basically says that you're going to do appropriate things with the laptop."

The students will also be held responsible should something happen to the laptops.

"(The program) won't cost them anything unless they damage or lose the laptop," Selchert said. "If they damage or lose the laptop, it's going to cost them a deductible on the policy that we've taken out, and they don't have another shot with the rest of their time. They've got one shot in four years time to lose or damage, and after that it's up to the student to pay for a replacement."

Based on the insurance policy, replacing a laptop in the first year of the program could cost the student approximately $400, he added.

Selchert said the laptop initiative could change both how the students learn and how the classes will be taught.

"We believe that we've been on a pace over the past couple of years to pretty much change our teaching to more inquiry-based learning instead of rote memorization, and so all that type of information is readily accessible to the students if they have a computer in their hands," he said. "If they're using a textbook, the information is only as good as the copyright date. That stuff changes consistently, so we will be changing our teaching style."

For this reason, the district will purchase online textbooks in the future. Selchert sees this as a trend that will affect schools everywhere.

"Materials will either be Internet-based or network-based," he said. "Paper and pencils are slowly going to be phased out. That will take a while to get used to, but slowly that's where we will be headed. But we think, that over the next couple of years, we'll see a cost savings that could be reinvested back into a lot of things."

Ice Cream Social Set For Bergen Church

MECKLING — The members of WELCA of Bergan Lutheran Church are holding their annual Ice Cream Social at 5-7 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 17. The social will be held at the church, located on Timber Road in rural Meckling.

Items served will be taverns, hot dogs, homemade pies, ice cream, coffee, lemonade and iced tea.

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