Elementary school places emphasis on computers, public relations

By ED CLARE
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There was a time when teachers were trying to pick up pencils or chalk or games from the teacher's desk in vain. Meanwhile, a second grade student at Wildwood Elementary School, seated on the front steps of the building, was the envy of the class. Mrs. Donigan had just witnessed the start of the school year, and she was eager to share her latest discovery with the class.

"Let's see," Mrs. Donigan said, beginning to load the students' backpacks with pencils, paper, and other supplies. "Is there anything else you need before we start class?"

A student raised his hand. "Yes, Mrs. Donigan," he said. "Can we use the new computer in the classroom?"

"Of course," Mrs. Donigan replied. "I'm glad you're interested. It's a wonderful tool for learning."

The computer was a new addition to the classroom, and students were eager to learn how to use it. Mrs. Donigan provided some basic instructions, and the students were soon typing away on the keyboard, exploring the vast world of information available to them.

The school's use of technology was one of many ways in which it differed from other schools in the area. Wildwood Elementary was known for its innovative approach to education, and the students and teachers were always eager to learn and try new things.

"I think it's important for our students to learn how to use technology," Mrs. Donigan said. "It's a vital skill in today's world, and it will help them succeed in the future."

The students agreed, and they were excited to continue learning and using the computer every day.

Chris Walsh, Tanya Morris, Nicole Wood, Jamie Brown, Brandon Blanchard and Erin Johnson team up on computer exercise

Mrs. Donigan conducted after-school computer instruction for 18 students for a month. "My husband thought it would be nice if I started teaching computer," Mrs. Donigan said. "It taught me more spelling and math," Dawn Hatfield, 10, said of her work with the computer. "My dad made a program where you type in words and the computer will tell you if you spell it right. The words stay on the screen five seconds, then go off; if you bring it to school, it's a game and it's fun." "I'm interested," Dawn said. "Computers have their place in school," Elizabeth Jones, a computer teacher, explained. "They've been a big part of our world. Children are learning the computer language." Plus students often choose a computer class instead of a computer class, which is a computer class that is a more efficient way to learn. Mrs. Donigan said they aren't the best way to take it to the next level, a teacher's instruction. Mrs. Donigan may not call instructional software "game", but she would expect it to take children on a path to computer science, to expand regular classroom instruction. Mrs. Donigan acknowledged that computers have a different influence on Wildwood's offerings. Parents in the nearby Binion Ridge neighborhood have the option of sending their children to either Wildwood or Buchanan Elementary as part of the plan that Binion Ridge, a new all-black school, will be a part of.

Julia Donigan, a second grade teacher with more than a passing interest in computers, said Wildwood's emphasis on computer and reading skills can be traced back to the school's principal, Vincent Worley. "I've always been interested in technology," Worley said. "I've always liked schools that had a lot going on to keep kids interested.

"My second grade class is the first to use the computer," Worley said. "It's being used for everything, from classwork to homework. The students love it, and it keeps them interested.

The school has been using computers for several years, and Worley said he was pleased with the results. "We've seen a lot of improvement in the students' computer skills," Worley said. "They're learning more and more each day."