

RCS Introduces 580 More Chromebooks to K-1 as Part of 1:1 Initiative Through ESPLOST IV

Rome City Schools continually works towards enhancing the educational experience for their students by offering new facilities, programs, devices and more. Most recently, RCS has extended this mission by purchasing 580 more Chromebooks for around \$220,000 through the ESPLOST IV grant in order to expand the initial one-to-one initiative into Kindergarten through 1st grade.

These advances are funded through the Education Special Purpose Location Option Sales Tax IV (ESPLOST IV) which helps to provide the students with facilities that revolve around encouragement, enrichment and exceeding expectations for students.

Rome City Schools Director of Technology and Network Services, Matt Stover stated that, "We have always wanted to expand this initiative into Kindergarten through 1st grade, but we knew that we wouldn't necessarily need one Chromebook per student because a lot of the activities that these children do consist of groups. We then decided, based on classroom numbers from July 19th, that acquiring 580 more Chromebooks would allow for ten Chromebooks per classroom."

Rome City Schools Superintendent Louis Byars worked alongside Stover and team when debating on the initial purchase of more Chromebooks through ESPLOST IV. "We have been thoroughly evaluating the benefits of the use of Chromebooks for K-1 for quite some time, as we are trying to be good stewards of our resources and funds that the citizens of Rome put us in charge of via ESPLOST IV dollars. We simply want to make sure that we are smart with our spending, which is how we came to the consensus of providing ten Chromebooks for each class," stated Byars.

The initial one-to-one initiative started in 2015 with the 9th grade academy. "We purchased around 500 Chromebooks, which then prompted us to work to expand the program from 2nd grade through the 12th grade," explained Stover. It was only fitting that the initiative expand to include all of Rome City School's students.

"By allowing our K-1 students access to these Chromebooks, we are introducing them to this device as something they will see for years to come. It serves as sort of a stepping stone for them, especially because one-hundred percent of our testing is done online, as requested by the state of Georgia," said Stover.

Stover and his team are already looking ahead to further enhance the infrastructure supporting these Chromebooks in order to keep up with the continuously evolving demand, however, Stover welcomes the challenge. "I get up every morning and I am happy to come to work, because Rome City Schools is investing in providing quality technology, infrastructure and support on top of our quality academics, athletics and arts. I feel confident in our team's ability to do the job because of how much we have accomplished and evolved over the past several years," said Stover.

Byars agreed that "Our IT Department with Mr. Stover has done an amazing job over the years of making sure we have a very strong infrastructure that can handle the extra devices. We are well established when it comes to our infrastructure."

Not only have the ESPLOST IV dollars come in handy when enhancing Rome City's technological developments but will continue to provide for the school for years to come. "The ESPLOST IV dollars will become vital to us when these Chromebooks need replacing as they age out or even need technological advances. We are continuing to make sure they stay up-to-date by checking them, routinely so that we can have the best devices," said Byars.

Rome City Schools is excited for the future of their school's technology use, which is just a stepping stone towards the overall goal of the one-to-one initiative's purpose.