

L-BF

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The new age of digital technology has found its way to L-BF, a school of less than 400 students tucked away just off Main Street in Littlefork. Last year, the L-BF School Board appropriated funds to equip the school with 160 iPads to be distributed on a one-to-one basis to students in grades 2, 3, 4, 10, 11 and 12. The board's aim was to better prepare students for the new digital world.

And there are plans to expand.

The district will continue to enlarge its one-to-one iPad initiative for the 2014-2015 school year, following a successful implementation with little trouble this year.

"It's crazy to think how far we've come in one year," Christopher Bachmeier, L-BF principal, said. "Using the iPads just kind of took off. Where we are now is night and day from when we were just starting to think about the idea at this time last year."

At a Feb. 19 school board meeting, Superintendent Fred Seybert said the district's technology plan includes purchasing an additional 180 iPads at a price tag of about \$170,000 for next year.

"Over two years, L-BF will spend in excess of \$290,000 (on iPads)," Seybert said. "The goal of L-BF expanding iPads for students during the 2014-2015 school year will actually exceed a one-to-one ratio. When considering iPads and desktops for the students, in fact, that number will probably approach 1.25 to one."

ATTRACTIVE DEVICE

Seybert said the district's technology plan is one of the driving forces attracting more and more students to the district. This school year alone, Seybert has reported the school's enrollment increased by about 50 students with the expectation for at least 30 more next year.

"The parents and students see what is hap-



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

**Kaelyn Bachmeier reads a book she "checked out" from a library app. Christopher Bachmeier, L-BF principal and Kaelyn's father, said students still use the actual library and are taught how to check out books.**

pening in this important area," he said. "They want to be part of this state-of-the-art program."

Bachmeier agreed. "To me, that's what I want my kids to have – the best option for technology," he said. "In all essence, it's going to be money in the kids' pockets."

SMOOTH SAILING

With anything new, some of the obstacles of implementing iPads were expected — like teachers adapting to a room full of students distracted by the glowing devices, and some were surprises found along the way — like how quickly students are able to learn using the device.

"They are digital natives and we need to transform to their way of learning," Wendy said. "Digital natives' are people born into a new culture of computers, while 'digital immigrants' are people who have lived in the analog age and adapted to the digital world."

Bachmeier said the education in classrooms is always changing and using iPads is certainly a change both students and teachers

are adjusting to. In the end, however, the principal said it seems to be working to an advantage.

"Using the iPads is a way to get some kids more engaged," he said. "They can accelerate in different ways."

Still, there needs to be a balancing act, he added. "The iPad is just a tool," he said. "We're still going to use paper and pencils. We still have to know how to write."

Teachers, Bachmeier said, are not using the devices for every lesson, and it's used differently by elementary and high school teachers.

Nancy McBride, who teaches English at the high school level, uses iPads in the classroom for discussion boards, taking notes, turning in papers and posting links for the kids to see and reach.

"Students are using iPads more and more," she said. "They can customize things for their own different uses."

McBride said she finds she, too, is using the devices more.

"I've already downloaded my textbook for next

year," she said. "With the literature book, students can tap on a picture and up pops a video...the background information and it's all right here."

McBride admits sorting through the galaxy of apps has been a difficult task with no "surefire way" of knowing what works best.

"We don't know until we try one," she said. "That's been both time consuming and a learning experience."

FOLLOWING THROUGH

Overall, the accessibility of the iPads is putting L-BF on the technology map.

"We say we're ahead of the technology curve and we want to do what we say," Bachmeier said. "The whole process and whole idea with this is exciting."

Bachmeier added the school's technology director, Frank Hand, has had significant involvement in the success of the school's iPad implementation.

"He's good at getting the training and the board is good at backing it," he said.

In fact, next year, once a month, the school will send students home at noon to allow for teacher discussion on technology for the rest of the day.

"It makes it very easy for us to move forward," he said. "Good things are happening at L-BF."

WINTER

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"The low pressure zips through and brings snow, then winds swing along from the north and bring the cold temperatures," Huyck said. "The fresh snow pack helps drop the temperatures a little more as well."

The 2013-14 winter will have to settle for the silver when it comes to all-time coldest average winter temperature. As of Feb. 26, the average temperature of -2.5 degrees was second all-time behind the average temperature of -2.9 degrees, set in 1978-79. Based on the forecast for the rest of the month, Huyck said it would be a "real challenge" to break the record, calculating the winter would fall one- or two-tenths of a degree short of the record.

The cause of these bitter cold temperatures is the low pressure system

that's usually parked over the north pole, Huyck said. There's a system of high pressure halfway between the north pole and the equator, he said, and the strength difference between these two systems is much larger than previous years, he said. This has allowed the cold air to push down, and settle over northern Minnesota.

In order to stay safe in the cold temperatures, Huyck said to remember to bundle up in layers if you're going outside. If you're traveling a long distance, keep a winter survival kit in your car. This should include items like a snow shovel, blankets, high-calorie food, and drinkable water.

The record-setting winter may not be over yet, but as the calendar flips over to March, the first day of spring is only three weeks away. It's not over yet, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

EDA

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Ward said the focus is now on establishing a site in Crane Lake, with the International Falls area next on the list. He said the Koochiching Economic Development Authority would be tapped in the Falls area effort.

While the plan for each community will be unique, he said it may involve park staff constructing it and a local tourism business operating it.

Katrin said another goal — collaborate with other entities supporting economic development efforts — will require the relationships members of the commission have already established.

He said several projects proposed are outside the EDA's jurisdiction and have been handed over to the appropriate leaders.

The final goal involves developing new funding streams for the EDA's operating expenses and projects.

He pointed to about \$600,000 saved last month by refinancing bonds sold to construct VNP's headquarters on property owned by the city.

Commissioner Bob Anderson said the plan appears to be more the board's than the EDA Commission's. He said the commission did not have the opportunity to provide input or discuss it as it was developed.


Mason encouraged discussion about the plan at Monday's meeting.

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