



Mozarts in the making

New piano lab at Fraser High School lets students tune their talents

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FRASER — Students at Fraser High School are filling a new classroom with music and learning the fundamentals of piano. This year, for the first time, the school started offering a course in its new piano lab, which was built over the summer.

The district was able to purchase the 88-key Yamaha Clavinova pianos using bond money. There are 24 pianos in the class, all hooked up to one another electronically.

Each student in the class gets a headset and a microphone, and teacher Karen Hagerty can control whose voice and which piano the students are hearing.

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Upper right: A new piano lab at Fraser High School allows students to use headsets and microphones to listen to each other and the teacher as they learn music. Rosie Wojdyski, 10th-grade, and Ashley Bartok, 12th-grade, are among 144 students who signed up for the course in its first year. Upper left: Teacher Karen Hagerty reviews notes with senior Sarah Sues during a lesson in the new piano lab at Fraser High School. Left: Fraser High School seniors Aimee Murdoch and Samantha Jennings play together in the new piano lab. Advanced students are given an opportunity to explore more challenging music in the class.

Photos by David Schreiber

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"They can hear my voice, my piano and themselves," said Hagerty, who's been playing piano since she was a child. "But we can also open up the channels, so they can listen to each other."

They usually use the headsets to hear, but she can pull the plug on the system and allow everyone to hear the pianos without the headsets, filling the surrounding hallways with music.

The new lab is one of many improvements that were included in recent bond renovations. For the first year, the class was open to sophomores, juniors and seniors, but school officials weren't sure how popular it would be at first.

"We were thinking we'd be lucky to fill one class," Hagerty said. "It really took off to the point where we're talking about implementing a Piano II (course)."

School officials were pleased

that 144 students signed up for the class. Many of them have been asking for extra time to come in after school to practice, and there's even talk of opening the lab up to the community for an adult course.

Very few schools in the area have a piano lab, Hagerty says, and the Fraser High School students have responded well to it.

"It's going to be great for those who want to get involved with music," said senior Aimee Murdoch. "They'll become a lot more fluent in the class."

Murdoch is one of the more advanced students in the class, having taken piano lessons for several years now. She hopes to pursue a career in music and study music education in college next year. The class is helping her prepare, she said.

"I have to say, it is one of my favorite classes," Murdoch said. "There's a lot of freedom and it's very constructive."

The students in the class have varying levels of experience in music and piano.

"Some have never touched a

piano," Hagerty said, while some have been taking lessons for years.

Hagerty tries to give the more advanced students time to practice more challenging music and explore their talents. Using the headsets, they're able to block out their classmates who are playing different songs and listen to their own music. Hagerty can use her own microphone to speak to the entire class or just a few students.

The bond approved by voters in 2005 allowed for many renovations at all of the schools in the district. At the high school, the district implemented significant technology upgrades, new security equipment, auditorium improvements and changes to the school's exterior.

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