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## Businesses asked to help with tech upgrades

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SPENCER — Local businesses could end up sponsoring up to \$900,000 in technology upgrades at two Spencer schools under a plan proposed by a school official and one of the district's curriculum providers.

Spencer-East Brookfield Superintendent of Schools Ralph Hicks said last week he and Gary Kaplan, executive director of JFYNetWorks in Boston, have met with leaders of five businesses to present their plans.

The prospectus from Hicks and Kaplan states the goal of their three-year plan is to have students at Knox Trail Junior High School ready to take Algebra I in eighth grade. To do that, the prospectus states, "it is the desire of Spencer-East Brookfield to move into the 21st century in the world of education by creating a completely digital math and science curriculum for middle and high school."

Students and teachers would create a new math curriculum to replace one that is "outdated and not completely in line with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks," the prospectus states. The new program would not use textbooks.

When the three-year plan is implemented, each student at Knox Trail and David Prouty High School would have access to a laptop computer for math and science classes. Sixth-graders at Wire Village School would also be introduced to the program, states the prospectus, which "provides them with some experience using the tools that will be a large part of their curriculum" once they enter Grade 7.

The cost for giving more than 600 students access to laptops, along with SMART Boards, projectors, storage carts, licenses for JFYNetWorks' two software packages and training and support, is estimated at \$893,337. It could not be done with the "very small" amount in the school district budget for technology upgrades, Hicks told the Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School Committee Tuesday, Oct. 12.

"If we get a fraction of it, it will be a step in the right direction," he said.

Hicks credited Kaplan with the suggestion to approach local businesses and ask if they want to partner with the district.

He also noted the district used money from Spencer and East Brookfield taxpayers three years ago to create a computer lab at Knox Trail, and the PALS group at Lake Street School provided funding for a computer lab there last year.

Hicks said the School Committee would get a plan once the district determines how many businesses are interested and how much they can provide.

JFYNetWorks, the prospectus states, "offers schools a comprehensive approach to math, science and English Language Arts instruction that supports teachers and administrators in their efforts to meet state and federal student performance standards. The focus of JFYNet is to ensure that students and teachers take full advantage of available learning tools in their pursuit of academic success."

JFYNetWorks, a nonprofit education and workforce development agency, created its program for schools in 2000. Spencer-East Brookfield has used its services for seven years, Hicks said.