

Technology Board Report - November 2020

Sam Rigby

New Devices

As of 11/6, all of the new devices purchased with the CARES Act money have been received and we have already begun distribution. The iPad cases/keyboards are on back-order and not anticipated to arrive until closer to the end of the year.

Jon Ludwig has begun configuring and distributing the laptops. The first distribution of laptops will go to those without a functioning computer. The next distribution group will replace our oldest, 2009 white Macbooks. The third group will replace our 2012 silver Macbook Pros. After that, we will distribute the remaining laptops.

Internet

Most of our beginning of the year internet related issues have been resolved. Any remaining issues we are aware of are actively being worked on by DRS. Internet usage reports from our district-wide Firewall show a confirmed increase in internet bandwidth capacity and usage.

The increase of our bandwidth from 10mbps to 25mbps combined with a switch to Zoom have resulted in an improved online class experience for both teachers and students. Disconnections from class with Blackboard last year were a daily occurrence, even for our online teachers. Disconnections and hiccups with Zoom have been few and far between.

We have been closely watching the development of Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite technology as it could be a huge leap forward for access to the internet in rural Alaska. LEO satellites allow for connections in rural areas without the high latency and bandwidth restrictions we see now with traditional geostationary satellites.

DRS is in the process of partnering with a LEO satellite company and is planning for in-house testing before the end of the year. The satellite constellations required for connectivity do not cover Alaska yet, but are expected to expand into the peninsula region soon. DRS plans to share more detailed information with us by the January board meeting. A cautious timeline suggests we may have full access to LEO satellites in LPSD by 2023.

Home Internet Grant

Thanks to Rick Luthi and Nate McArthur, we have finalized the details for our home internet grant program. Equipment has been ordered and is en route to each school. We will be providing 6 months of internet service to student homes for our distance education program. Service provided by the grant will run from November 2020 to April 2021.