

Winter Newsletter: Computer Lab

Geography, branches of government (federal and state), history, math and reading were all areas we have explored in Computer Lab since the beginning of school and are continuing to explore this semester. I have worked closely with teachers in each grade so that students' computer lab assignments complemented their classroom curriculum.

When **third grade** students were learning their multiplication tables in their classrooms, I supported that effort by teaching the students how to maneuver through math websites to determine which ones were relevant and appropriate, and then letting them do multiplication problems on those websites.

When the **fourth grade** students were studying science, we found appropriate websites on specific science subjects, which supported their classroom work.

And when the **fifth grade** students were studying government, we pulled up the North Carolina state government website to learn the different branches of government, who the state representatives were for Haywood County and how to contact a representative. We also looked at how a bill becomes law. We want to do more of that.

Our **first graders** are still learning how to log in to their computers, using the correct letter and number combinations that make up their username and password. Many have come a long way; others are still working on it. If we get everyone logged in before class ends, they get to learn keyboarding on ABCYA.com, keyboard zoo.

Our **second graders** have made great strides in learning to log in, remembering their usernames and passwords. Once logged in, I have them practice their reading and spelling on ABCYA.com.

This past fall we spent several weeks learning how to type properly, a useful skill students will use throughout their schooling and beyond. You may have heard your child singing the finger positions. It would have gone something like this: "a-s-d-f, j-k-l-;" (going from low notes to high notes). I insist they use correct fingering – no hunting and pecking with two fingers—when they are in computer lab. I hope you will remind them to do the same at home.

As we approach spring, the students will start filling their e-folders with documents that reflect the computer skills they must learn by the end of school.

In January, as part of our Leader in Me philosophy, I selected 20 second and third graders to serve as computer lab assistants for this semester. These students had to apply and tell me why they would make a good computer lab assistant. They help me in the computer lab between 7:45 and 8 a.m. each morning, cleaning the keyboards to help cut down on the spread of germs, replacing broken headsets, or straightening chairs. So far we've had very responsible students.

Though I teach computer lab and love the wonderful tools technology offers, I tell my students that learning to read is the single most important tool they need to succeed. I ask that they read the same amount of time they play computer games. If they play a computer game for 30 minutes, then they should read for 30 minutes. I hope you will support this goal as well. Thank you. Melanie McConnell