The Art of Education

Art teacher Todd Lensing, left, and Principal Josh Metzger are excited about the possibilities of the new digital arts classroom at Gold Beach High School.

Gold Beach High adds digital arts classroom

There are many types of art available for us to enjoy: visual art, music and theater are but a few. Today, the influence of digital art and design is all around us, sometimes in ways that may surprise you.

Digital arts is not a new class for most schools nationwide. However, it is new to Gold Beach High School due to a prior lack of proper hardware and software. While teachers and students made the best of the resources available, a partnership between Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative and Central Curry School District facilitated some big changes.

On November 6, 2019, Gold Beach High School students arrived to find a completely new digital arts classroom.

Funded by a GEAR UP grant (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) through the Department of Education, Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative, which is contracted to provide IT services to the Central Curry School District, negotiated pricing for computers and software, and set up the classroom. Dan Springer, CCEC chief information officer, provided an orientation to the first class in the lab. He provided tips and tools on how to log into Microsoft Office 365 with their user-specific login, how to save documents to their files and, most importantly, how to share their work with the digital arts teacher.

It is a great improvement to the classroom, which consisted previously of of Windows Home machines which were insufficient for software to teach digital arts. The old machines used a generic login, leaving each student to work around the previous user's settings.

Along with the new hardware, the digital arts class now has full subscriptions to Adobe Creative Suite, which offers access to programs such as Photoshop for image editing; and Illustrator, graphic design software used to create web and mobile graphics.

The successful partnership between CCEC and Central Curry School District has impacted students beyond the new digital arts classroom. A previous Gear Up grant enabled the district to buy 50 Surface Pro tablets. The new equipment allows teachers to get more creative in their assignments and projects. For example, the eighth grade biology teacher was able to have their students model functions of a cell on the tablets using the popular game Minecraft for education.

"The new $25,000 grant enabled the program to purchase the computers; however, the district must budget in the remaining funds for flooring, heating systems, labor and more," says Curry Central School District Superintendent, Tim Wilson.

According to Tim, they do not take this upgrade lightly. The previous computer lab was misused by some students. To maintain the integrity of this major upgrade, a select number of 11th and 12th grade students have been screened and selected to use the facility for yearbook class.

The school plans to integrate computer science and student business. However, one thing is sure: The school district, students and teachers are all looking forward to seeing the impact this new technology will provide. ∎