

Dear Parents:

On Wednesday, January 25, 2012, students were no longer prohibited from bringing their own laptop computer, iPad or Android-based tablet computer into Holliston High School. Based upon our observations of classrooms, we estimate that the initial participation rate is about 25-30% of our student body, slightly above our initial prediction of 20%. These students are using their own device to take notes in class, conduct in-class research over the Internet, manage their personal calendar or participate in on-line discussions. In some classrooms we observed, teachers were allowing students with their own device to participate in simultaneous “back-channel” discussions while traditional classroom discussion was taking place. Using this technique, students are encouraged to post their thoughts related to the classroom discussion on-line using Web 2.0 tools such as www.polleverywhere.com while the teacher uses their interactive whiteboard to display the back-channel discussion in real-time. The classroom discussions we observed using this technique allowed for both a more in-depth analysis of the content being debated and a significant increase in the number of students participating in the discussion. Finally, teachers are not reporting that personal device use is posing an increased level distraction.

This initial phase of the BYOD project will continue for the remainder of the 2011-2012 school year. We are focusing our attention on providing our teachers with supportive professional development to expand the appropriate use of technology in the classroom while at the same time fine-tuning our infrastructure and making appropriate modifications to our plans based on data and feedback. Last week, 33 teachers participated in locally-run professional development activities designed to familiarize teachers with Moodle, the Learning Management System used at HHS, so that when school opens in the fall, all teachers will be able to:

- Post all of their homework assignments on-line using Moodle or another on-line tool;
- Post class materials online (using Moodle or another on-line tool) including syllabus, links, screenshots, classroom videos, study guides, notes and presentations; and
- Incorporate interactive technology at least once per month where students are sharing ideas and critiquing the ideas of others in order to develop deeper understanding of a topic. Ex: Ning, blog, wiki, discussion forum, Google docs, Twitter, etc.

On January 19th, over 100 parents attended the BYOD Parent Information Night held in the HHS Library. This meeting offered parents the opportunity to learn about the vision behind the BYOD project as well as the opportunity to share any concerns they had with the project or its planned implementation. While the vision to integrate technology more deeply into the instruction at HHS was almost universally supported, there were some issues that were identified that encouraged us to revise our thinking. As a result of this parent meeting, the following adjustments to our BYOD plan are being made:

1. Blocking Facebook – We have reversed our previous decision and decided to block access to Facebook during the school day. Both parents and teachers had expressed concerns that anytime access to Facebook during the school day may prove too distracting to students.
2. Access to electrical outlets for during-the-school-day charging of devices – We have purchased power-strips to install in each classroom, increasing the number of accessible outlets into which devices can be plugged during the school day.
3. Theft –
 - a. We are organizing an evening meeting for parents with members of the Holliston Police Department and administrators at the High School to discuss strategies to minimize the chances of having a device lost or stolen.
 - b. We are conducting a full inventory to ensure that there is an adequate number of athletic lockers available for students to secure their device when they are participating in after-school sports.
 - c. We are conducting a thorough review of our daily schedule to see if students require longer passing times in order to go to their lockers between classes. Since increasing passing times would result in shorter instructional periods, we will review this issue carefully before making any final decisions. If we determine that a schedule adjustment is warranted, it is likely that it would not take place until the first day of the 2012-2013 school year.
4. Student Follow-up -- We are finalizing our plans to meet with students again to review and clarify our expectations and get their feedback.

We appreciate the feedback we received during the Parent Information Night and are confident that the adjustments we are making will strengthen the BYOD program and make it even more successful. We will continue to report on the progress of the program as the year progresses.

Please do NOT reply to this email, as the email is being sent from an unmonitored account. If you have questions about our BYOD program or would like to share your child's classroom experience with us, please email us at jacksonb@holliston.k12.ma.us or aherns@holliston.k12.ma.us or cournoyerm@holliston.k12.ma.us.

Sincerely,

Bradford L. Jackson, Ed.D. Sara E. Ahern, Ed.D. Michael Cournoyer

Superintendent of Schools Assistant Superintendent Principal

Holliston High School