

SERF Grant Funds Special Education Resources

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Lauren Jurgens, Amy Vera, and Jennifer Yaffe with the SERF-funded iPads.

Special education students at the Loring Elementary School are learning with new hands-on technology this fall, thanks to a grant from the Sudbury Education Resource Fund (SERF).

SERF is a non-profit organization that has provided grants to classrooms in the Sudbury Public Schools (SPS) and the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School (LSRHS) for over twenty years.

Lauren Jurgens, Jennifer Yaffe and Amy Vera, all special educators at the Loring school, applied for the SERF grant to purchase two iPads and special education apps.

The iPads and apps are used by the specialists in Loring's Learning Center to enhance multisensory learning for students with special needs. The specialists use the hands-on technology to motivate students and increase their capacities for learning specific skills. For example, the technology assists with augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) for developing skills in those with communication disorders.

"We currently use the iPads with students in all grade levels," explains Ms. Jurgens. "There are numerous apps which reinforce all curriculum areas: reading, ELA, math, science and social studies. There are also apps which address language skills, social skills, fine motor and visual tracking skills."

Students have readily integrated the new technology into their learning. "The kids are naturals with it and they are so much easier to navigate than a computer for so many kids, especially the younger ones," reports Ms. Jurgens.

The benefits of the technology extend beyond just academics. "While we use them to reinforce academic skills, they are also, obviously, very motivating and are used for reward time as well in order to address some behavioral challenges," explains Ms. Jurgens.

Students are very enthusiastic about the new technology. One fourth grader said, "The iPad helps me take notes instead of writing them out. It's easier for me to brainstorm." Students have also benefitted from the technology in learning math. One student noted, "I love learning on the iPad. It really gets me to practice my math facts!" Another observed, "I like playing fraction games on the iPad because it's a fun way to learn!"

SERF relies on contributions from parents and the community to fund critical needs in the K-12 classrooms. To donate, visit www.serfsudbury.org.