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## Tuning in

Kids following iPod lessons in SVSD making progress

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LONGMONT — As Andrew Salazar sits at his kitchen table listening to his iPod, it seems as though he's talking to himself.

"Kuh-ab.

"D-ab.

"Juh-ahh-bu. Jab.

"Tuh-ahh-bu. Tab."

While Andrew listens to his first-grade teacher, Melissa Tobin, recite those words, he reads them aloud from a red, construction paper reading strip and follows along with his finger.

When he finishes with that worksheet, Andrew moves on to a blue page that features pictures with the words.

"Kuh-rrr-ab.

"C-r-ab."

And, a bit faster, "Crab."

Andrew is one of 16 Columbine Elementary School students participating in Take My Teacher Home, a home-study program designed to bring struggling readers up to grade level.

Four days a week since Jan. 11, Andrew and his brother, Donovan Garcia, have taken home canvas bags, each containing an iPod and the week's lesson.

Tobin and kindergarten teacher Deb Stechman each record lessons for the iPods, create the worksheet and choose books to include every week.

Deysi Lopez, the boys' mother, said at the end of January that both children quickly caught on to the process of starting the iPod and following the teacher's instructions for picking out the correct worksheet.

"I personally like it. It's helping them," Lopez said.

Before Take My Teacher Home started, Lopez struggled to get Andrew to do his homework, she said.

"He's getting really good at reading now," Lopez said.

Tobin said Wednesday that she is pleased with Andrew's reading progress.

Having a variety of short reading activities suits Andrew well, because he needs his assignments to be exciting, she said.

Stechman was more enthusiastic about Donovan's progress. He has moved up one level from the lowest reading group and is at the top of his new group, she said.



Columbine Elementary kindergartner Donovan Garcia, left, and first-grader Andrew Salazar do their homework with the Take My Teacher Home project at their home in Longmont on Jan. 26. **Jill P. Mott/Times-Call**

"It's just amazing the progress he's made," Stechman said.

During small-group reading with Stechman on Wednesday, Donovan confidently read the words from flash cards, often responding first of the five children.

Six of the students using Take My Teacher Home are in kindergarten. The other 10 are in Tobin's class.

Every morning, the first-graders turn in their bags and she quickly reviews the lesson with them, she said.

Five of her students consistently complete the Take My Teacher Home lessons, she said.

"I know the ones who are listening, because they tell me specifically what was on the recording," Tobin said.

One girl already is reading at grade level, the teacher said.

"I'm very pleased with the results," Tobin said. "I want 100 percent of the kids to be using it."

Columbine principal Eddie Cloke said he is talking to parents whose children aren't using the lessons as they should.

"We're limited in what we can do," Cloke said. "We need parents to take the next step."

But the students are honest, so when they admit to watching television instead of doing their homework, Cloke said, he reminds them to take responsibility for themselves.

"You need to choose to listen to your iPod over watching the Cartoon Network," Cloke said he tells them.

Before they started using Take My Teacher Home, the students were assessed for their literacy skills. They will be assessed again soon, and a third time at the end of the 12-week program, Cloke said.

Because Cloke and the teachers met with each parent before sending the iPods home, students started the program at different times, he said. Some have been participating for just three weeks, he said.

"I'm really happy with this, in terms of (it being) the first year," Cloke said.

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