

New Technology Equipment for Classrooms through ESSER Fund

If there could be anything positive from the Coronavirus, it might be the extra funding awarded to public schools across the United States. In March of 2020, Congress set aside approximately \$13.2 billion through the Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund). Signed into law on March 27, 2020, the US Department of Education awarded these funds to state educational agencies for the purpose of providing local educational agencies, that is, individual school districts, including charter schools such as MCA, with emergency relief funds to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the country.

Although the rules of products and services allowed to be covered through the ESSER fund are quite strict, new technology equipment to help teachers and students in the classroom, and ultimately to help in the event of remote education should a COVID-19 spike require it, is covered. After much consideration and research, it was determined that we purchase new iPads for lower school teachers, kindergarteners and first graders, and new interactive panels for classrooms still using twelve to fourteen year old SMART board and projector technologies. In order to get the funding approved, three separate bids were required for each type of equipment with the winning bid being the lowest of the three in each case.

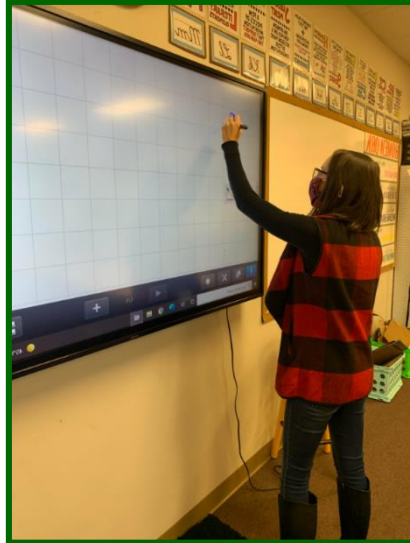
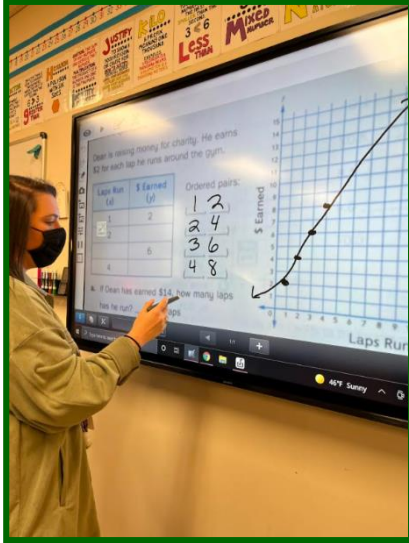
We chose new iPads for lower school teachers since MCA's Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum for grades kindergarten through five can be more easily managed and manipulated by teachers with iPads as they move about their classrooms. Some teachers even have apps that let them control their computer, and therefore the interactive panel in their classroom from their iPads. They can literally write on their boards from the back of their classrooms! Two iPad carts, with twenty-one iPads each, were purchased for kindergarten and first grade students. Although kindergarten and first grade already shared Chromebook carts, iPads are much more easily accessible for these younger students since they do not have to type log-in information, and they are able to touch the screens to interact with web sites and applications rather than having to type on a keyboard. The iPads increase efficiencies since less time is needed to get students online, and since it is much easier for them to interact with their apps using the touchscreen capability .



At the left, Mrs. Allred's first grade class uses the new iPads for Math IXL. This app offers practice for many math skills. Students can touch answers, read thermometers, practice addition and subtraction, and write their answers directly on the iPads. Students may work individually or in small groups. Mrs. Allred reports that the students love using the devices, and that she sees improvement in their engagement levels as a result of using the devices.

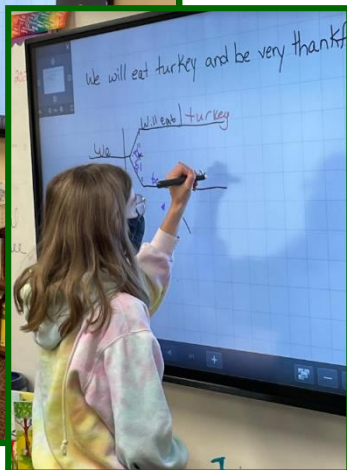
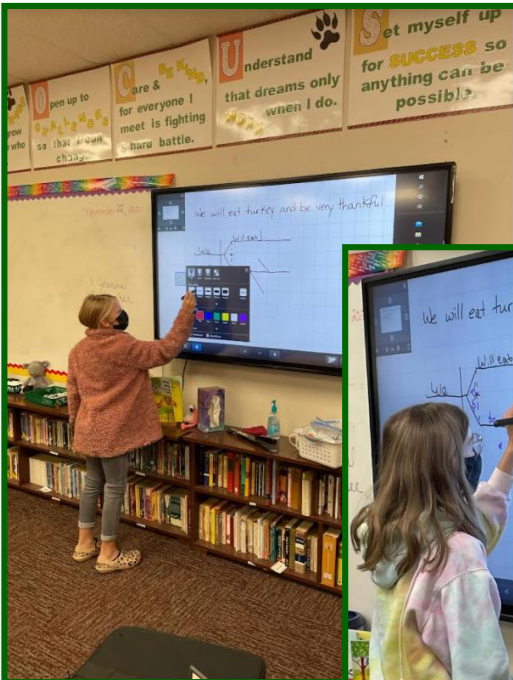
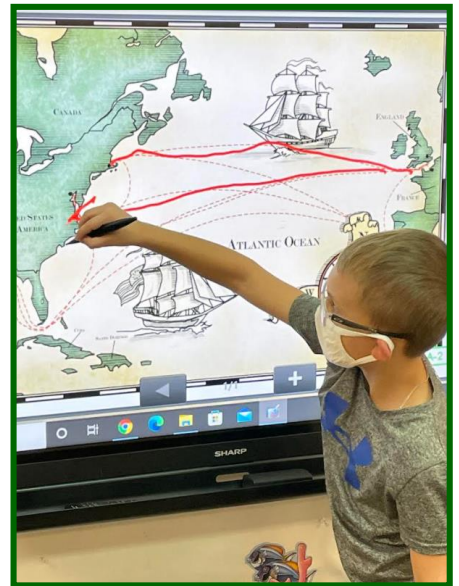


Before we obtained this funding, sixteen MCA classrooms still used old-style SMART board and ceiling mounted projector combinations to display what was on the teacher’s computer. Although this equipment was once state-of-the-art, over time, projection had become somewhat dim, often forcing teachers to keep the window blinds closed and lights off so students could more easily see the board. Some of the SMART boards, also as a result of their age, had become difficult to write upon. Now each of these classrooms is equipped with a new electronic interactive panel that is bright and does not have to continuously be calibrated before writing upon it. Teachers and students may much more easily write on the board with the lights on and blinds open.



To the left, Mrs. Acord and Mrs. Fregia are writing on their new interactive panels. Mrs. Acord, at the far left, is using an “overlay” which allows her to write on a page from a math journal that she is displaying from her computer. Mrs. Fregia is writing on “graph paper” and using the board like a white board.

To the right, a student in Mrs. Wardle’s room traces shipping routes from England to The Colonies. Once the pen software is opened, writing on the new panels is like writing on a regular white board.



Here at the left, students in Mrs. Moore’s sixth grade English class practice diagramming sentences on the new panel.

At MCA, technology is always employed as a means toward the end goal of education, to create wise and virtuous citizens, and never as an end in itself. We value digital technologies primarily as a means of production of high-quality products and presentations with consumption of information playing a lesser role. Our students and families can be sure that the addition of these new products were considered in this same light before the purchase, and we are most grateful to be able to add them to our classrooms for our students and teachers.