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Watertown schools receive \$57,000 grant for My Access! program

By Ryan Stranko

Watertown Public Schools have been awarded a grant of \$57,118 by the State Department of Education for computer assisted writing, instruction and testing.

The grant was prepared by Matthew Geary, Principal of Watertown High School with assistance from Assistant Superintendent Todd LoFrese, Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Phillip A. Pelosi, and Thad Hasbrouck, director of curriculum and professional services.

The funds will be used to purchase new laptop computers, and to gain access to the My Access! computer program. Part of the grant will also be used to provide staff training involving laptop computers and the My Access! program.

“Just the technology is excit-

ing,” said Mr. Geary. “With kids, it is something to spur learning.”

The computers and My Access! program will be used by about half of the ninth grade students at Watertown High school. Tenth grade honors English students have already been using the program for about a year and the high school has been researching and using it for about three years total, according to Mr. Geary. If the program continues to generate positive results the school will look to continue to expand its use. All together 30 new laptops were purchased and all children involved will have access to My Access!.

The My Access! Program is a web-based program that teachers or students must subscribe to. It supplies an artificial intelligence that allows students to

write and get immediate feedback on their work. The program also edits, grades, and helps students select topics to write about. It works to improve the overall finished product of each student's work and also gives teachers a chance to gain outside feedback on the quality of their student's writing. The technology creates a easier interaction between students, teachers, and parents.

Educators like Principal Geary hope that this technology will appeal to the students and encourage them to want to write more and produce good quality writing pieces.

“We think by allowing kids to write more and give instant feedback, we can improve overall student achievement,” Mr. Geary said.