

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL 2011-2012

Final Report

Study Topic: Explore Best Practices for the Use of Personal Devices in the Classroom

Recommendations

1. Update Policy 237, Electronic Devices (attached)
2. Update related sections of the Student Handbook for each school (attached)
3. Parallel to the topic, Policy 815 - Responsible Use (attached), was rewritten outside of the committee to reflect the recommended changes in Policy 237 and to align with current trends and legal practices with respect to personal devices and required internet safety guidelines (Children's Internet Protection Act).
4. Develop professional development opportunities for staff to explore ways to integrate personal electronic devices into the classroom.
5. Develop informational sessions for students and parents to explain the changes at each specific level.

Background information

Objectives:

- Study recommendations and best practices for Policy 237
- Determine network accessibility
- Define liability issues
- Define security measures
- Address the need to replace 735 student laptops and netbooks purchased 3 -5 years ago with one-time grant money

Process used:

- The committee analyzed selected regional districts' policies related to personal devices in the classroom.
- District visitations were performed by various members of the committee to South Western, Northeastern, and Penn Manor.
- Research and best practices were discussed during the rewriting and revision of Policy 237.
- Each building requested staff input regarding handbook changes and an explanation of Policy 237.

Benchmarks/Research Findings

The committee found:

- It was very important that teachers be given the choice of allowing these devices in their own classrooms.
- The technical challenge of providing secure internet access to personal devices could be met with minimal costs.
- The District can also provide an alternative method of authentication for users of these devices by utilizing network hardware it already owns.
- An emphasis on student responsibility and clear classroom procedures was essential in the revision of Policy 237.
- While each school can allow personal devices, what it actually looks like will be different at each level (HS, MS, SGI, K-4).

For further information, all meeting minutes, discussion items, and data are publicly available at <http://www.sgasd.org/cac>.

Benefits to Recommendation

- Students will be able to use the tools they are most comfortable using on a daily basis to facilitate their learning and not having to ‘unplug’ when they come to school.
- Staff will be able to model and teach appropriate use.
- Teachers can add relevance to their instruction and support student learning in real-time, taking advantage of the ‘teachable moments’ to promote higher-order thinking skills.
- Teachers are empowered to decide when personal devices are allowed in their classrooms.
- Students are empowered to learn more effectively on their terms and are not solely relegated to the quantity, quality, and location of the hardware which the school can provide.
- A cost-effective method to increase student access to digital tools used for learning.
- The classroom environment can become a more realistic model of learning in today’s society.

Drawbacks to Recommendation

- Frustrations related to technology malfunctions with various types of devices.
- Concerns regarding increased classroom disturbances and distractions.
- Increased management of network resources to maintain sufficient bandwidth and connectivity over wireless connections.
- Parent and student reaction to some teachers allowing the devices in their respective classrooms and some do not.
- Consideration to ensure equal access for all students.

Resources Required

- Communicating policy and building handbook changes.
- Provide appropriate professional development for teachers.
- Provide informational sessions to parents.
- Update web filter. The District can support this change without additional financial overhead due to the network changes that have been made in previous years.

Committee Members

Michael	Becker	HS Teacher - Math
Daniel	Brenner	HS Teacher - Music
Steffani	Bryan	NSE Teacher - Gr. 4
Alexis	Cable	Student Representative
Eric	Cable	Board Member
David	Copeland	HS Teacher - Math
Rosemary	Cugliari	HS Principal, Co-Chair
Christopher	Enck	IT Director, Co-Chair
David	Gipe	Technology Assistant
Steven	Guadagnino	MS Principal, Co-Chair
Kristen	Henning	K-6 Instructional Tech Specialist
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George	Ioannidis	Business Manager
Tracy	Lease	MS Teacher - World Lang./ Parent
Dr. Robert	Lombardo	Superintendent
Jennifer	Maurer	Parent
David	Renaut	Assistant Superintendent
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