Blackboard K-12

Embracing the Inevitable

HOW TO CREATE K-12 ACCEPTABLE USE POLICIES THAT HARNESS THE POWER OF MOBILITY

The answers will vary from district to district, but this paper will help you reach the conclusions that are best for your schools. It provides guidance on developing Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) for this new era of mobile active learning. Most importantly, it showcases many examples of how savvy schools and innovative educators are successfully leveraging the power of technology to enhance learning experiences for their students.

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INTRODUCTION: THE RISE OF THE ACTIVE LEARNER IS A "GAME CHANGER" FOR K-12 POLICY MAKERS

Although debates continue about using mobile devices in K-12 education, it seems that their use by Active Learners—students who have grown up with the Internet and expect to have information readily available at their fingertips—has already reached critical mass. As evidence, consider:

- **Project Tomorrow's Speak Up 2011 National Research Project found that 58% of middle and high school students want to use their own mobile devices as part of their education**
- **The same report found that 30% of middle school and 46% of high school students have used Facebook to collaborate on classroom projects**
- **The National School Board Association found 63% of students use mobile devices in schools—even when prohibited**
- **Believe it or not, 46% of drivers aged 18 to 24 said they would choose Internet access over owning a car, according to the research firm Gartner**

As school districts look for ways to adapt to Active Learners, they are also faced with new challenges that go hand-in-hand with the technology. For example:

- **Should districts provide mobile devices to students (so-called 1:1 initiatives) or allow students to "bring your own device" (BYOD)?**
- **How can equitable device access be ensured for all students, including those least able to afford it?**
- **Which are allowable uses? Is social media acceptable?**
- **Who is responsible for technical support?**
- **Is the school or district liable for damage to a student's personal device?**

EVOLVING INSIGHT: STUDENTS THEMSELVES ARE DEMANDING CHANGE

Peggy Whyte is Curriculum Integration Coordinator for the South Central Ohio Computer Association (SCOCA), which serves 58 school districts. At one school she works with, students in an AP class (using Blackboard Learn) saw a link for Blackboard Mobile and downloaded it. Whyte got a frantic call from the teacher (during school hours in a district that prohibited student cell phones at school) because the students were begging her for the log-in information. Once they had the instructions, the teacher reported that almost immediately she heard cries of "I'm in." "I just got in too!" "Me too." The next day, the teacher called Whyte again because students wanted to know how to set up "push" notifications to their phones. These were the first steps toward the district changing its mobile phone use policy—a change that was driven primarily by the students themselves. Currently, 70%- 80% of SCOCA schools provide elearning access for mobile devices.

Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD) Is Becoming The Preferred Approach

As you have probably realized by now, mobile devices are in your schools whether they are officially sanctioned or not. And because they are so commonplace, they are skewing the debate between 1:1 initiatives and bring-your-own-device or BYOD. With 1:1 initiatives, schools provide the same standardized devices to everyone. But more schools are opting for BYOD, with emphasis on smartphones, allowing students to use their own devices as part of school sponsored elearning initiatives.

But BYOD is more than simply the path of least resistance. It provides a number of benefits to both students and administrators.

EVOLVING INSIGHT: SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE

The Clark County School District in Las Vegas, NV implemented a BYOD policy along with a commitment to provide Wi-Fi at all schools. While the district is also developing a 1:1 initiative for students at five Title 1 middle schools, Chief Technology Officer Jhone Ebert reports, "One of the biggest 'AHA!' moments was when students spontaneously shared their personal devices in classrooms so that no one was left out."

> *Today's students are digital natives who are used to being connected by technology 24/7. Denying them access for the eight hours of the school day is simply unrealistic.*
>
> Josh Montgomery
> *Technology Coordinator*
> *Chillicothe (OH) City Schools*

BYOD BENEFITS

- **The learning day is extended because students bring their devices home.**
- **Districts lessen the financial impact of hardware purchases.**
- **In districts that have already purchased mobile devices, BYOD can be blended with 1:1 programs. Such scenarios include providing school-owned devices to students from lower-income families or combining students' devices with technology carts (i.e., district tablets or laptops).**
- **Students who bring their own devices can personalize them (e.g., choose their own apps and screensavers within district guidelines), which increases engagement and, therefore, content retention.**
- **BYOD frees districts from the responsibility of providing technical support for devices, allowing them to focus time and budgets exclusively on the network and instructional issues.**

EVOLVING INSIGHT: STUDENTS TAKE BETTER CARE OF THEIR OWN EQUIPMENT

Bishop O'Dowd High School in Oakland, CA began with a 1:1 laptop program but transitioned to allowing BYOD. Students can still obtain devices from the school, but 75% now bring their own—and many bring multiple devices, including smartphones and iPads. The switch has resulted in fewer service calls and repairs for the school. Romeo Baldeviso, Chief Information Officer, pointed out, "The kids take much better care of their own equipment than they ever did with what we provided."

Key Issues to Consider When Introducing Mobility in the K-12 Environment

Whether you choose the BYOD or 1:1 route, you will need to develop or modify a set of Acceptable Use Policies (AUP's). On the surface, they would appear to simply define how information and communication technologies are to be used, according to the Consortium for School Networking Initiative (COSN). These guidelines also protect students from inappropriate online sites and material, and ensure access to appropriate educational resources. But they also protect schools by detailing areas of responsibility, liability and preventing abuse of district computer networks.

A number of other key issues also need to be considered so that decisions can be made on whether they are applicable to your district and, if so, which of several options are appropriate.

Device and Application Requirements

1:1 programs offer the benefit of standardized technology. If everyone uses the same device and apps, technical support, maintenance and repairs become much less complex. However, numerous districts using BYOD report that students provide support and assistance to each other. As a result, students can use a variety of different devices and apps without the districts needing to provide tech supportother than for network and connectivity issues.

Acceptable Use vs. Responsible Use

Aside from the federal Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) that many districts use for guidance on what online material is acceptable, there are two basic approaches used to guide student activities online. One focuses on acceptable use. The other emphasizes responsible use. The one you choose will have a major impact on how your use policy is put together.

A side-by-side comparison illustrates the major differences between the two:

ACCEPTABLE USE	RESPONSIBLE USE
• **Stringent application of blocking and filtering software** • **Online student access is limited to specifically approved resources** • **Emphasis is on detailing prohibited behaviors and activities** • **Focus on "bad" behavior and avoidance of unapproved resources enforces a restrictive view of the Web and the need to protect students**	• **Moderate application of blocking and filtering software** • **Students allowed to explore to find appropriate resources** • **Encourages "good" choices in online behavior** • **Flexibility in student choices (adjusted for age) to develop responsible online skills** • **Students are held accountable for online behavior without emphasizing punishment**

Mary Ann Wolf, CEO of Wolf Ed and former executive director of the State Technology Education Directors Association, has characterized the difference between the two approaches as acceptable use emphasizing poor behavior that must be avoided and punished, vs. responsible use emphasizing appropriate behaviors for maximizing learning. In Transforming Education Through Technology (t/h/e) Journal, she said, "[In one, mobile devices] are seen as another resource, similar to the old-fashioned textbook or an encyclopedia, as opposed to a toy that ought to be confiscated."

Whichever approach your district chooses, existing codes of conduct (e.g., prohibitions and consequences related to cheating, bullying, passing notes) can usually be applied to online/mobile activities.

EVOLVING INSIGHT: RELAXING STANDARDS ON APPLICATION USE

Bishop O'Dowd High School has relaxed its requirements for which applications students can use to complete assignments. For example, both PowerPoint (for PC/Android-based devices) and Keynote (for Mac/iPads) can be used for presentations. The school has found that students are more productive when they can make their own choices as long as instructors can view and grade the end product.

EVOLVING INSIGHT: ALLOWING TEACHERS TO MAKE SMART DECISIONS

If a teacher in the Clark County School District in Nevada locates a resource that is unnecessarily blocked, he or she can go to the Resource Review Committee to request access to the site. Adjustments can be made within a day, and sometimes within hours, of the request.

EVOLVING INSIGHTS: TEACHABLE MOMENTS: CONSEQUENCES OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Infractions of use policies present valuable teachable moments. Oakland's Bishop O'Dowd High School experienced two separate incidents of bullying and accessing pornography online. In both cases, the school shut off the involved students' network access and held meetings with parents before reinstating online privileges.

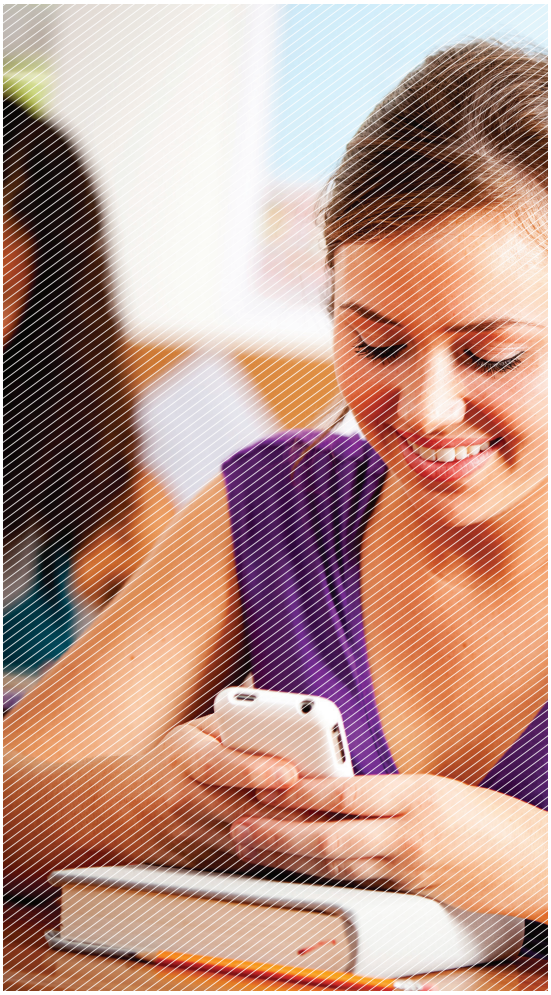
Equal Access

Unless schools are willing and able to support 1:1 initiatives, there is no way to guarantee that all students have equivalent devices with equal "power" and access. Even in the most affluent private schools, inequalities exist—although they may be that some students have multiple devices and others have only one. Certain levels of baseline access can be established through:

- **Financial aid**
- **Combining BYOD with school/district-owned devices**
- **Public-private partnerships through which parents' employers and local companies donate funds and devices for student use**

Personalization

This can be a sticky issue since schools generally want controlled, standardized tools while students want to "make them their own"—and the greater the personalization, the greater the engagement, which leads to improved learning outcomes. Keep in mind that the tools used may be less important than the process and final results.



EVOLVING INSIGHTS: MULTI-LAYER DEVICES: PERSONALIZATION THAT'S MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

Some technology providers, like Apple, have implemented mobile devices with an "institutional layer" where operating systems, apps and other controls reside, and a "personalization layer" for students' apps and content. This simplifies management and maintenance. When a device is returned to the school, the personalized content is removed so the device is ready for use by another student.

Social Media

Teachers and administrators may view social media as venues for networking and gossip, but students tend to view it simply as a normal part of everyday life. Although it can provoke concerns of unwanted distractions and intrusions for educators, it provides a powerful platform for knowledge sharing, linking to outside resources and coordinating and monitoring collaborative projects. It also engages students to a greater extent than traditional media.

EVOLVING INSIGHT: SOCIAL MEDIA IS BECOMING MORE ACCEPTABLE

"Many school districts allow social networking that has been devised for schools and includes protections in the form of restricted access, filters, or monitors—but block the most widespread social networking applications such as Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter. However, a growing number of districts allow them for classroom use and for communication between school personnel with parents and others in the community." - *COSN's "Acceptable Use Policies in the Web 2.0 and Mobile Era."*

Budgets

As noted earlier, the choice of BYOD or 1:1 scenarios creates a substantial cost differential. But some districts have turned to other creative solutions. *According to Education Week's Mobile Learning Costs Add Up:*

ST. MARY'S (OH) CITY SCHOOL SYSTEM (DONATED FUNDS)	JIM NED CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (ARRA FUNDING)	E-RATE FUNDING
St. Mary's received free smartphones for six classes of 3rd, 4th and 5th graders and pays for broadband service and software licensing from the local provider. New phones are provided each year and the district expects the cost to drop as more students participate. This arrangement saved approximately $60,000 in startup costs by relying on the service provider's infrastructure.	**This district in Tuscola, TX funded a 1:1 initiative at one high school with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the federal economic stimulus law).**	**Many schools turn to E-rate funding, a program for discounted telecommunications services from the Schools and Libraries Division of the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), a division of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The program provides 20%-90% discounts for services based on location and need.**

In addition to basic funding questions, other less obvious budget considerations can include whether or not equipment/infrastructure costs will be passed on to students and if students are required to buy insurance for devices provided to them by the district.

Bandwidth and Technical Support

The more devices attempting to access your network, the more access points and bandwidth (speed and capacity) are required. This can be controlled with 1:1 programs that prohibit access to personal/outside devices. But as the complexity of online media increases—and particularly in BYOD environments in which students may have two or three devices to connect—the demand for bandwidth is sure to increase.

Bandwidth issues go hand-in-hand with questions about the level of technical support:

- **Does the district have the budget and manpower to adequately service the network?**
- **Do you have the expertise and capacity to address issues that arise when hundreds or thousands of users attempt to access the network around the clock?**
- **Will you provide support for individual users/devices?**
- **Are you able to adequately handle network upgrades that will be needed every two to three years?**

A cost effective option for addressing these questions may be to look to outside IT vendors, or to the Cloud. These providers can offer expertise in supporting, updating and troubleshooting high volume, high capacity networks—usually along with service level guarantees that ensure system uptime. If desired, they can also provide "help desk" services. This solution allows educators to remain focused on instruction and students while IT experts handle the technology.

Engaging and Supporting Teachers and Parents

The reason for providing mobile access is to enhance students' education, so it is important to ensure that the adults understand how to implement and use it effectively. For teachers, this means introductory and ongoing training so they understand both the instructional value and the basics of the technology. Assistance with lesson plans, including examples of how to incorporate mobility, is also highly recommended. In addition, parents need to be familiar with what activities and behaviors are part of instruction and the school's AUP.

EVOLVING INSIGHT: TEACHERS NEED TO LEARN, TOO

Chillicothe (OH) City School teachers' contract requires them to attend monthly training sessions to review mobile technology educational strategies, how to implement instructional apps in the classroom and other associated issues.

EVOLVING INSIGHT: INFORMED CONSENT AS BEST PRACTICE

Teachers and parents at Bishop O'Dowd High School must sign the school's mobile use policy each year. New students and their parents must also meet with school staff to review the technology and its responsible use.

USE POLICY 101

An effective use policy should include the following basic sections:

INTRODUCTION – Explain the goals and reason for the policy. It may also state that existing rules and consequences covering student behavior apply to online activities.

DEFINITIONS – Include key terms for parents and students.

POLICY STATEMENT – Describe the activities the policy covers.

PRIVILEGE VS. RIGHT OF USE – States the district's right to suspend or revoke use.

ACCEPTABLE/UNACCEPTABLE USES – Clearly lists appropriate and/or inappropriate activities and behaviors.

DISTRICT'S RIGHT TO MONITOR USE – State that this right takes precedence over the need to obtain student permission or students' right to privacy.

VIOLATIONS/SANCTIONS – How/to whom to report violations. Can include consequences for infractions if they differ from breaches of the general code of conduct.

DISTRICT DISCLAIMERS: Waive responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through the network, any financial obligations incurred by network users, or occurrences such as damage to devices, loss of data and service interruption.

About Blackboard

Blackboard is a global leader in education technology that transforms the experience of millions of students and teachers every day. Blackboard works with states, K-12 districts and virtual schools to expand educational opportunities, create collaborative learning communities and increase engagement for students, teachers, parents and administrators. With Blackboard's website, online learning, mobile, and mass communication solutions, educators are closing the gap between the way students live and the way they learn through personalized, connected learning experiences that meet the needs of the K-12 classroom and the 21st century. Learn more at **blackboard.com/k12**.

Additional Resources

While there is no right or wrong answer to developing policies that are "right-sized" for your school, we hope this paper has been helpful in providing some ideas and showing you where other trailblazing innovators are headed. As the pre-eminent online learning platform, Blackboard has tremendous experience and expertise in providing technology-based education solutions such as Blackboard Learn®, Blackboard Mobile® and Blackboard Collaborate®. Our knowledgeable staff is always available to answer your questions about mobile technology in education.

In addition, here are some resources that provide valuable information about developing an effective and comprehensive mobile use policy:

1. Acceptable Use Policies in the Web 2.0 and Mobile Era - Consortium for School Networking Initiative (COSN)
2. Education's Guide to Mobile Learning Devices: Everything You Need to Know About Mobile Tech and Your Schools – eSchool News
3. Children's Internet Protection Act – Federal Communications Commission
4. University of San Diego's Center for Education Policy and Law: Suggested Student Discipline
5. Creating and Enforcing Acceptable Use Policies – TechRepublic.com (Intended for corporate use, this provides guidelines appropriate for education.)
6. Critiquing Acceptable Use Policies – Although originally written in 1995, this essay by Dave Kinnarman provides very helpful suggestions about context and language for use policies, as well as many more recent links to numerous schools' use policies.
7. Federal E-Rate Funding
8. Classroom 2.0 – Information on how to incorporate social media

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