



City of Gainesville

Office of the City Manager

City Manager Memorandum No. 210023

To: The Honorable Mayor and City Commission

From: Lee R. Feldman, ICMA-CM, City Manager

Date: April 28, 2021

Re: Skybridge Computer Lab Overview

This memorandum is to serve as an informative overview of the Skybridge Computer Labs located at Albert “Ray” Massey Recreation Center, Eastside Recreation Center, and Porters Community Center.

Model Development

In spring of 2019, Commissioner GiGi Simmons held meetings with City and the School Board of Alachua County (SBAC) staff to discuss how we may be able to utilize our PRCA Youth Programs and Centers to support educational development for students. Specifically, the lack of access to reliable, high speed internet for lower-income families was discussed as a barrier to success for many students enrolled in our school system. Many of the students without internet in the homes are unable to complete and submit homework assignments via SBAC’s Skyward Portal. PRCA staff updated the City’s computer labs with Chromebooks, which mirror the operating systems at SBAC.

Infrastructure Development

During the spring and summer months, NCF Diagnostic and DNA Technologies offered a donation of \$10,000 to support the creation of a computer lab for the Porters Community Center. With a funding source established, staff from SBAC, PRCA, GRU IT, and the City Manager’s office began discussing system infrastructure development for the future. Initially, there were discussions about providing free, public Wi-Fi at the center, but this was determined to be cost prohibitive and difficult to implement due to regulatory restrictions that limit web filtering services operated on the same network. GRUCOM fiber was brought into the center and a wireless access point with web filtering services was installed. Due to a limited budget, much of the network cabling and conduit work was provided internally to reduce costs, and existing staff networking equipment was reused.

The new network was set up to use password protected access. This enables the City to provide secure access to anyone needing a connection from their own devices to complete school work or for events that we may host at the center. With the donated funds, the City purchased the following:

- 20 Chromebooks
- A charging cabinet
- A wireless access point
- First year's enterprise system management software that allows the Chromebooks to be remotely managed and supported by IT services
- First years web filtering services

Implementation

Once the computer labs were installed, PRCA staff met with SBAC staff to receive training on how the Skyward portal operates, online learning resources for students through the portal, and how to reach out to SBAC to receive login support for students if needed. Training and installation was completed near the beginning of the academic 2019-2020 school year. We set aside 30-45 minutes Monday-Thursday for each child visiting the center to use the Chromebooks to complete online homework in addition to paper homework completion. If the student did not have online homework, they would still spend the time on the computers to participate in the additional online educational resources. Due to COVID-19, the center was unable to accommodate students seeking to complete the spring standardized testing in 2020; however, preliminary results from other testing earlier in the year showed 81% of the group demonstrated growth in reading and 75% showed growth in math. Unfortunately, due to mixed attendance for digital academy/brick and mortar students and changing rosters, we have not been able to effectively track performance for the current academic school year.

Expansion of Computer Labs to the Eastside

The network and computer lab model proved to be a highly-effective way to provide service with support for our computer labs, and became our new standard for future computer lab setups. During the spring of 2020, PRCA received funding from the Children's Trust of Alachua County for \$14,802 to expand the Skybridge Computer Labs. These funds covered almost all costs to implement the new model at Eastside Recreation Center, including the replacement of all of the older networking equipment, run new cabling, install two wireless access points, and purchase 20 Chromebooks and a charging cabinet. In August of 2020, federal funding was used to expand the computer lab model to Albert "Ray" Massey Recreation Center and Martin Luther King Jr Multipurpose Center to address the lack of internet and computer access for students participating in Digital Academy Remote School. Each center received new wireless access points, fiber, charging cabinets and 20 Chromebooks.

cc: Deborah Bowie, Assistant City Manager
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