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**SAU 13 to launch Cloud computing environment this fall**

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Special to the Union Leader

TAMWORTH — Clouds of the technology sort are gathering over New Hampshire School Administrative Unit 13.  
  
In a first of its kind initiative in the state, the head of School Administrative Unit 13, which includes Madison, Tamworth and Freedom, is collaborating with two other superintendents from Texas and North Carolina on implementing a Cloud computing environment where teachers, administrators and staff will collaborate and share resources across all three districts.

Cloud computing is defined as the practice of storing regularly used computer data on multiple servers that can be accessed through the Internet. The Cloud initiative will eventually provide rugged KUNO brand tablet devices to 85 students and staff in grades kindergarten to sixth grade in Freedom; 193 tablets for students in grades kindergarten to sixth grade in Madison; and 285 students in grades kindergarten to eighth in Tamworth.

Superintendent of Schools for SAU 13 Louis Goscinski heard about Cloud computing in an educational environment through companies like Engaging Solutions, a consulting company that specializes in offering user-friendly devices for classroom use as well as linking up schools with resources for grants, training documents and videos. He researched it further and eventually gained support from the school board, PTA, teachers, staff and parents.

“The concept intrigued me,” said Goscinski on Monday. Goscinski is working closely with Troy Mircovich, superintendent of the Ingleside Independent School District in Texas, and Dennis Sawyer, superintendent of the Roanoke Rapids Graded School District in North Carolina.  
 This past Saturday, the three school officials participated in a radio interview on WPTF in Raleigh, N.C. Goscincki said the three school districts were selected as three of five Champion School Districts by the CurriculumLoft, a company that specialized in assisting schools shifting towards digital instruction. This distinction earned SAU 13 between $30,000 and $50,000 in value, as CurriculumLoft will build the district’s Cloud platform at no cost to the district. SAU 13 is the only district chosen as a Champion School District in New England, said Goscinski.

Under the initiative, teachers will design a course with digital data to upload to the Cloud that students will be able to access, even without an Internet connection, at home or at school.The KUNO tablet was chosen not only for its durability — dropping it doesn’t kill it — but for its compliances with the federal Children’s Internet Protection Act passed in 2000 so users cannot access inappropriate web content.He said the program would be rolled out first with teacher and administrative staff training sessions this summer. About 30 teachers have volunteered their time this summer to attend just to get ahead of the curve, he said. Students and parents will be trained as well. Once the technology is in place, students can access schoolwork during snow days, he said.

But first, the district’s Cloud must be built. He estimates that students will receive tablets by mid to late September.  
  
The Cloud content will be based on the Common Core Curriculum guidelines adopted by the state, adds teacher and PTA member Lori Palmer.

“I think its an amazing opportunity for us,” she said on Monday. “Technology is the future whether people want to embrace it or not. This will give our kids that much of a boost when they go to high school. It’s going to do wonders,” she said.

The PTA in Tamworth raised and donated $11,000 to the technology initiative.  
  
Another benefit to the program is an eventual savings in textbook costs.  
  
“For example, if you buy a textbook, within six months that textbook is outdated,” he said. His colleague in Texas told him that he has books where former President Bill Clinton is still listed as President.

“Digital books get updated constantly. Tablets don’t replace teaching — they are just another tool to use,” Goscinski said.  
  
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