

ICN Insider



A 21st Century Learning Environment

The new Waverly-Shell Rock Middle School is taking technology to the next level by providing each student in 5th through 8th grades with an iPad for the 2011-2012 school year.

After the flood of 2008 destroyed the prior elementary school, the school district decided to incorporate a 21st century learning environment by using bond and FEMA money received.

With students being immensely familiar with technology, a suggested business model was to incorporate handheld mobile technology devices by participating in the 1:1 program. Waverly-Shell Rock is anticipated to be the first school district in the Cedar-Valley area to implement the program, and one of the very few in the United States to use the iPad rather than laptops or netbooks.

With the creation of the new middle school, the question turned to investing in multiple computer labs or individual devices. By purchasing the iPad technology, the school district plans to save \$180,000.

With this new endeavor come obstacles such as sustainability of the devices and mobility. Content is largely limited when exclusively focusing on text books.



The money dedicated to purchasing textbooks can be used for online subscriptions for the iPads. The sustainability increases when students have a constant opportunity to access the Internet to research world-wide topics and learn real-time educational issues.

ICN's fiber-optic infrastructure provides Waverly-Shell Rock with the critical link to ensure that the iPad project is successful by supplying the Internet and bandwidth needed for the multiple applications teachers/students will use each day. In the future, it is anticipated that the high school will also be a wireless hub.

"We could not do this initiative without the ICN," said Bridgette Wagoner, Waverly-Shell Rock's Director of Educational Services.

"It's critical to have the infrastructure in place when handing teachers and students a piece of equipment that completely relies on the technology. We know that the technology isn't sustainable, but we also know that the technology isn't optional either."

One critical concern still being considered is the Internet adoption aspect for parents and caretakers of students. Since the majority if not all of the curriculum will be digital, having a reliable, consistent Internet connection will be essential at home.

This is an issue that we will have to face head-on; we know that consistent Internet connectivity will affect families in rural communities and low-income households," Wagoner stated.

At this time the school district has no specific plans, but is looking into how to potentially support the Internet access to student's households.

Waverly-Shell Rock is excited to be a part of the next wave of technology. They talk about their 1:1 iPads through the lens of a Wayne Gretzky quote that says he skates to where the puck is going to be, not where it is. Waverly-Shell Rock is moving beyond where technology is now and instead looking to where it will be in the future.