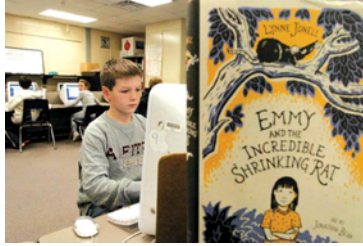


## Greenwood students blogging with a rat



For the past month, students at Greenwood Elementary School have been exploring creative writing and learning from a professional writer, although the lessons are coming to them via a rat.



Local author Lynne Jonell is blogging with the students through a character in her recent book, "Emmy and the Incredible Shrinking Rat." As Raston the rat, Jonell is learning about her audience and what they would like to read in future books, as well as critiquing their writing.

For the students, it's an opportunity to learn about creative writing from a published author, help shape Raston's future adventures and practice their use of technology.

For their teachers, it's a chance to incorporate technology into the classroom, and interest more students in reading. "This is great because it can make a reader out of a student that might not have been interested in it otherwise," said Greenwood computer assistant Sharon Quern.

Jamie Ruzicka's fifth grade students spend time during their morning computer lab blogging with Raston. They practice their grammar skills as well as correct posture at the computer and typing skills. In return for their efforts, they are rewarded, usually that same afternoon, with a response from Raston to each of their messages. Jonell writes her responses both from Raston's perspective, and her own. Raston is known as

the king of grammar and is strict in challenging the students to become good grammarians.

The blog is actually hosted by Wayzata Public Schools on its server and is set up to protect the identity of the children because all of their comments are viewable on the Internet. Students log on under their teacher's name. Students also have an opportunity to blog from home over the weekend, or if they're sick during the week. Ruzicka said it's a great opportunity for the students to continue learning on their own time.

Now that her students are experienced at blogging, Ruzicka also plans to assign a book to read over the summer that students can chat about with her and each other via a blog.

Jonell also has plans to visit the students at Greenwood for a second time. She visited with the students while she was working on her recent book, but plans to follow up with them now they have been blogging together. Jonell is not only a local author, but is also a parent in the district.

