

## **BYO Devices in Schools - What do you think?**

Have you been thinking about allowing students to bring their own computers, tablets and the like to school for lessons? BYO device. Or has your school already been doing it? I'd love to hear what you think, how you went about it in your school and what worked.

The Internet, and computers generally, being connected, are such an integral part of schools today. With the shortage of school funding to provide enough up-to-date hardware, schools and school systems are evolving to allow students to bring their own devices. No doubt your school system will have a BYO Device Policy for you to follow but you might also want to consider the following.

No matter what you do, you will need to talk to all those involved before launching anything. Unless the users are on board your plans will come to nothing. Firstly, your Principal will have to be willing to back your ideas. Some are very concerned about privacy and property issues. Staff will have to be committed to its implementation, remembering that their involvement will vary depending upon their view of technology and the support given to them. Parents have to see the point of equipping their children with tablets or computers at their own expense and being willing to bear the cost, especially if the device is lost or damaged. Finally, students will need to be willing to comply with usage restrictions and charge their device at home each night! School is not home. Signed agreement statements with parents and students could be used.

Devices you are willing to accept in the classroom are educational and technical decisions. You might decide to nominate a particular platform or model, but more likely you might just set a minimum screen size and wi-fi access standard. A mixture of platforms and devices can work in the classroom with a little planning but, apart from setting up wi-fi access within the school, teachers don't want to be technical trouble shooters. As an aside, a number of companies and retailers are offering support services for schools and parents so that they will scoop sales! They are very willing to listen to individual school requirements.

I think we want devices at school to generally only have activated wi-fi access to get onto the Internet, through a filtered link, use printers and send files between devices. In many schools, therefore, wireless Internet access would have to be greatly improved involving some expense for schools with hardware improvements and possible external broadband upgrades.

In a primary school we only want the devices used under teacher supervision, such as in the classroom, so perhaps when a child comes to school in the morning they would have to bring their device to the classroom and check it in for the day. Those without a device could use existing school hardware or possibly share with a friend.

With a variety of platforms used in a class, different software producing shareable results would be acceptable, along with using on-line applications. An agreed form of Cloud-based storage would be used both to store and share files.

With all computer technology, as soon as you think you have an understanding of it, the goal posts move and the game is completely different. However, computer technology and on-line access is a real part of our student's lives. Teachers would be wasting a real resource not to use it. Our challenge, as teachers, is to effectively use it in education with our students, without going bankrupt or pulling our hair out!!

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