

KENOSHA NEWS

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KENOSHA NEWS PHOTOS BY BRIAN PASSINO

KTEC West seventh-graders Diego Alanis, left, Joey DeVilbiss, second from left, Zander Holster, second from right, and Katelynn Ripper, far right, work on building computers for the Chicago Sinfonietta as part of a partnership with Leeward Business Advisors at KTEC West on Wednesday. About 20 students from both KTEC schools participated.

Learning on the job

KTEC students build computers for partner company client

BY TERRY FLORES
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When Cristian Escobar was 10 years old, he took apart what his mother thought was a malfunctioning computer keyboard.

“There was a time when my mother’s computer wasn’t working,” said Christian. “So, I just took out the back to see what was wrong. I remember unscrewing something and then screwing it back in. Then making sure everything was back in the proper place. I put everything back together, and I remember turning the computer back on and the keyboard started to work.”

Now 13 and a member of Kenosha School of Technology Enhanced Curriculum’s science club, he and 19 other students are working to solve technical problems for clients in the real world.

On Wednesday, the club — which partners with the Kenosha-based technology firm of Leeward Business Advisors — was custom-building seven computers to be used by the Chicago Sinfonietta. The award-winning, internationally recognized orchestra performs works by diverse and rarely heard composers.

In building the computers, the students replaced traditional “spinning” hard disk drives with solid state drives for storage.

Cristian said he and a partner took apart one machine and added a



KTEC East eighth-graders Isabella Turner, left, and Gavin Houghton, right, install memory chips in a computer.

60 GB solid state drive into an existing cartridge that formerly held a 250 GB hard disk. They updated the computers, replacing or adding more sticks of random access memory.

They then installed Windows 10, the latest operating system, in all of the computers.

Maggie Franklin, 14, and Naomi Sanchez-Nava, 14, both of Kenosha, were in the final stages of loading the operating system. The girls explained that the process of installing



KTEC West seventh-graders Ethan Bergman, left, and Alex Hurtz place a solid state drive in a caddy.

the new drives took a little longer than they had anticipated.

“The old one was bigger and bulkier. This one is newer and compact and has better stuff,” Franklin said. “It’s better and faster.”

The students took anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes to complete the jobs.

Next week, staff at Leeward will deliver the PCs after installing specific applications for the Sinfonietta’s network. In two weeks, the students will have a video conference meeting with Sinfonietta members, learning “what things worked and what didn’t work,” said Michael Polzin, CEO of Leeward, who was on hand to help supervise the club.

“What better way than to learn about the computer than to build a computer?” he said.