

# Chippewa Valley board hears update on technology

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On Nov. 17, Chippewa Valley Instructional Technology Coordinator Sarah White updated the Chippewa Valley Board of Education on technology use in the district. (Photos by NICOLE TUTTLE)

On Nov. 17, the Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education swore in a new board member and heard a technology update.

Jill DeMuynek Zech was sworn in as a Chippewa Valley Board of Education member by Superintendent Ron Roberts. On Nov. 4, Zech was elected to one partial term on the board ending Dec. 31, 2016.

Chippewa Valley Instructional Technology Coordinator Sarah White updated the Board of Education on technology use in the district, for both staff and students.

"We just want to give a little update of what is going on in our classrooms with technology," White said. "I know you all deal with the ins and outs of what we have done over the last couple years with our bond money to update our infrastructure in our classrooms, so how is that helping our students? Just to give you a quick overview of some of our technology, with our 2010 bond we updated to a 21st-century classroom. Every classroom K-12 has the SMART boards, the overhead audio system, document camera. We also purchased a lot of SMART response clickers."

White said the district has around 13,000 computers to manage, approximately 8,000 of which are virtualized student computers.

"Virtualized desktops allow us to do a lot of management ... It helps us with the over 400 programs that we manage," White said. "And when a student in Chippewa goes between buildings, a student from Cherokee can log into a computer at Dakota and get the elementary programs that are assigned to them based on their login and their profile. So we've really improved a lot of accessibility. And that virtualization is letting us take older computers and repurpose them. We basically just need a machine. So right now we're in the middle of replacing elementary teacher computers, and those older computers we can very easily take and put into classrooms and virtualize them. So it becomes a pretty cost-effective measure."

The true goal of technology use in the district is to support students and teachers, according to White.

"One thing we do with technology is help engage our students, help them feel active in the classroom, help them get hands-on. It helps them. They like the technology tools, so I really think it helps get them involved," White said.

White showed the board examples of district students using technology in learning, such as second-graders using

technology for mapping skills and older students in labs doing research using web tools to create presentations. Middle school students have learned to search the web for reliable sources, according to White.

"They are applying what they learned in the classrooms and using 21st century tools," White said.

Familiarity with technology will be an important skill for students in their future careers, and so portions of district technology learning in classrooms focus on professional and business skills, according to White.

"These are fourth- and fifth-graders learning to do charts in Excel," White said. "So programs that I did not learn until college, these kids are already mastering to do data analysis. And second-graders are learning Word in our labs. They can insert pictures, and copy and paste, and change the font."

Students attend a technology showcase in Lansing each year and another statewide technology conference, White said.

"They go and they show their work and they talk about what they do," White said. "They interact with teachers from around the state. They interact with legislators and they say, 'This is what I am learning and this is how we do it,' and they show their stuff. And that collaboration and that idea of being able to present and talk to people is just really important."

Students are also learning to use technology in a variety of ways to support the content of their classes, according to White.

"Teachers use our technology to support their content. Again, to take what we are learning and give students new ways to express their knowledge," White said.

Almost 2,000 Chippewa Valley students took part in distance learning in 2012-13 through MISD programs, according to White.

"Besides our ISD programs we had students last year who connected with Michelle Obama. They got to watch a live interview in their classroom as students interviewed the first lady.

"This was just last week for Veterans Day, one of our teachers at Fox used Skype to connect her class with her cousin who is serving the military," White said, adding that technology is also used for student assessment.

"One thing I loved in the classroom was the SMART clickers. Students in groups or individually can provide responses and right there, I know exactly how each student answers and I can get immediate feedback so I can intervene and help them," White said. "And there are other web tools."

The district has used technology to enhance professional development for teachers as well, helping to sponsor a SMART conference and offering 15-minute technology updates every other week, according to White. Teachers are also involved in several national and statewide technology projects, White said.

"We have lots of teachers throughout the district taking their own time to get better at their own technology skills and improve their teaching skills," White said.

An important priority for the district's technology department is making sure every student has access, according to White.

"Any student that has an Internet connection can access all of our Office programs for free and all of our students can also download those programs for free at home," White said. "We have our virtual desktop that students can access at home, so that allows them to have access to basic programs and all their files if they have an Internet connection. And for our students who don't have Internet access, we work with the Clinton Macomb Public Library to install that virtual desktop so any of our Chippewa students can go to the library and for free have access to those resources and that technology. We really want all kids to have access and be able to get what they need."

In addition to hearing the technology update, the board approved a motion to award a contract to MBM Computer System Solutions totaling \$359,800.51.

"The project was planned as part of the 2010 bond issue, and includes equipment and services to replace the district's current data backup appliance," Chippewa Valley Assistant Superintendent for Business and Operations Scott Sederlund said. "This information was reviewed with the building and site subcommittee on Monday, Nov. 3, 2014 and funding is available within the 2010 building and site funds."

The board also approved a contract with Sound Engineering totaling \$36,995.

"The project was planned as part of the 2010 bond issue, and includes equipment and services to replace the current video system inside the boardroom," Sederlund said. "This information was reviewed with the building and site subcommittee on Monday, Nov. 3, 2014 and funding is available within the 2010 building site funds."

Roberts said after new sound equipment was put into the school board's meeting room in the district administration building in Clinton Township, it was discovered that some related equipment was outdated. The district's video system does not work with the new equipment, according to Roberts.

"We have other equipment in this setup over here that is a little bit outdated, which causes some problems for the efficient operation of the entire system," Roberts said. "So they will address that and hopefully in the future after they make some wiring changes in the ceiling, we will get rid of the occasional feedback we get."

The board further approved a motion to purchase two vans from Red Holman Buick GMC in the amount of \$41,613.60 on Nov. 17.

"This purchase was reviewed and approved by the facility operations and purchasing offices," Sederlund said. "Funding will come from the 2014-15 general fund budget for this purchase."

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