

# Schoharie Central School

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## News Release

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### Flood-muddy saxophone leads to winning grant application by Schoharie Central School District and Mittel to help schoolchildren keep music alive via Apple iPads

District is awarded \$5,000 Foundation for Rural Educational Development grant to purchase Apple iPads, Apple workstation and music software for practice, composition and performance

Schoharie Central School District teamed up with Middleburgh Telephone (Mittel) to apply for and win a competitive \$5,000 Foundation for Rural Educational Development grant to purchase Apple iPads, an Apple workstation and music software for schoolchildren to use for practice, composition and performance. Schoharie Superintendent Brian Sherman was inspired to apply for the grant after tropical storms Irene and Lee, when a firefighter handed him a "rather messy saxophone that had been recovered from a farm field after the flooding had receded."

The grant will allow children who lost their instruments in the flooding and are awaiting replacements to practice and compose music, take lessons from home and maintain their skills. Many students saw their instruments destroyed by the storms, along with their homes and personal belongings. Some of the instruments were personally owned, while others were loaned to them by the school district.

After the storms, Sherman spoke to Schoharie Schools Music Teacher Mark Pracher about how Pracher uses specialized music software to teach and about the impact of the students' loss of their instruments. Among the software to be purchased with grant will be computer applications for playing the drums and piano on an iPad, plus other music apps.

Sherman noted that compositions written on the iPads can be transferred to the Apple workstation and interface with the school's midi connections. "For example," he said, "you can connect a guitar and play a musical piece, which will be recorded on the iPad as a musical notation. As the composition is written, additional instruments can become part of the total work."

He added that the iPads also can interface directly with the sound equipment in the school's theatre, so compositions created on them can be played through the sound system, and can interface with software students currently use to take music lessons at home that they have missed at school, via the Internet.

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According to Sherman, “Midtel’s owners, the Becker family, and company representative Steve Conroy were instrumental – in the truest sense of the word – in helping our schoolchildren keep music alive, despite the devastating losses suffered by many of our families. Their enthusiastic letter of support and strong ties to our school community as a telephone and Internet service provider were key to our securing the grant and allowing the district to continue its exemplary music program.”

Sherman added that the school district has been working closely with Midtel and public television access channel SchoPEG to expand content from the school to the wider community, including original music and performance programming.

The grant application noted that tropical storms Irene and Lee resulted in nearly 150 Schoharie Central School students becoming homeless or displaced. Sixty to eighty percent of homes in the village of Schoharie were destroyed or condemned, while thirty percent of homes in Esperance were severely damaged, condemned, or lost in floodwaters, and twenty percent of the homes in Central Bridge were lost.

“We applied for the grant to provide portable technology that works with our current technology, so our students can continue to practice, compose, and learn about music theory and performance,” Sherman said. “Yet music teaches students far more than this. Music teaches personal and life skills that will benefit them in the workplace, college and beyond.

“But most importantly, music provides our schoolchildren with a creative and fun outlet while they and their families continue along the long road to recovery from disaster.”