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CCHS Advanced Media Production Grant

By Alison Silver

This summer, Concord-Carlisle High School received a multi-media production grant from the Concord Education Fund. On July 1, 2009, the proposal for the \$26,000 grant was approved and the money put into immediate effect. The purpose of the grant was to provide the CCHS students and faculty with easily accessible video equipment and advanced software for the production of high quality television broadcasts, computer programming, and curriculum-based projects inside and outside the classroom. Four months after the grant's acceptance, the improved technology is already benefitting students and teachers by providing newer and readily available equipment specifically for the high school's use.

Prior to the advanced media grant, CCHS had recently installed a six-station media production lab in the school library, as well as a recording studio, and the school offered digital imaging and computer-based video production classes. However, despite the increasing interest among CC students in video production, students had to rely on Concord-Carlisle Television (CCTV) for equipment. As a result of the fact that CCTV has a limited amount of equipment, which is available to the community, the school often had trouble reserving necessary equipment to meet various student needs. With the addition of the grant, the school will be able to purchase new video cameras and microphones for the library, which will be accessible to students anytime, as well as an outdoor remote camera.

One of the benefits of the grant that is already in place is the new technology that it provides for Concord-Carlisle Weather Services (CCWS) and some of the science courses at the high school. CCWS, an extra-curricular activity, now provides the weather forecast for the school as well as for the local television and radio stations. These forecasts are helpful to the athletic department, school administration, and classes planning field trips. One of the students involved with CCWS, senior Alexandra Coffin, says that the grant "has made it easier to present our work to the CC community through a variety of different means, [including] radio, TV, and internet!" Still to come are the handheld video cameras and microphones, as well as the roof-top camera for outside surveillance. This will be used for live footage of current weather conditions for the website, Patriot TV, and CCTV. It will also offer video feed of the school grounds and various athletic events. In addition, the new Mac computer with double monitors, provided by the grant, enables students to simultaneously look at weather maps and write up their forecasts. The grant also provided a new MacBook pro laptop, which is of great convenience, for it allows students to create and transport graphics packages for their forecasts on a portable machine, which they can play back in the CCTV studio; this is an easy way to connect the images for their forecasts with the TV station's green screen.

The new equipment is also already being used in several science classes at CCHS. Jeff Yuhas, a teacher from the science department, offers a meteorology class to juniors and seniors, for which students put on a weather show every Friday, in front of a green

screen, to build on the week's lessons. The upgrades in computing capabilities enable students in that class to do much more with graphics in editing and processing their material. "It can't be emphasized enough how unique this overall experience is for high school students," comments Mr. Yuhas. Because the computer and its software were installed specifically for student use, they are always available for science classes and the weather group.

Furthermore, the grant will also provide resources for different media-based student groups. For example, Patriot Productions, a student video-production club, has been awaiting the available resources to get the club off the ground. That club and other groups will be able to make use of the two new video cameras that have been ordered for the library and which are more advanced than the current equipment at CC; these cameras are expected to arrive within a month and will always be available for student use. With the use of the new, more professional equipment, the students in the club hope to learn how to produce their own programs. Andrew Sapp, an English teacher and the faculty advisor of Patriot Productions, who submitted the grant to the Concord Ed Fund, will be in charge of monitoring the use of the equipment for student projects. "[The new equipment] will have a broad benefit for the school and the community," he says.

At CCHS, many teachers have expressed a desire to integrate visual media into their classes, but before now they have lacked the necessary resources to do so. The new technology will promote student skills in communicating through media. Students as well are growing more interested in using more advanced technology for projects in school and co-curricular groups. The 21st century has been described as a new age in which media is a core literacy. Robin Cicchetti, one of the CCHS librarians who worked on the grant proposal, emphasizes the necessity for today's students to learn the skills of digital and visual media production. She observes that "[the grant] is so exciting because it allows kids to develop new skills in communication," skills which are vital to have in today's society.