



“The Tech Trek: Grand Blanc’s Journey into the Future.”

Volume III: Brendel Elementary: All About the Little Things

“It’s the little details that are vital. Little things make big things happen.” John Wooden

“Sometimes, little things make a big difference....” Nino Varsimashvili

When asked what makes Brendel Elementary unique, 5th grade teacher Dawn Sheick said that for her personally, it’s “just the little things that are really making a big difference.” There’s no flash and flare, no big bang; just the little daily activities that add up to something special, something extraordinary. That something is the students at Brendel Elementary and what they are learning and accomplishing each day, thanks in large part to the new technology.

“I think that the biggest highlight from the 1:1 devices is just the collaboration between the students, it’s amazing to see,” says 3rd grade teacher Katie Hoffmeyer. With the collaboration comes a new level of interest: “The engagement for the assignments has really skyrocketed with the 1:1 device. They just seem to want to put more into it and hold up their end of it when they know they’re collaborating.”

Credited with seamless transitions throughout the day, the devices are proving themselves to be useful tools for furthering day to day instruction. Dawn Sheick appreciates the opportunity the Chromebooks provide to her students for furthering their knowledge, noting that “it kind of blends together the book learning and their curiosity because now if something spurs their learning and their curiosity, they can go right to the information they need.”



3rd graders in Katie Hoffmeyer's class work independently on their 1:1 devices.

It’s not just students and teachers that are benefiting from the devices. Parents are also gaining more through the new technology. With Google Classroom, parents are able to see what their students are doing at school and can find resources that can help them. Katie Hoffmeyer says she will put a YouTube link of how she taught math or a method similar because a lot of time parents say they don’t know how to teach something the new way: “It’s not the new way; we’re just using other terminology. So the parents are able to see the videos and I think that’s been really beneficial.”

During meetings with teachers, the opportunity came up to talk with some of the students at Brendel Elementary and ask them what they like about the Chromebooks. Below are some of their responses.

3rd grader Madisen Harris: "I like that we can spend half of our day learning on the Chromebooks, like if we're in tech ex, we can do edutyping or code.org, or if we're in our classroom we can do math games in the morning for our morning work and writing.

I like that we get free time sometimes in tech ex so I like to design my room because I'm about to move next year and I like to design what my room is going to look like. So I like Google slides or Google pictures or Google shapes. I use shapes on the site so sometimes I use lines to make my bed or I use a rectangle to make my pillow or something like that.

I want to be a teacher; I love learning. I asked for a Chromebook for Christmas because I really like to do things on there, like finish my stories, or my room."

3rd grader Emily Mack: "I like that you can take them home and they're portable because I ride the bus every day and I like to read on it. I like that you can do coding mostly because I want to be a technologist when I'm older.

I tried to take my tablet at home apart and put it back together. It was already broken and I like trying to fix things. I think my parents are going to get me a computer because we only get to keep the Chromebooks till the end of the year and for summer I'm going to ask my parents to get me like a Chromebook. "



A couple of 5th graders work on their devices in a favorite spot. Many classrooms have incorporated various seating for students to choose from, giving them the autonomy to select their workspace.

5th grader Brooklyn Saultman: "I like them because you can do tests. You don't always have to take tests on paper. Sometimes you can and sometimes you can't. It helps you in middle school or high school because you can type your homework up faster and make it easier.

The fun thing is that when you're writing and you're done drafting the only thing you need to do is type it up in your computer and publish it to your teacher. It's easy. It's not hard, it's not like, "Oh I need to get this done, edit this, edit that;" it self-edits. It's so easy, it's cool.

I would like to be a teacher and do mostly coding; you can teach kids to code and stuff like that. My uncle manufactures cars so he uses coding a lot."

5th grader Zoe Taylor: "I like them because you can get more work done and you can focus better and you're not trying to constantly write something out. It also seems that in tech ex, educated coding, educated games, and keyboarding are teaching you when you grow up to do things like code and create computers and maybe text faster and type faster.

I have my own personal Chromebook that I got for Christmas last year. I do a lot on it. It's also a touch screen so it can flip into a tablet and is like, so cool. At home, I like checking grades. Especially when you're missing an assignment and you don't remember you have it, but the teacher marks it in the grade book as "missing reading log, missing math." So you don't have to wait until report cards come out and see you're missing this."

Students have more to say about the 1:1 devices than just their favorite part. Brooklyn Saultman and Zoe Taylor also had a few words of advice: “Just be careful with them, whatever you do. Don’t go on inappropriate sites. Stay on appropriate sites from school and at your home don’t go on inappropriate sites,” says Zoe. “Yeah, and don’t get water by the Chromebooks,” adds Brooklyn.

While teachers and students alike are benefiting from the 1:1 Chromebooks, teachers are still recognizing that there are times when the devices are appropriate, and times when the old fashioned way of pen and paper is a better method. When asked how she thinks the Chromebooks affect retention, Dawn Sheick remarked: “For the processing, especially at this age, typing is not as fluent as it needs to be. So a lot of times when we do written responses or writing in general, we don’t start off typing on the Chromebook, we start with paper and pencil because there’s something that works with our brain that connects to actually doing that physical movement. I think it gives them more time to actually process it and kind of sit back and think about it and then we’ll transfer it from paper to the computer. On the other side, it could help retention because with the access to PowerPoint and videos and things like that, I think it makes it so much more real to kids, especially when you’re teaching science or social studies. Those subjects are very abstract to them; something they haven’t seen before, they haven’t done anything with before, so to be able to actually get a peek into what it is, is so beneficial. They have the ability to do that whether self directed, or because it’s assigned to them.”



A special thank you goes to teachers Katie Hoffmeyer and Dawn Sheick for graciously sharing their time so that Grand Blanc Community Schools can share with you; their community.

These are the volumes of Grand Blanc Community Schools. Its lifelong mission: to explore new concepts, to seek out new learning and new technology, to boldly go where no school has gone before.

Written by Caitlin Yancho