



Cole Puckett, left, and Jack Rotermund use an iPod to record their voices while learning how to make a podcast in second-grade teacher Maggie Moore's class at Strawberry Park Elementary School. Edgemont is collecting iPods to donate to local schools for programs such as the one in Moore's class. Photo by John F. Russell.

iPods becoming a tool of the trade.

Local schools incorporating portable music players into lessons.

By: Zach Fridell

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — It may seem a strange place to receive a lesson on sound, but the library at Strawberry Park Elementary School was abuzz with rolling pencils, shuffling papers and spinning globes as a part of a technology-enhanced class Thursday afternoon.

Librarian Sherry Holland's lesson to students in Maggie Moore's second-grade class included how sound is made and transmitted and the unique properties of ears. Holland used a sound-making tool many young students already take for granted — an iPod.

The iPod has become a common tool in the Steamboat Springs School District, after 25 of the devices were purchased for city schools last year through the Education Fund Board, which administers the city's half-cent sales tax for education. Now that teachers are discovering the uses of sending students home with lessons and the ability to create podcasts for multimedia teaching, district officials hope the program can expand.

They'll have help from local developers.

When staffers at the Edgemont development were looking for a charitable campaign, the iPod program stood out as a place where donations and funds were needed, leading the group to begin an iPod drive culminating with the Merry Mainstreet "Eat, Shop Celebrate" event Edgemont is sponsoring Dec. 13.

Marketing Coordinator Allison Finn said the iPod drive was selected because it was unique and would help the "Take Your Teacher Home" program, which elementary schools hope to use as a way to get lessons home with students.

"We all here at the office wanted to get involved in something for the Christmas holiday," Finn said. "A lot of organizations were doing food and clothing drives, so that was out of the question, because we didn't want to be competitive with them."



Instead, Edgemont is requesting any working iPods or other MP3 players to donate to the schools, where librarians and teachers can load them with educational material. Finn is distributing drop-off boxes around the community and said the group is willing to pick up donations, too.

The district has 25 iPods distributed through the schools. Finn said Edgemont's goal is to add an additional 40 devices to the ranks.

"If we got 40 iPods, we'd be able to create all kinds of opportunities," Holland said. "They don't have to be the big fancy ones."

The iPods are used in many different ways throughout the district, Holland said, including for English Language Learners and in Title 1 Reading programs, where students benefit from repeatedly listening to passages. Other students may miss a day of class because of a sports trip or vacation and can catch up on materials through a teacher-recorded lesson.

So far, the devices at Strawberry Park are used primarily in the classrooms as learning stations. But in the future, students may be able to take the players home.

On Thursday, the students were learning how to create a podcast about the properties of sound to share with their peers.

The one part they did not need help on, however, was how to make the special sounds they wanted to record.

An assignment to think up two soft sounds and two loud sounds led a table full of second-grade boys into a discussion about whether a flatulent, "raspberry" sound is loud or soft.

The conclusion: They probably shouldn't test it.