AUSTIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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DATE: May 12, 2025

TITLE: Technology Services

TYPE: Information

PRESENTER: Amy Thuesen, Director of Technology

BACKGROUND:
Technology Services designs, implements, and supports the technology infrastructure and resources in this district. This includes network and communications, hardware and software, and technology training and integration.

Technology Advisory Team
- This team has finished meeting for the 24-25 school year and will resume meetings in September 2025.

Support and resources to ensure a safe and welcoming learning environment
- Over the past year, our department has taken foundational steps to improve the safety and usability of district tech for staff and students. These steps allow us to make the following changes.
    o We will no longer have to collect staff devices every summer – this will be more convenient for staff members and also allows us to monitor the device security more effectively. Staff will also have access to the district's app store (Company Portal) off-site.
    o Our Systems Administrator has rebuilt the Windows image for all staff and student Windows laptops, which will make deployment much smoother and faster on the part of the end user.
    o Starting in the fall, Microsoft Edge will be the district-approved web browser. For staff, we are requesting that all school business be conducted using this browser – other browsers will be for personal use. For students, this will be the only web browser they can access. When using Microsoft Edge, staff and student credentials are automatically synced, which backs up logins, bookmarks, and homepages. Tech Services is also able to manage extension use in this browser – rogue extensions are a big cybersecurity risk.
    o We have deployed increased Microsoft security tools across the district as well as an external Endpoint Detection and Response system. Both of these additions are important tools for preventing cyber-attacks and identity theft.
    o On student laptops there will be a pre-set homepage and bookmarks for all students in grades 5-12. This will allow students to have easier access to the sites they need for schoolwork. On student iPads there will be a slimmed-down home screen showing only those apps they need for learning.

- To improve our processes and support for 25-26, the Tech Department is deploying an all-staff survey. This survey gathers feedback on measures we have taken this year and areas for growth.

District-wide MTSS & Packer Profile

- Buildings are busy developing their site-improvement plans for the 25-26 school year. When those are completed, the Technology and Teaching & Learning Departments will work together to review plans and ensure that all buildings get the technology training and supports that align with their plans. Special focus of our department's work will be in Artificial Intelligence, tech-infused HIITs strategies, and Packer Profile artifacts.
- One of our main goals this year has been to increase and improve technology-related communication to families. This year we have shared "tech tips" with families each quarter through both district and building newsletters. This spring, we are concentrating on communication around laptop turn-in, and this summer we will focus on laptop fees and fall distribution. For the fall, when students receive their laptops, families will receive confirmation of laptop assigned as well as information about supporting appropriate laptop use at home.

Excellence in Resource Management

- A Technology Plan goal for the end of the 24-25 school year was to communicate how all hardware and software in the district is selected, purchased, supported, and evaluated. To meet part of that goal, we have created this [Hardware and Digital Resource Standards](#) document to communicate technology purchase and support practices. While we still have a bit of work to do in outlining clear practices for selection and evaluation, we have created several internal documents that are supporting our current work.
- Tech Services is gearing up for both the end of the traditional school year and the beginning of summer programming. Grade 9-12 ALC in the summer uses 1:1 laptops, and Targeted Services in grades K-8 will use shared iPads and laptops. We will also be supporting staff at CLC programming and other summer programs.
- Some elements of district network infrastructure will be updated this summer – this will include the building cores at Banfield, Ellis, and IJ Holton. These cores communicate with district infrastructure housed at AHS and distribute network access to satellite buildings. We replace all building cores on a regular cycle. It's also important to note that we are then able to use old core hardware for other uses after they are cycled out at buildings. Our department prioritizes updated equipment at all of our sites while at the same time ensuring that we use the equipment until the end of its lifespan.