

## **ED592 Students, Families and Communities Capstone**

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### **A Public Thank-You**

I am writing this article to publicly thank an outstanding community member for their generosity and dedication to the Oakridge School District.

Two years ago, Mrs. Glatha Patterson, a long-time resident of Oakridge and life-long educator, approached district superintendent Dr. Larry Horton with an idea to help at-risk students. Through her generous donation of \$40,000, a state-of-the-art technology lab was designed and built at Westridge Middle School in the Fall of 1999. It was important to Mrs. Patterson that many students would benefit from such a project. The technology lab fulfills this desire by allowing every student at Westridge to benefit from keyboarding, vocational technology and computer applications training.

As the school year progresses, the lab is being utilized more and more. Teachers are relying on the computers for research projects with the students and are beginning to integrate the use of technology into the curriculum. In addition, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders work in the lab on a daily basis to develop keyboarding and word processing skills. Each student works on a self-paced keyboarding program that monitors their strengths and weaknesses and directs them to use techniques to increase accuracy and speed. Another popular program, Slam Dunk Typing, combines keyboarding skills with a Nintendo-like basketball game. Teachers send individual students to the lab regularly to work on independent class research topics such as Inventors and Space Exploration. An open invitation is extended to the community to stop by and see the students at work!

Currently, the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Technology Class offers students the opportunity to learn keyboarding, word processing and Internet skills. In addition, computer applications like Excel, Publisher and Paint Shop Pro are part of the technology curriculum. One of the favorite culminating activities for the students is to create a PowerPoint presentation about themselves. The students have the opportunity to show off their creative abilities by designing an autobiographical, multimedia presentation complete with animation and soundtracks.

In the future, as 8<sup>th</sup> grade students move into the building, other application specific classes such as Web Design, Desktop Publishing, Vocational-Tech and Career Education will be incorporated. It is the hope of this technology lab to pique students interest in computers and prepare them for the high school curriculum and ultimately the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce.

As Technology Coordinator for the district I feel fortunate to work with students every day in the technology lab. Many students come to me excited about a new skill they have

learned on the computer and some have even professed their desire to work in the computer and technology field when they become adults. Several visitors have stopped by the lab throughout the year and remarked how pleased they are to see such a high-tech learning center in a rural community. This state-of-the-art lab, in conjunction with other learning centers such the Oakridge-Westfir Family Resource Center and the Lane Community College Learning Center provide high-tech learning opportunities for the entire community and guarantee success for our students.

Without this generous donation from Mrs. Patterson, the Westridge Technology Lab would not exist. Middle School students would not benefit from the advances of educational technology or have the opportunity to learn about high-tech careers. On behalf of the Oakridge School District and the communities of Oakridge and Westfir, I thank you Mrs. Patterson for your gift of learning to all of our children.