

School Board Workshop:

June 14, 2010

Subject:

BCMS Mobile Device Initiative

Presenter:

Josh Swanson & Julie Swaggert

SUGGESTED SCHOOL BOARD ACTION:

Report only at this time.

DESCRIPTION:

Background and Rational of Proposal:

Buffalo Community Middle School (BCMS) faculty have been working in professional learning communities to continuously improve instruction, curriculum, and learning for students for the past several years. One focus or strategy the middle school has employed is the integration of technology into instruction. There has been a substantial investment into infrastructure and tools over the past several years to increase access and provide the “right” tool for the job. This is in alignment with the district technology and learning goals and the results have been quite positive. Through PLC conversations, the excitement has spread and interest in learning about new strategies and technology integration has grown.

Staff at BCMS knows from this experience that technology is one of the effective tools teachers can use to engage students in learning. Although there has been a substantial investment into school technology, teachers are still looking for more access. This has pushed BCMS to look at ways to provide a 1:1 technology experience for students.

Financially, as a district, we will not be able to afford to put a computer in every student’s hands. Many districts have tried and although the programs have been a huge instructional success in most cases, they have been unsustainable. With the large-scale acceptance, robust capabilities, and decreased cost of mobile devices, we have a new opportunity to provide a 1:1 experience through re-thinking the model. By replacing the currently parent-purchased graphing calculator with a student owned mobile device, we could provide a 1:1 experience and when a more robust tool is needed for a project, the school would provide that tool.

We are proposing to pilot the use of iPod Touches at BCMS for all 7th grade students in the 2010-11 school year. Students would use the device at school and at home. Incoming 7th grade students would use a device they already own (ipod Touch or iphone) or parents would purchase an iPod touch for them. We have a plan to be able to provide a school-owned device in situations where there is a financial burden that is too much for a family to bear.

We looked at several devices that might work within a 1:1 model and have chosen the iPod Touch as a standard. About 1/3 of the students at BCMS already own an iPod Touch. Apple and the application developers have a strong educational focus so there are lots of tools available to teachers. Having one device standardizes the tools so a teacher can focus on instruction and learning not on helping each student with a different device. There are several graphing calculators available for the iPod Touch that will work as well as the currently used calculators. The device will also serve as a student response system for instant formative assessment and has great productivity, communication, educational access, and organization capabilities.

As this project was explored, the following groups helped form the project as it is being presented and provided input: BHM Schools Advertising Committee, BCMS Teaching & Learning Leadership Council, BCMS Parent Advisory Committee, BHS Administrators and Technology Committee, Elementary Principals, 7th Grade Teams, middle school teachers and Integration Specialists. In addition to meeting with all of these groups, information about the proposal has gone home in the BCMS newsletter and data has been collected through a student survey, BCMS teacher survey, and parent survey.

Implications on BHM Schools:

One of the concerns with a large-scale 1:1 technology roll out is equity. We have focused on making sure we can provide equity to educational access to all students. This will be done through standardization of the device, standardization of applications to device minimums, and a plan to ensure that regardless of family financial situations that each student has a device for the year. This pilot will provide great learning opportunities for students, staff, and the district. It will be a chance to learn first hand about rolling out 1:1 programming. We have spoken to many other districts whom have gone through this process to avoid the common potholes, but all have guaranteed us that we will learn more as we try it the first time.

The Technology and Information Services Department has taken a good look at bandwidth and wireless infrastructure. We believe that we are prepared to handle the traffic and have taken several strategic steps to minimize risk and maximize success. We will continue to monitor this closely and we have the ability to isolate the project within our infrastructure. We have also set up internet safety precautions and have the ability to track each individual student's use of the network.

As the summer and school year begins there will be a strong need to train teachers, parents and students. The BCMS administration and leadership team is working on contracts and clear expectations for students. The pilot provides a great opportunity to teach about responsible use and digital citizenship while getting rid of "Technology Overhead" early in the year (learning to use the device and tools), so the focus can be on the learning objectives of the class. We see this project growing in the future and it will impact grades above and below the 7th grade. We have included the High School in the initial discussion and will bring them more on board as we roll this out so they can plan, prepare, and make

decisions appropriate to their site. The sixth and eighth grade teachers have heard about the idea and will have a year to prepare and learn from the seventh grade pilot if it expands within the Middle School.

Financial Implications:

Our initial figures indicate that the device will cost parents approximately \$175.00 if purchased through our district negotiated program. The retail price is \$199.00. The graphing calculator that is recommended is currently selling for \$129.00 at local stores. For the \$45.00 difference the student has real-time access to the internet, thousands of free applications, an electronic calendar that can be updated automatically through subscription to the teacher's calendar, books, curriculum specific apps, and lesson review videos in the future. We understand that this is a burden on families, but we hope this can replace the 5-10 dollar calculator many families buy for students and replace other school supply costs to create a relatively breakeven family cost over time. We are working on options for families for purchase and we should be able to share more soon.

BCMS will have a financial burden to provide devices to students whose families cannot afford the iPod. Money has been set aside to cover this projected cost and is being re-prioritized. There will be **NO** new money spent on this program. It is designed to be sustainable and a change in how resources are used, not as an additional cost.

Evaluation:

We are working on developing an evaluation for this pilot. We are including parents, students, teachers, and administrators. We will be looking at changes in climate, learning, access, and student engagement.

Steps to Prepare for the Pilot and Next Steps:

We will begin ordering devices for teachers in June. Negotiations with vendors are being finalized to provide an efficient and effective purchasing process for parents as well as a process to apply for financial support. The pilot team will be trained throughout the summer and the integration specialists have already begun to receive training so they can support the project. Incoming seventh grade families will receive information and initial iPod Touch applications will be chosen. We are focusing on free applications and tools. School owned devices will be imaged and will be collected at each break for cleanup and syncing. A large kickoff will take place in August, including parent education with continuous evaluation and improvement taking place throughout the 2010-11 school year.

Questions/Comments/Direction:

ATTACHMENT(S):