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**Students go high tech in class**

By Natalie Jordan, Rocky Mount Telegram

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Thirty students took their first step Saturday to becoming technology brainiacs during the first of eight sessions at an area middle school.

Phillips Middle hosted the first session of an eight-week technology program for its sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders. The program, Phillips Tech-YES, teaches the students how to incorporate technology into their everyday lives.

"In order for them to do well in the 21st century, they have to have 21st century skills," said Dr. Ken Sheldon, lead school psychologist for Edgecombe County Public Schools. "And this program is supposed to teach them those skills, so they can be tech literate. We want them to feel more comfortable with technology."

Saturday served as an orientation for the students, giving them an overview of the program and going over rules of Internet use. During the program, each student will receive a guidebook, a monitored e-mail account and classroom time, Sheldon said.

"The students will be working on two technology projects that they will select for themselves," he said. "It can be a school-related or community-related project that could be a PowerPoint (presentation) or Web page. They can involve digital camera use as well as camcorders. The point is to teach them how to plan, organize and put together their projects. The projects do require them to do research on the Internet, so it involves technologies that are available to them, and it also requires them to use academic skills such as reading and math."

Sheldon said the students will be evaluated by three people — a peer, project adviser and one other person — to make sure students followed the guidelines set when making the projects.

"I wanted to do it because I've done cyber camp during the summer, and this was something like that," said eighth-grader Robert Thorne, 13. "I think by me learning more about technology it will help with high school and college, It's ok that the program is on a Saturday because I have another program to go to at Englewood church, so I'm looking forward to it."

Thorne said he received the information about the technology camp through his parents, who had gotten a letter from the school.

"These students will be using state-of-the-art equipment," said Sylvia Archibald, media coordinator at Phillips Middle and one of the project advisers. "They get to use Macintosh iBooks. Hopefully, these students get a sense of achievement out of the program. With this, they'll get a heads up on high school and college because technology is the wave of the future, and hopefully those who were chosen will be proficient by the end of the eight weeks."

Sheldon said not only does he think the students will have fun putting together their projects, but they will like the idea of having certification.

"If (the students) projects meet the guidelines, they will receive a certificate that means they are proficient in a range of technologies," he said. "They'll be certified through the Generation YES program, a research-based program

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