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# Chester goes high tech

By Scott Fitzgerald, The Southern

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CHESTER - Technology has made huge strides in public education and Chester Grade School is on the cutting edge of it.

Student parents, civic officials, school administrators and teachers joined Illinois State Superintendent Chris Koch on Thursday morning to watch a demonstration of the school's recently purchased SMART Table, an interactive learning center designed around a touch screen table for primary grade students.

It's the first table deployed by the SMART Technologies Co., and Chester Public School got it recently from Chicago, where it was initially unveiled at a public school, said SMART representative Rae Raffin.

"I think you all will see a revolutionary tool," said school Principal Tim Lochhead before four students from Alisa Herrell's third-grade class sat down and gave a demonstration with numbers and images.

School administrators first saw the table demonstrated in June during an education conference they attended in San Antonio.

They were familiar with SMART products, having purchased since 2006 interactive classroom white boards that connect directly to computers and digital projectors, said Assistant Principal Debi Caraway.

Much of the money to pay for the new technology has come from competitive grants that Chester has applied for and received to the tune of \$1.5 million. A SMART Table costs \$8,000.

"We've done a lot of work in the last three years," said Chester Superintendent Rebecca Keim about aggressively pursuing grant money to pay for technological learning aids.

The SMART Table will be in a school technology center with other computers, said math teacher Jaime Lodge.

Herrell who helps write grants said the new educational tool will certainly be welcomed in her quest to help elementary students learn the basics.

"I'm excited about collaborative learning in the classroom," Herrell said.

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STEVE JAHNKE / THE SOUTHERN Third graders Clay Herrell (from left), Curt Meyer, Maddison Hoffman, and Karson Colvis try out the school's SMART Table, a multi-touch high tech device for learning, Thursday at Chester Grade School. The grade school is one of only 12 in the country to test out the table.

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