

Apple computers make impact in area schools

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As a parent and an administrator, Garrett High School principal Matt Smith has seen the impact of Apple computers in his school district.

Thursday, Smith paid tribute to Apple co-founder and former CEO Steve Jobs for his "insight" and "forward thinking." Jobs died this week.

This year, Garrett-Keyser-Butler schools began a 1 to 1 computer-to-student technology initiative. Each student in kindergarten through sixth grade received an iPad, which stays at school. Students in grades 7-12 received MacBook laptops that they take home, Smith said.

East Noble and Hamilton also are joining area school districts that use Apple computers extensively.

Smith said student engagement

is the reasoning behind the district's approach. He said the generation known as "digital natives" has grown up with Internet, texting, email and social networking websites such as Facebook.

"We know to try to increase student engagement in education, we don't want to ask them to come to school and power down," Smith said.

Student engagement, Smith said, will improve student achievement.

"Technology is one tool to increase student engagement," he added.

Since school began Aug. 24, preliminary data shows a reduction in classroom discipline infractions,

Smith said.

"We are optimistic about that and hope that continues to improve," he added.

As a parent, Smith said, he has seen his children communicating more with their teachers through email and digital assignments.

"I'm excited about that as a parent and an educator," he said.

Smith acknowledged that not all students have embraced computer technology in the classroom, and some students' learning styles show a preference for pencil, paper and textbooks.

The East Noble school district also has implemented a 1 to 1 technology initiative and uses Apple devices in kindergarten through fourth grade. Students in kindergarten and first grade use iPod Touches, and students in grades 2-4 use iPads, said the district's director of technology, Kay Reinhoehl.



Smith

"We're just getting started, and we are seeing more engagement of our kids during their learning," Reinhoehl said. She said students are excited about having the devices in their classrooms, and technology has enhanced their learning experience.

Hamilton Community Schools students in kindergarten through fifth grade also use iPads, said Principal Barbara Weber. Several iPads are available in kindergarten and first-grade classrooms. Students in grades 2-5 each have an iPad 2 that they use in class and also are allowed to take home, Weber said.

"It's had great impact already," Weber said. "I've seen iPads used on a daily basis."

Weber said kindergartners are learning their telephone numbers using an application on the iPad. Students enter their telephone numbers on a mock phone, and the

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Kay Reinhoehl
East Noble schools

iPad rings if the number is correct. Kindergartners also are using iPads to learn words and use their fingers to form letters and write on the screens, she said. Other elementary students use the devices for research.

"It varies by grade level and teacher by teacher," Weber said, "but the amount that the kids are using them and teachers are embracing then has been truly impressive."