

Our Changing Times
By John Chapman

I enjoy watching the television show, *ARE YOU SMARTER THAN A FIFTH GRADER?*, and I would like to believe that I am indeed smarter than a fifth grader, but there is one subject that majority of today's fifth graders are eons smarter than me...technology. I am embarrassed to say that I just learned two weeks ago what a Wii is, and I had to look up exactly how to spell it. My second grader informed me yesterday as we were walking down a department store isle that he would like to have a PSP for his birthday coming up. A what?! Both of these items are currently hot on the market right now and kids everywhere are light years ahead of most of us adults when it comes to technology games. Technology is here to stay and changes faster than my four year old changes clothes?! Our kids deserve the best, but right now, our school's technology is not where it needs to be. However, we are headed in the right direction. Since school began, we have added the COWS (computers on wheels) to each campus. A COW is a cart with 20-25 laptops that teacher's can check out to do classroom lessons or research from the Internet. We have many new printers district wide where teachers no longer have to buy their own printer cartridges.

At this time, we are very excited to report that central office and the high school are now wireless, and hopefully in a very short time, the middle school and elementary will also be wireless. Although Comfort is not as large as some other neighboring districts, there is no need for us to suffer inadequately with our technological capabilities. Several classrooms now have Smartboards, which is a large overhead screen that is hooked to the teacher's computer. Students can learn from a variety of ways instead from just books and papers. We all know about the Internet and email, and I don't think Cyberspace will ever go away. On the contrary, it will only get bigger and bigger. It is our duty to change with the changing times. Technology won't slow down and wait for us to catch up. We have to be proactive and empower our students with knowledge of today's world, not yesterday's teachings.

I would love to see in the near future, teacher's with several student computers in their rooms, or why not provide each student with their own laptop? There are several districts across the state that are receiving grants to supply middle school and high school students their own laptops and subscribe to on-line textbooks. Sounds a little Twilight Zone?! Well, it will be here before you know it, and I for one would like to jump aboard the train instead of see it flash right by while I'm left in the dust. Comfort is even looking into an automated phone system that has several features including calling parents each grading period, calling parents with emergency info. and many other features.

Another advancement that has allowed the district to run more efficiently is on-line work orders. All staff is able to get on-line and access work orders, fill them out appropriately and have their problems fixed within a timely manner. This has been very successful as of this point. I would like to thank our computer technologists, Jerry Lively, Mark Davis and Stephan Rieber at this time for going the extra mile to ensure our technology remains in working order.