

# Del Mar Heights continues to take a proactive approach to technology learning

BY KAREN BILLING

Del Mar Heights School continues to lead the way for the Del Mar Union School District in technology learning. For the third year students are using iPods in the classroom and this year, for the first time, iPads were introduced into fourth grade classrooms.

Technology at the Heights is completely project based, supporting what students are learning in the classroom, said Gail Moran, Extended Studies Curriculum technology teacher.

In no way are the devices a "babysitting tool" and Moran said one of the most exciting things to happen is that the iPads and iPods have changed the way teachers teach and the way children learn.

The program goes hand-in hand with the district's goal to create a 21st century learner—students learn collaboration, communication, problem solving, media literacy and digital citizenship.

"We have to provide these opportunities for kids because in the future that's what they're going to need. We're preparing them for jobs that haven't even been created yet," Moran said.

Del Mar Heights isn't the only local school breaking new ground in technology.

Cathedral Catholic High School next year will become the first school in San Diego County with a school-wide One to One iPad3 program—iPads for every student. Parents will still purchase a limited number of textbooks and pay an annual fee for the iPad rental, apps and other technology needs.

"These young people grew up on this type of technology—they're digital natives," said Sean Doyle, director of technology in a press release. "We believe these devices will offer them access to more information for less money, as well as increase their efficiently and fully engage them in learning."

Del Mar Heights' iTouch pilot program launched in spring 2010 with one third grade class using iPods. In 2011, they added a second third grade class. This year, all three third grade classes have iPods and the fourth graders share one set of iPads.

Their program is constantly evolving, with help from generous PTA donations, and Moran hopes they are able to purchase a second set of iPads for the fifth grade next year.

Other schools in the district have started to look at mobile devices as well—Del Mar Hills has netbooks, Carmel Del Mar has netbooks donated by the Dad's Club this year and Google Chromebooks will be piloted at Sycamore Ridge this spring.

The district is looking to make a decision in June about what type of mobile device will be implemented at all the schools and then it will be piloted at two schools' fourth through sixth grade classrooms.

Del Mar Heights started its program on its own and its push with the devices is in reading and writing.

"Writing scores have improved. It's a tool that the students like to use and teachers have noticed they are highly motivated," said Moran, noting most everything they need is available at the touch of a finger, such as dictionaries or research. "That doesn't mean that they never learn to put a pencil to paper. We did it overkill the first year with making them do everything on paper first.

Students complete much of their work in Google documents. Assignments can be handed in paperless and teachers can make corrections to the document and the students can share documents when they're working on a collaborative project. They can even watch

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Fourth grader Kennedy Quay works on her iPad at Del Mar Heights. Photo/Karen Billing



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"We have to sensitize our economists ... that changes are happening now," Ramanathan said.

While advocating respect for long-held traditions, the Dalai Lama said humanity also must face "today's reality," and care for the planet in the same way a bird would its nest.

"Our survival depends on it," he said. "It is wrong just to exploit as much as possible without care."

Asked by a member of the audience how one can have a calm, rational debate about climate change with those who deny its existence, the Dalai Lama said the key is to "have respect" and "listen" to the other side.

During the UCSD event, the Dalai Lama occasionally consulted a translator by his side. Though portions of his talk were lost in translation, the audience seemed to comprehend the general message he wished to convey.

"It's kind of like listening to Shakespeare, where your ear adjusts, and then you get it," said Michelle

Tiernan, following the UCSD event.

University donor Blake Harper said he has long admired the Dalai Lama and found the presentation "fantastic."

"The two scientists were so brilliant in their thinking on environmental issues, and the Dalai Lama just brought a whole different attitude (with his) spiritual background," Harper said.

Tiernan said she admired how the Dalai Lama brought "secular education in line with people's religious beliefs, 'honoring all paths and all faiths.'"

Environmental engineering student Kingston Hon said he was surprised by how informed the Dalai Lama is on climate change.

"I didn't know what knowledge he could bring to the table about environmental issues, but surprisingly enough, he did have a lot of wisdom pertaining to the situation we're in," Hon said.

"I always thought he would be kind of distant from everybody, but you could sort of relate (to him), like your grandfather. He has an aura about him that you just respect, but at the same time he's still very

humble, still very human,"

"He's like Yoda," added UCSD political science major Hannah Bernabe.

Sierra Stevens-McGeever, who is studying marine biology at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, said she liked that the Dalai Lama repeatedly underscored the concept of shared humanity.

"Some people are starving and some people are trying to get the biggest, baddest house and the craziest car, but it's not really what's important when it comes down to it," she said. "We do share this world and our pollution is affecting people in other parts of the world that don't have the luxury of driving a car around, but they're still breathing in polluted air."

Student Jesse Traller, who is studying algae biofuel research, said she liked that the Dalai Lama called for engaging in civil discourse with climate change denialists.

"As long as you address them in a harsh way, like I found myself doing last night — (while) talking to somebody about global warming — nothing's going to ever come across and you'll never work through

your issues," she said. "I think the first key is to respect others."

"Like what Richard Somerville said: Everyone is entitled to their own opinions, but not their own facts," Stevens-McGeever added.

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as a classmate makes changes.

In addition to writing and reading (including eBooks), the tools are used to tap into nearly every subject, social studies to math.

Teachers take advantage of educational "apps" like Monkey Fractions or one on idioms that children loved so much that the teachers heard from parents that they requested to download it for their own devices and continue using it at home.

Moran works closely with the teachers to make sure the teachers use the most educational apps that make sense with the school's core standards.

Classroom management is key with these tools, Moran said. Students are given rules and they stick to them. Students are instructed "iPods up" or "iPods down" and students follow the rules for fear of losing the privilege. The students respect the equipment and they have had no broken devices in three years.

The whole classroom learns together—teachers have a pad of paper at the front of the classroom where students can write down different tricks or tools they learned that day to share with the class.

"It changes the way a classroom looks and works together," Moran said.

In Colleen Gaines' third grade class last week, students were in a rotation of five applications on their iPods: a read-aloud app, the Sticker Shop where students learn about money and deci-

imals and Sketchy, where students write a story using their vocabulary words and are able to illustrate it. As they worked, Gaines circulated to work with students one on one on editing some of their writing.

"I really like it, it doesn't take the place of regular curriculum it's just another piece you add in," said Gaines, who uses the iPods in class about four days a week.

In Courtney Masick's class, the students were working on stories they had written with vocabulary words. Masick has them use the iPod's voice recorder to read their stories aloud without self correcting and then listening to it in order to make edits.

"It helps me recognize what I'm doing in my writing and what I can do to make it more interesting," said third grader Lyric Bledsoe.

Fellow student Kaden Michaels said the voice recorder also helps their reading skills.

"If you're reading like this," said Kaden, imitating a slow, boring monotone, "You can tell. You can tell if you need to speak louder or quieter."

Kaden's favorite app they use is Freddy Fractions, where they learn about fractions, decimals and percentages. Students Dominic Khattar and Reinhard Bartsch also prefer the fractions app.

Lyric likes Chicktionary, a game with letters that you have to use to make a word.

Masick's class also uses a story kit to write their story with illustrations—Masick said some students choose to illustrate every page, some every line, but all are required to have at least four pages.

"This is round two for me and it's as wonderful as it was last year," Masick said. "I've just added more

and more layers, working on their reading, writing and creating and taking it to another level... It's terrific, we're really lucky to have these."

New this year are the iPods, rotating through the fourth grade with teacher Tiffany Kinney. So far using the new devices have been successful.

As the students were ready to start a novel last week, Kinney had the children looking up vocabulary and working in pairs in Google docs. The students had to find words with multiple definitions and identify what definition might be used in the book, which takes place in the 1840s during a sailing expedition.

"They're all very engaged and enthusiastic about using the tool as a learning device, not looking up words in a bound dictionary," Kinney said. "This is their world, this is how they're going to look up words from now on."

Learning about reliable online sources starts early on in their education, Moran said.

"Reliable sources and responsible use are all part of digital citizenship," Moran said. "They learn just because it's on the Internet, it doesn't make it a fact."

The students have used an app on their iPad to assist their learning about rocks and minerals, with quizzes at the end that they have to pass to unlock a next quiz. Another app has them launching cupcakes "Angry Birds"-style to hit the correct solution for a math problem.

When they play as a class, the students get a kick out of Kinney's cupcake launching skills—hers aren't as honed as the children's.

"It has been amazing to watch the students learn and my teaching has obviously changed, it's just been really amazing," Kinney said.

## Jewels of San Diego fundraiser to be held at Grand Del Mar

The Honorary Jewels of San Diego invite this newspaper's readers to The Jewels of San Diego on May 5 at The Grand Del Mar, San Diego's only Five Star resort. The evening will feature a fabulous Moulin Rouge Cabaret Show, choreographed by celebrity choreographer Mary Murphy of Fox's hit TV show "So You Think You Can Dance." This magnificent affair will benefit The Arc of San Diego, which is the largest, most comprehensive provider of services to children and adults with disabilities in San Diego County ([www.arc-sd.com](http://www.arc-sd.com)).



"Jewels": L-R: Kristi Pieper, Phyllis Parrish, Joye Blount, Sally B. Thornton and Jeanne Jones (Sandy Redman not pictured). Photo/Vincent Andrunas

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