



Shrewsbury Public Schools

To: School Committee
From: Joe Sawyer and Mary Beth Banios
Re: Transitioning to District-Owned Personal Electronic Devices
Date: December 17, 2014

After careful analysis and review, our administrative team is recommending that the Shrewsbury Public Schools transition its 1:1 program from one that offers 3 different options for participation to a district-owned approach that allows all students access to a personal electronic device both in school and at home at no charge. When we began the 1:1 initiative, we relied on an initial investment made possible by the Sherwood building project, and we perceived that we would need to rely on partial funding through family financing in order to sustain the program over time. This has worked to get our program where it is today, but the landscape has changed and we are now recommending that the next iteration of our 1:1 program move to a district-owned model.

Challenges With Current Model

1. Given how lean our administrative staffing is at the school and Central Office level, and given that there is *no* dedicated administrative staffing for the instructional and information technology departments, the management of program enrollment, payment and fee collection, etc. has been a significant strain on our resources. Adding another 1,650 students to this type of fee-based/bring your own next year would not be possible without additional support in the form of personnel.
2. Some of the concerns expressed by parents and educators is the lack of the ability to reasonably manage devices in terms of which built-in features may be accessed, easily turning off the ability to get outside of a particular app (when giving a test, for example), etc. Apple's "Supervision" device management program, which previously required each device to be plugged into a computer to manage (which is not feasible for a program as large as ours), now allows the wireless management of a large number of devices, enabling access to more features regarding app management, etc. This will provide a much more robust approach to device management by the district, but the caveat is that it will only will work on devices the district has actually purchased itself, making the "bring your own" model very problematic if we want to take advantage of this new capacity.
3. Our current model makes it difficult in some cases to hold families accountable for damage due to the policy that the district pays for breakage at school. There is also evolving state policy regarding the charging of technology fees and how districts may utilize such revenue that could complicate our current approach.

4. Policy regarding lease or fee programs for technology from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and its Program Quality Assurance arm has been evolving. While we believe we are currently operating within this framework, a district-owned device model carries the least risk of required adjustments due to state policy updates.
5. The fee burden on high school families is significant, given the requirement of a transportation fee of \$250 to ride the bus, \$290 per season per sport, and \$100 to participate in any/all co-curricular activities. Adding another fee of \$165 per year for a device will be seen as more of a burden than it was at the middle level, where the fees are lower and less universal for transportation.
6. Implementing the program to all the high school grades at once would create a complex situation for a family fee program, as seniors would only use the device for one year, juniors for two years, etc. We also know that another district that offered various leasing options for high school students when they implemented their program at all high school levels and this district is having a very difficult time managing payments with their existing staffing and are strongly considering doing away with their lease-to-own program next year.

Because of the challenges listed above, we believe it will be more cost effective and more equitable to shift to a model where the district purchases all devices and manages them, all students have access to the same type of device with the same opportunities to bring the device home and personalize it, and families have no requirement for financial participation through a fee, yet have more of an incentive to protect the device and a strong incentive to purchase outside insurance.

Transition Planning

As we consider moving away from a heavily parent subsidized 1:1 program to a district owned device program, we offer the following transition plan:

Assumptions

- Current 8th graders in the take home program, who will have had an iPad for three years at the end of this year, will receive a new device when they enter high school.
- Current 7th, 6th, and 5th graders in the take home program will continue to use their current district issued iPad next year.
- Current students who are bringing their own iPad will no longer be able to use a personal device in our program.

Recommendations

1. The following choices would be provided to current middle school families who currently in the take home fee program:
 - a. In June 2015, families of current 8th graders could either opt to pay the district the fourth installment of the \$165 fee and be given the device to keep under the existing arrangement, or not pay anything additional and return the

- device to the district (the student's apps would be transferred to their new device they would receive in 9th grade if they go to SHS).
- b. Families of current 7th graders could either opt to stay in the existing program, pay the fourth installment of the \$165 fee and own the device at the end of the 8th grade year; or choose not to pay the fee, use the device for 8th grade, and return the device to the district at the end of 8th grade.
 - c. Families of current 6th and 5th graders could opt to continue in the program over the remaining middle school years as in b) above, paying the fee each year, and own the device after 8th grade; or continue to use the district-owned device free of charge for the remainder of their middle school years, with the understanding that the district would reclaim the device at the end of 8th grade.
2. Families who have been opting for the bring your own option would no longer be allowed to utilize their family-owned iPad beginning next year, and they also would no longer be required to pay the \$40 app fee. Next year, these students would be issued a district-owned iPad that at least matches the same model their classmates were issued through the take home fee program, to use free of charge. As noted above, we advise that the district purchase new iPads for all of next year's 9th graders that would then be used for the four years of high school. We believe most, if not all, of the iPads the district would need to issue to current grades 5-7 students in this category would be available through repurposing of existing district pilot iPads currently at the high school, combined with iPads turned back by current 8th grade families who choose not to pay the fourth installment of \$165 in order to own the device. The district would need to purchase additional iPads if there are not enough pilot and returned devices that could be repurposed (there are currently 265 bring your own students in grades 5-7).
 3. Next year's 5th grade students and next year's 9th-12th grade students would all be issued new, district-owned iPads free of charge, with no option for a fee program resulting in future ownership, and no option to bring their own devices. This would become the model for each successive year.

Financial Considerations

As noted in the cover memo, we are recommending that the district move to a lease model to address the financing challenges associated with a district-owned device program. This approach allows the SPS a budget-neutral pathway to transition to the district-owned model. Full details of the financing model can be found later in this report.