Roslyn Elementary School wins grant for mobile computer lab (Photos)

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Roslyn Elementary School wins – What do you do when the school has only one computer lab and everybody wants to use it but there never seems to be enough time to accommodate everyone's needs? Well you put in for a grant to get more computers. That's what Roslyn's enterprising technology teacher Julie Marcus did and – voila! – wish granted.

Julie Marcus, tech teacher (Roslyn School) on the podium telling the students how deserving they are of these new computers

"We didn't have the space for another computer lab but I knew about mobile labs so I applied for a grant," Marcus said. "A lot of teachers give homework that requires the use of a computer, for say, a project on the Olympics. The problem was that the home class projects were cutting into the time that technology students needed. Roslyn has a very advanced tech program for an elementary school she says, one with an accent on media literacy, offering a wide range of courses in video editing, coding, animation, and Photoshop, among other options. "Ideally we could have a perfect marriage of the two (homeroom and technology), but if I give up class time the technology students are missing out."

She applied for 30 laptops through a PowerUp school grant program of Soft Choice which partners with Lenova and VMware to provide IT solutions. Roslyn was one of only 10 schools selected from all over North America although there were around 250 applications. Roslyn is located in the upscale municipality of Westmount but kids are bused in from other areas covered by the English Montreal School Board, including the districts of Point Saint Charles, Saint Henri, and Little Bergundy, Montreal boroughs that are becoming increasingly gentrified. However many of the residents in these neighborhoods are less affluent than their Westmount counterparts, part of the funding criteria for the company to give away free computers. "It's about half and half," says Roslyn Vice-Principal Danica Lewington of the socioeconomic mix of the various areas where students live.

The long and the short of it was that the company's representatives paid the school an on-site visit last December to meet the teacher and students followed by a telephone interview that also included a parent representative and the school administration. In the end Marcus believes the students got the grant because they earned it, Roslyn being uniquely qualified because of its leading-edge technology program. "Our school was deserving," she said. "They took a tour and they were impressed with our students." No argument there from the 500 or so students (student population: 683) who filled the gymnasium last week when the computers were given out at a special presentation. Predictably, they were thrilled.

"All the teachers are fighting to reserve it," Marcus who is in her 6th consecutive year teaching technology at Roslyn says. The mobile cart wheeled around the school also has a charging card that allows individual students to use the laptops in addition to homeroom classes. "We're really grateful," she says. "I'm excited about students learning how you package information and what it can translate into," she says, hopeful for the future success of her young charges. "I'm grateful to the administration and parents too for being so supportive."

Feature image: Julie Marcus, tech teacher (Roslyn School) in front of the school holding one of the brand new computers

By: Deborah Rankin – info@mtltimes.ca

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