

# THE VISION

## **MORE NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY AWARDS FOR AVOCA**

It was announced in January that Avoca West Elementary School and Marie Murphy School were each awarded a prestigious national award from the Apple Corporation.



*(L-R: Avoca West 5<sup>th</sup> graders Ethan Batchelor and Allen Lee work together on a classroom project using their laptop computers.)*

Avoca West is one of only 38 schools nationwide to be awarded the Apple Exemplary Program Award. This is a new Apple program, and the designation is reserved for educational programs that are model implementations of educational technology. Only programs that have demonstrated a wide variety of technology solutions and illustrate “best practice” qualities of a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment are honored in this way. An Apple spokesperson commented, “In reviewing the great work that is under way at Avoca West Elementary School, we were especially impressed to learn how you are ensuring

that notebook computers and software are being integrated effectively into the curriculum through classes, such as Encore Tech. Your program serves as an example for other schools, both locally and nationally.”

Marie Murphy School’s designation as an Apple Distinguished School was renewed for the 2009-2010 school year, making this the third straight year to be recognized. The Distinguished School designation is reserved for schools that have become centers of educational excellence and leadership, consistently demonstrating “best practice” qualities of a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment utilizing educational technology. Marie Murphy is one of only fifty-four schools in the nation and three schools in Illinois to receive this honor. An Apple spokesperson stated, “We were especially impressed by your continued commitment to increase student access to notebook computers, iLife and iWork for teaching and learning.”

While receiving awards provides outside affirmation of our efforts, the true value of Avoca’s educational technology program lies in the results it helps us generate. In the five years since the innovative technology program was implemented, Avoca’s state ranking in student achievement rose from 20<sup>th</sup>, to 14<sup>th</sup>, to 8<sup>th</sup>, to 6<sup>th</sup>, and now stands at 4<sup>th</sup> in the state.



*(Marie Murphy School 6<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher Peter Ogden, pictured with student Emily Gorman, uses a wide variety of educational technology in his interactive lab activities.)*

### **COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY CLASSES SCHEDULED**

One of the goals from the Avoca strategic plan is to open up our schools to the broader community, especially in the area of technology instruction. We are blessed with high-quality technological facilities and equipment because of community support of Avoca School District #37. Therefore, this is a natural area for community outreach in the form of basic technology classes for Avoca residents. We hope you will consider joining our talented technology staff for one of these community classes. Included with this mailing, you will find a detailed flyer for the classes available this winter. After reviewing the flyer, if you would like to register for one or more of the classes, simply complete the registration form at the bottom of the flyer and send it to the District Office (2921 Illinois Road, Wilmette, IL 60091, Attention: Madeleine). There is no charge for the classes; this is Avoca's way of giving back to the community that supports it so strongly. The registration deadline is February 25.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE**

Only three goals remain from the ambitious 2007-2009 Avoca strategic plan. The three remaining goals include

establishing district committees to study and make recommendations to the School Board this spring (Community Relations Committee, Diversity Committee, and Extracurricular Committee). With members that include parents, community members, teachers, administrators and board members, the committees represent a broad spectrum of the Avoca school community. We look forward to their creative ideas for improvement and enhancement in all three areas.

While those three goals remain, Avoca takes great pride in the accomplishment of the first seven goals of the three-year strategic plan. Goals that have been successfully completed over the past three years include:

- Implement the new K-8 language arts program
- Implement the 2007-2010 technology plan
- Improve and enhance the Avoca English Language Learner (ELL) program
- Adopt the Professional Learning Communities model to assure continuous improvement of student achievement
- Review, refine and improve measure tools that assess Avoca's progress toward "greatness"
- Pass a referendum to balance the budget
- Create a specific curriculum review process and time line.

Strategic plans and goals are only valuable if they serve to focus the school community on its number one mission, which is continuous improvement in student achievement. All measurement tools and processes we have employed over the past three years indicate that Avoca is consistently meeting this expectation.