

Roslyn students surprised with \$10,000 worth of new tech for classrooms

Westmount school a 2018 recipient of a Power Up grant that helped purchase a mobile computer lab with 30 new laptops.



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(<mailto:sschwartz@postmedia.com>) The students at Roslyn School knew only that an announcement would be made at an assembly on Tuesday afternoon: They didn't know about what. And when they

learned that the school was getting \$10,000 worth of classroom technology in the form of a mobile computer lab with 30 new laptops, a great whoop of delight went up in the gymnasium of the English Montreal School Board

(http://www.emsb.qc.ca/emsb_en/index_en.asp) elementary school.

Roslyn has been selected as a 2018 recipients of a Power Up grant (<https://www.softchoice.com/about-softchoice/social-impact/powerup>) from the Softchoice technology company, one of 10 elementary and middle schools across North America. The grant program provides students from low-income communities with access to technology and digital learning. The Lenovo and VMware tech companies are also involved.

Although Roslyn is in Westmount, an affluent community, about half the school's 683 students live elsewhere, including St-Henri, Pointe-St-Charles, Little Burgundy and the western part of downtown.

"I am extremely proud of the fact that this place is so diverse," principal Nick Katalifos said. "A large portion of the school population comes from what would be considered an inner-city background ... The parents choose the school because of their confidence in it."

As part of the grant application, Softchoice requested socio-economic data including the percentage of students on a free or reduced-cost breakfast and lunch programs and education ministry data

(http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/statistiques_info_decisionnelle/Indices_PUBLICATION_20162017_final.pdf) used to classify schools as underprivileged, Pete Morra, the company's community investment manager, explained on Tuesday.

Credit for the successful grant application, Katalifos said, goes to Roslyn technology teacher Julie Marcus. "It was her initiative," he said. "Julie is not only a wonderful teacher, but she works very hard in terms of being there for the kids and in terms of extra-curricular activities."

Roslyn's population includes students with limited access or, in some cases, no access to home computers, Marcus said. "I had students telling me they wanted more access to computers — and I felt that our school had a need for computers."

The teacher is no stranger to grant writing. A successful application she wrote five years ago meant a brand new computer lab for the school; a grant two years ago brought equipment for Roslyn including a projector, a tripod and a tablet projector.

“I have been successful,” she said, “but the kids are deserving. If there is opportunity to improve the technology in your school, why not take it?”

Marcus is passionate about the importance of technology and wanting to prepare her students to take their place in a society in which “every field of the future has some element of computerization.”

At Roslyn, “we are very advanced in our technology program,” she said. Every student in Grades 5 and 6, for instance, takes robotics class. In the computer lab, where students get one hour weekly of instruction, Marcus teaches them about topics including coding, media literacy, video editing, animation and Photoshop. She teaches them about the importance of packaging information properly — “If you can make your work look good, people are more inclined to read it,” she said — and about how to label and save work so they can find it again. “It’s a lifelong skill.”

But the computer lab is exclusively for technology class projects, so that meant no access to computers for homeroom teachers with their classes. It meant also that students without home access to computers had little opportunity to use computers outside the lab — to do homework, for instance. After Tuesday’s announcement, this will change.



Antoine Archambault, right, and Kamai Samuels log on to new laptops given to the Roslyn School. *ALLEN MCINNIS / MONTREAL GAZETTE*

Following the assembly, a group of Grade 5 students huddled with the new computers as Marcus showed them how to use [Bon Patron](https://bonpatron.com/en/) (<https://bonpatron.com/en/>), an online spelling and grammar checker for French as a second language.

“I’m excited to learn now things on the computer,” said 11-year-old Roslyn student Madison Heckinger. “There is what you learn — and we have a lot of fun with computers.”

The computer “can make it easier to learn more,” said Oceane Tilden, 10.

For Olympe Guillaud, 10, “computers make it less boring. I like typing instead of writing.”

And 11-year-old Antoine Archambault said: “I like having the opportunity to use the computer in our normal classes — and not just in technology class.”

When Marcus addressed students after representatives from the tech companies had spoken about the importance of knowing how to use technology, she told them: “You have amazed me with your skills ... I am so grateful that your teachers can now reserve time to use computers as part of

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class projects. I am happy that you have the computer lab ... and that now you now also have the chance to use computers in your classrooms, too.”

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