

Augie students help RI school go high-tech

Kay Luna | Posted: Sunday, August 21, 2011 2:00 am

The 5-year-old boy looked down at the iPad, reading the numbers on the screen.

"Eight plus two," said Jaquez Smith, a kindergartner at Longfellow Liberal Arts Elementary School in Rock Island.

Working at a table set up in the hallway on the school's second floor, Jaquez used his fingers to count and come up with the math equation's answer.

"Ten," the boy said.

"Ten, right," his tutor, Augustana College elementary education student Josh Fahs, said. "Good job."

This is the scene throughout the year at Longfellow, which partners with the Rock Island college to allow students to lead the Number Sense Project.

Started in the 2009-10 school year, the program teaches elementary-education college majors during a fall course on how to teach math methods to students. The course also groups pairs of Augustana students with four kindergartners during once-a-week tutoring sessions where they can practice applying those methods.

The students help the youngsters with their number skills, relying heavily on technology - iPads and iPods - to do that. They use applications designed by Augustana education professor Randy Hengst to play math games with the kids, said Mike Egan, assistant education professor.

Many of the Number Sense Project apps can be downloaded for free on iTunes, he added.

"They are tools that mesh well with kindergarten learning goals," Egan said. "The kids catch on quickly."

At the end of the course, three Augustana students volunteered to continue working with the kindergartners during the spring semester, too.

"The big benefit of using the technology is how eye-catching it is for the students," he said. "There are games, but they do learn a lot. They get excited to learn about math."

Fahs said his little student, Jaquez, has shown improvement in understanding math concepts since they started working together in the fall.

"I learn how to do math," Jaquez said. "You get to try to figure out what the numbers equal. I like to do the games."

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