Program gets a boost at Belding

Middle school pupils get new audiovisual technology laboratory

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BELDING — Pupils at Belding Middle School will be taking advantage of the latest audiovisual production equipment during the upcoming school year.

"Everything is sitting on docks waiting to come," said Principal Mike Wallace. "We can have it running in seven to 10 days."

At Monday night's Belding Area Schools Board of Education meeting, members approved by a 6-1 vote the leasing of 10 Apple computers for a new technology laboratory that will focus on audiovisual production. Board member Tim Flynn voted against the proposal.

"We feel this is the best program we can get at this time for our kids," Wallace said. "This will upgrade, modify and provide more of what our kids want."

The lease, which is for three years, will cost just less than $10,000 a year. It can be broken at any time if school officials are not satisfied with operations.

The money to fund the computers will come from internal funding within the middle school. No additional district funds will be used to pay for the lease.

Funding was a concern for board members. Some questioned if it would be cheaper to purchase everything separately.

But Wallace explained that along with the computers, Apple will provide the district with all the software and equipment needed to run the programs as well as technical support and maintenance, things that would quickly add up if purchased separately.

The school's technology department will not be responsible for maintaining the equipment.

There was also some concern from board members about the system's deviating from the IBM computers currently used throughout the district. However, board vice president Tom Humphreys explained that Apple computers are the standard in the audio-video technology and production industry.

"The IBM software is not as student-friendly or user friendly," Wallace said. "Apple computers are much more accessible and user and student-friendly ... and the opportunity for support is there."

The class, taught by Eric Spicer, already is popular with students.

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Some had a taste of it last year after one computer was set up with the audiovisual programs and was used during classes. With it, the students were able to create news programs and video announcements.

The class, which is taught in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades, will meet every hour this school year. It is already full with 20 or more students enrolled each hour.

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