

 <https://www.chron.com/neighborhood/cyfair/schools/article/Cy-Fair-ISD-program-helps-stem-summer-slide-13024053.php>

Cy-Fair ISD program helps stem “summer slide” in reading with WiFi, laptops

By Jane Stueckemann Updated 12:46 pm, Monday, June 25, 2018



Fourth-grader Oscar Huerta Cruz’ summer began with excitement about free hot dogs.

The hot dogs, though, were just a small part of a May festival at the Tanner Road Mobile Home Park where Oscar lives. The event was held to kick off a new internet-based iConnect initiative from Cypress-Fairbanks ISD.

The program was implemented in cooperation with Layer 3 Communications, a company that installed and directed a WiFi accesspoint less than a mile from the mobile home community.

The district then loaned mobile home park CFISD students like Oscar and his ninth-grade sister, Diana Huerta Cruz, a laptop for use over the summer — and beyond — to access district software programs in order to play educational games and read e-books.

Beyond the educational games and the internet access, Linda Macias, CFISD associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction, said the heart of this initiative is to stop the “summer slide.”

“Kids leave school at a specific reading level, but they go home and there’s not much learning that takes place during the summer for economically disadvantaged students. So they regress some. This is an opportunity to work toward eliminating the summer slide, not just reduce it,” Macias said.

Students attending Kirk Elementary, Truitt Middle and Cypress Ridge High schools, which are the campuses zoned for the mobile home park, were eligible to receive devices to connect to the internet. The district gave out between 30 and 40 devices per school, which meant about one tool per household.

The district also provided information about how to care for the devices, how to use the programs and how parents can stay up-to-date about their child’s education via online portals.

While Oscar likes to use their laptop play the games about math and science, Diana is using it to look toward her future career.

“I’ve been reading about photography careers and jobs that are related to photography, like industrial designer, graphic designer and fashion designer,” Diana said. “I also like cosmetology and want to have a cosmetology license, so I’ve been looking for different schools.”

To Diana’s mother, Irene Cruz, this is the best part of the initiative.

“I like that they have the computer here, and I like the idea that they are projecting themselves to the future,” Irene said.

She also said that she expects this will help Oscar and Diana to keep practicing what they learned over the school year so they’re prepared to continue in the fall.

For kids like Oscar and Diana who didn’t have a reliable connection before this, the internet access can make a big difference in how they learn and retain information.

Maria Trejo, the district’s director for special populations, said Diana is now able to practice reading at home through digital software offered by the district—which she wasn’t able to do without the laptop.

“It wasn’t just about access; it was also about the device. That’s the key here. We gave them both,” Trejo said.

While Macias said the district doesn’t yet have statistics that delve into how the kids are using the devices specifically, she is confident that students are using the connection for educational purposes.

In order to combat non-educational use, Frankie Jackson, CFISD chief technology officer, said that all devices loaned out to students have the same firewalls and blocking filters subject to on-campus devices.