

# morris daily herald

## Our Schools: I.C.S. offers 'best possible' technology

By Kim DesLauriers — Superintendent, Immaculate Conception School

Created: Friday, February 24, 2012 1:00 p.m. CDT

*EDITOR'S NOTE — This is the fourth in a week-long series of columns written by Morris school leaders discussing their schools' use of technology. In the coming months, similar series of articles will focus on other topics pertinent to local education.*

Immaculate Conception School is committed to providing its students and staff with the best possible technology and the best possible instruction in its use.

Many I.C.S. students now read books and other materials from hand-held devices. Reading good books is always highly encouraged and the use of such devices is both encouraged and monitored. The school is currently exploring one to one programs that can be used by an entire class.

In the years ahead, student textbooks will be available through a 1-to-1 program and each student in a class will need a handheld device. Students will take this device to and from classes and to and from home. Textbooks will be very interactive and the purchase price for these materials will be less than that of traditional textbooks. This will increase student interest and motivation.

Currently, students and staff members are required to sign acceptable use agreements that require them be responsible users of the school's technology. Staff members are provided with laptop computers that enable them to work at both school and at home. The school currently has wireless access points, use of a file server, DSL service, an internet filtering system,

networked printers, access to scanners for documents, a Facebook page and a webpage. The school's library is automated and digital cameras and video cameras are available for teacher and student use.

Students in kindergarten through eighth grade learn Microsoft Word formatting skills, including headers and footers, margin changing, double spacing, automatic indenting and page numbers. They become skilled in internet usage and searching skills. Also among the skills being learned throughout all the grades are desktop publishing, including making signs, banners, cards and calendars.

In grades second through eighth, students are taught keyboarding skills and are required to have a minimum proficiency of 25 words per minute by eighth grade. Grades four through eight learn Microsoft Excel skills, including how to use a spreadsheet and make graphs from data. Grades fifth through eighth create Powerpoint presentations. Eighth grade learns scanning, importing pictures, and basic photo editing. Fifth-graders participate in school and at home in an online math tutorial program called Aleks. While so much is currently done with computers, I.C.S. still emphasizes the basic skills of good printing, cursive writing and note taking.

I.C.S. staff members use Teacher Ease as an online grade book and communication system. Report cards are automated. Teachers have online access to AimsWeb, which is a system for progress monitoring and developing methods for differentiating instruction. Teachers also have access to the Iowa Basic Skills Online System to further improve individualized curriculum areas. Kindergarten through eighth grade use the Accelerated Reader program as a tool to assess student reading comprehension. Each classroom is equipped with a Smart Board.

Parents in grades fourth through eighth have online access to student grades and progress. All I.C.S. families have email. A great deal of communication between families and the school is handled through email. Weekly school updates are sent to families at the beginning of each week.

This year, the school began using School Reach as an additional communication tool. School Reach enables the school to reach all families and staff with either a text message or phone call. This is a great means of communicating an important events or informing families of a weather related closing.

The school charges a \$25 per student fee for technology and has an annual budget for technology repair and replacement. I.C.S. families and friends of the school have always wanted students and staff to have access to the best available technology and have been very generous in donating toward the purchase of items that are deemed important. The most recent purchases include Smart Boards for each classroom and all new Mac computers for the tech lab.

In the very near future, the school hopes to initiate the use of handheld devices and one to one programs. Through the years, the school's technology budget has been greatly enhanced by donations made by individuals and businesses.

Many years ago, the school made a commitment to make the best possible technology available to all students and staff members on a daily basis. This commitment requires an ongoing assessment of needs. The school is grateful for the support its efforts receive from families and the community.

*Reprinted from the Morris Daily Herald*  
*<http://www.morrisdailyherald.com>*