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## The San Diego Union-Tribune.

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# Learning via 'e-Pad'

## Wireless computers wave of future now for students in class, at home

By Leonel Sanchez  
STAFF WRITER

February 23, 2007

LEMONGROVE – The future is now for 1,370 students in the Lemon Grove School District.

This week, students at the district's two middle schools began receiving their "e-Pads."

That's the trademarked name of the district-designed wireless computers that Palm and Lemon Grove middle school students will keep until they graduate from eighth grade.

"It's very current. It's futuristic," Lemon Grove district Superintendent Ernest Anastos said about the small computers that students will tote in specially designed backpacks.

Learning will never be the same for students in this diverse East County school district.

From now on, all middle-grade students will do most of their classwork and homework using the yellow-framed e-Pad, which connects from home or school to the central server at the district's office.

Teachers will build lesson plans around information on classroom Web sites. Every participating household has been provided with a free broadband Internet connection that links to the district's server, said Darryl LaGace, the district's chief technology officer.

The server is laden with online educational resources, including access to electronic versions of textbooks, 150 newspapers, thousands of hours of video clips and educational games. E-mail and instant messaging also are available between students and



JOHN GIBBINS / Union-Tribune  
After students at Palm Middle School in Lemon Grove got their own e-Pad computers Wednesday, sixth-grader John Lawson read the instructions before starting up his.

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## Developments

**September 2004:** Pilot program begins at Lemon Grove Middle School. Sixty students are given wireless laptop computers that they

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teachers, but not outside the district.

"They're pretty cool," sixth-grader Christine Croft said as she practiced on the e-Pad, which bore her name on the case. "It'll make homework fun!"

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell has been impressed with the district's efforts to expand learning opportunities. He mentioned Lemon Grove in his annual State of Education address earlier this month.

"While the data are still preliminary, this district and its innovative methods are showing real promise in raising the achievement of low-income students," said O'Connell, who plans to visit Palm Middle School today to help officially launch the district's e-Pad program.

The program began as a pilot in 2004 at Lemon Grove Middle School. Students' academic performance improved. So did attendance. Few of the computers were lost or damaged.

"We've seen that students are more interested and more motivated when they have this kind of access to information," Anastos said.

The district decided to expand the program to all middle-grade students this year with help from \$500,000 in funding from Microsoft's U.S. Partners in Learning program.

"They're visionaries," said Allyson Knox, academic program manager for the Microsoft program.

Bruce Braciszewski, executive director of the Classroom of the Future Foundation, said many school districts have been successful in matching their students with computers in the classroom.

Few have put together the round-the-clock access to online educational tools as the Lemon Grove district has, he said. Braciszewski was particularly impressed with its use of computers that don't have hard drives and depend primarily on a central server for processing information.

The county Office of Education, where the foundation is based, hopes to become a central server soon to a few districts around the county, said Braciszewski, whose foundation has provided financial support to the Lemon Grove project since its inception.

The Lemon Grove district also is sharing its technology by providing access to its server to some schools outside the district, including Helix Charter School in La Mesa.

"The vision is not just for Lemon Grove," said Barbara Allen, the district's educational technology director. "It's for everybody."

use in class and at home. Program expands to 300 students over next two school years.

**June 2006:** Pilot ends. District likes the results, decides to expand program to all sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students by early 2007.

**Today:** Official launching of the "e-Pad" program at Palm Middle School. E-Pad is the district acronym for environment for learning that's personalized, accelerated and designed for the future of education.

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