April 15, 2014

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The Jefferson staff takes pride in preparing your student for a successful high school career. We emphasize the importance of reading, math, science, social studies and other academic subjects. However, there is an additional life skill that students need. In this digital age, students need to learn proper keyboarding techniques.

Although many students have outstanding texting skills, these skills do not transfer directly to the computer keyboard and number pad. We have found that many students spend unnecessary hours “keying in” their school work because they do not have the keyboarding skills they need. In addition, beginning this year, students will take the Smarter Balanced online standardized tests. These tests require a great deal of writing for which students will use computers instead of the traditional pen and paper protocol. To pass these tests students need to be able to answer questions quickly and accurately without the distraction of being unfamiliar with the keyboard.

With the heightened importance of adequate computing skills, all sixth graders will take a keyboarding proficiency test in the fall. This will measure typing accuracy, speed, and familiarity with general keyboard functions. It has been our experience that most students will fall below the 35 wpm proficiency standard established by the Olympia School District Technology Department in accordance with the State Technology Standards and will therefore need to be enrolled in the online Keyboard Mastery Program. The Olympia School District has purchased a site license for this program to increase student keyboarding proficiency across the district.

Since Jefferson students already have a full class schedule, the online Keyboard Mastery Program will provide an outside-the-school-day opportunity for keyboarding improvement. This offering will be shown on the report card as a separate class so that you can partner with us in the monitoring of your son or daughter in this critical area. Students will receive an “NC” in keyboarding until they finish the twenty-four lesson Keyboard Mastery Program. At that point the program will compute a letter grade. Students will earn a letter grade of a “C” for 25 wpm, a “B” for 30 wpm and an “A” for achieving the 35 wpm proficiency standard. Once students reach 35 wpm proficiency, they will not have to continue typing practice and they will carry that grade through to the end of the year. While keyboarding grades appear on the report card, they do not count toward the GPA of the student. Students who do not meet the 25 wpm minimum standard continue to work on keyboarding as seventh and eighth graders. The Keyboard Mastery Program is self-directed and can be used on any internet capable computer.

In order to help students achieve their keyboarding goals, the library and computer labs will be open before school at 7:30 A.M., during the lunch break, and in the afternoon until 3:30 P.M. The Boys and Girls Club will also have computers available to students until 5:30 P.M.

If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to give me a call at 596-3200.

Sincerely,

Michael Cimino