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Students at L.A. middle school get computers to take home

May 4, 2010 | 6:31 pm

Robert Louis Stevenson Middle

725 South Indiana St., Los Angeles, 90023



- Public school in the Los Angeles Unified district.
- Grades 6-8
- 2,473 students
- 104 faculty members

Source: California Department of Education

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SANDRA POINDEXTER, BEN WELSH Los Angeles Times

Sixth-graders at Stevenson Middle School in Boyle Heights will get personal notebook computers to take home as part of a pilot program to provide technology to low-income students.

The effort, formally unveiled Tuesday, is a public/private venture called School2Home, which is aimed at narrowing what has been called the "digital divide," the gap in access to technology that separates the poor from the more prosperous. At many schools, advanced course work presumes home access to computers, printers and broadband Internet, yet many families still lack these tools.

Stevenson Middle School is one of two schools piloting this program, according to the office of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, whose education nonprofit worked with the Los Angeles Unified School District to bring the program to the 660 sixth-graders at Stevenson.

For the next two years, successive sixth-grade classes also will receive computers, eventually reaching all the school's students.

As part of the effort, teachers received three days of training on how to integrate technology into their teaching. Parents also will undergo six hours of training delivered in three, two-hour sessions. After parents complete the first training session they may take home their child's computer.

The ultimate goal of School2Home is to provide computers to more than 500 low-performing middle schools and up to 400,000 students and families across California.

Funding for the Stevenson computers has been provided by the California Emerging Technology Fund, L.A. Unified, AT&T, Comcast, Google and Verizon.

The California Public Utilities Commission ordered the establishment of the California Emerging Technology Fund as a condition for approving the mergers of SBC-AT&T and Verizon-MCI in 2005. AT&T and Verizon are contributing a total of \$60 million in seed capital to the initiative.

There are various other ongoing efforts to provide individual computers to students and their families. Several are district funded or developed in cooperation with a school's parent group, such as at Ivanhoe Elementary in Silver Lake.

El Sereno Middle School is in the second year of Computers For You, which provides computers directly to families, said Themistocles Sparangis, educational technology director for L.A. Unified. A federal grant could expand that program to 20 additional secondary schools.

-- Howard Blume

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