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SBCUSD parents oriented into Chromebook Initiative

Hector Hernandez Jr. Sep 6, 2018



SBCUSD community relations worker Marco Spears leads Bonnie Oehl Elementary parents through an instructional presentation on the Google Chromebooks their students are receiving through the district's program to close the digital divide.

San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD), to support students and parents taking advantage of the district's Chromebook program, has begun a series of instructional workshops for district parents.

One of the first meetings of the year was hosted at Bonnie Oehl Elementary on Wednesday, Aug. 29.

Community relations workers Marco Spears and Esmeralda McWilliams led the parents in a presentation orienting them to the Chromebook devices and the data plans offered through the program.

The program offers students the use of Google Chromebook laptops and Internet hotspot devices free of charge for as long as they are SBCUSD students. It arose out of the district's aim to close the digital divide and enable students of low-income families the benefits of computer and Internet accessibility at home.

"Creating a cost efficient system to get students using technology at schools and homes at the same time improves the proficiency levels of the district's students," said Spears during the presentation.

He added that in the program's first year home learning increased from 73 percent of students to 85 percent. The improvements were particularly strong in writing and research assignments.

Each family that receives the use of a district Chromebook also receives 1 gigabyte 3G T-Mobile data plan, also funded by the district. Spears shared that while 1 gigabyte a month is plenty for homework, online research and emailing it is not enough for streaming movies, gaming or downloading music.

During the presentation, Spears gave the half dozen parents in attendance instruction and tips operating the device, using the Internet, the district's support websites for students and parents, the data plan and supervising their children's online activities.

The district offers additional support at each of its high school campuses and at its new Family Engagement Center

The Family Chromebook Initiative began in July 2015 with \$100,000 from the California Emerging Technology Fund to provide laptops and Internet to approximately 5,000 SBCUSD students. A later partnership with Sprint provided Internet hotspot devices and wireless services for high school students donated in December 2017.

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