Technology goes mobile at Trindale Elementary

BY DEBBIE HIGHTOWER

ARCHDALE — In Christy Hutchins’ fifth-grade classroom at Trindale Elementary School, students are using technology to support classroom activities in English, math and science, thanks to an infusion of cash from Archdale-Trinity Tax Advisory Council.

In the not-so-distant past, students in Trindale classes had to take turns for scheduled visits to the computer lab to work on stationary desktop computers.

Hoping to step up technology in the schools, in the spring of 2017 the AT Tax Council allocated $402,000 for technology to all schools and grade levels in the Archdale-Trinity tax district to be used for Chromebooks and other technology requests.

In addition, at their October meeting the AT Tax council voted unanimously to approve a $25 per-student allotment designated for technology needs in the 2017-2018 school year in addition to the $175 per student already given.

The goal of the AT Tax Council is to give all students, especially those in elementary schools, the ability to use mobile technology in their lessons. Chromebooks, in combination with the Google Classroom apps, allow each student to access learning activities specifically tailored to their learning level in reading, math and science.

Students in Hutchins’ classroom are learning about fractions and decimals, a fact that is not remarkable in itself. The way they practice these skills, however, has changed in recent months. Chromebooks give students the option to do learning activities at any location in the classroom — individually, with a classmate or in a group.

At his desk, Drake Steffey completed a traditional paper assignment in pencil. As he did so, he opened a Google Classroom app on a Chromebook — also on his desk. “There is a lesson ready just for you,” said a cartoon character on the laptop’s screen.

Once he got underway, Drake joined classmates Evan Renn and Luis Galeana-Rodriguez who were seated in chairs to work on the assignment.

At a table, students Thu Vu and Kaitlyn Sams sat with Hutchins where they got a little guidance from their teacher on the assignment. Nearby, Sadie Baldwin and Zoey Taylor completed Math Stations activities while seated on the floor.

They can’t take the Chromebooks home but, through Google classroom, students can continue to learn at home.

“My students asked me if they can use their student account to sign on to Google to practice their skills if we have a snow day or over the weekend and I said, ‘Absolutely!’” said Hutchins.

The AT Tax Council is following through on their commitment to give students in the district an educational edge.

“With the ever-changing technology needs and ongoing school requests, the council is prepared to work with the county to make sure that our schools have an additional $200,000 to $250,000 annually for additional technology needs,” said AT Tax Chairman John Cable. “We are proud that several of our elementary schools now have one-to-one technology and others are working to become one-to-one. The council works diligently to provide as much funding as possible to help our schools meet their technology goals.”

“We love the technology,” said Hutchins. “We are one-to-one with technology so no one has to wait to use it. It gives them the ability to collaborate. There is so much we are able to do.”

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Photos by Debbie Hightower

Chromebooks funded by Archdale-Trinity Tax Advisory Council give students at area elementary schools the ability to access learning activities from anywhere within the school. Through Google Classroom, students have the capacity to take charge of their own learning and proceed at an individualized pace. When Drake Steffey opened the Google Classroom on his Chromebook, a cartoon character greeted him with the message, “There is a lesson waiting just for you!”

Left: Several elementary schools in the Archdale-Trinity district are one-to-one with technology so students don’t have to wait in line to use computers. Chromebooks give students the mobility to do learning activities at any location in the classroom — individually, with a classmate or in a group. Pictured here, Zoey Taylor and Sadie Baldwin complete lessons on classroom Chromebooks.