

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

August 1, 2018

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools
Subject: Technology Systems Update (06-25-18-12)

During the Technology Systems Update discussion, Board members requested the following:

Question A

That more investment needs to be put into this (technology) for professional development of staff.

Response

Relevant and sustained learning opportunities exist for staff to increase their capacity to integrate technology effectively. With changes in staffing in the Office of the Chief Technology Officer, significant attention has been given during the last year to rethink ways in which we can provide professional learning for staff at scale and on demand by leveraging the available technology. We continue to create online and hybrid professional development experiences in partnership with various offices to make training available anytime, anywhere, via the technology. We are planning a continued expansion of online and hybrid learning experiences for support staff with new technology and other districtwide initiatives.

Question B

Why are students not able to access their home Google accounts on MCPS chromebooks? Please provide follow-up information about this glitch between using one's MCPS Google login and a home account login.

Response

Allowing access to a personal account on a Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) device would prove problematic from the perspective of Internet filtering and monitoring. By using a personal Google account, this would circumvent a number of necessary restrictions in place to limit student access to inappropriate content when using the Internet. For this reason, we prevent students from signing in to a personal account on a MCPS Chromebook. Keeping students safe and secure while on the MCPS network is a high priority; therefore, it is imperative that we continue to implement certain restrictions on the use of personal Google accounts on MCPS-provisioned Chromebooks.

Question C

Explore the possibility of including explanations on the blocked webpages so that someone knows why a particular website is being blocked.

Response

MCPS utilizes industry leading web content filtering technology to protect students from accessing inappropriate or malicious content on the web. This includes the blocking and filtering of web content that potentially is harmful to students such as content categorized as gambling, pornography or violence. Presently, the message an individual receives when attempting to access a blocked website is the same regardless of the category or nature of the site. To improve the experience for users, we are exploring how to customize the message to provide clearer language that describes potential reasons why the website is deemed inappropriate and therefore inaccessible.

Question D

Information regarding the availability of more chromebooks for the system's Title I schools.

Response

Each year of the rollout and provisioning of Chromebooks across all elementary schools, including Title I schools, the factor in allotment quantities has been based on student enrollment. During the last four years, we have deployed Chromebooks to Grades 3–5 homeroom classrooms at a ratio of one Chromebook for every student, and to Grade 2 at a ratio of 1:3 in all elementary schools. We understand that schools may have additional means, such as Parent Teacher Association funds, to purchase Chromebooks and other technologies; thus, it was important for us to achieve these ratios in Grades 2–5 across all schools to ensure equitable access to the technology.

Question E

Information regarding the change to the myMCPS app: The option to have multiple children accessible from a singular account versus having to log in multiple times. [Preferences were erased?]

Response

The official *myMCPS* mobile app is designed to keep MCPS parents/guardians informed about their children's progress as well as to provide school-related updates. The official app is available at no cost for both iOS and Android devices, and integrates with the *myMCPS* Student and Parent portal. By creating an account via the portal, parents/guardians then are linked to each of their children in both the portal and the mobile app. When using the mobile app, parents/guardians can log in one time and toggle between their children by tapping the profile icon for each child. If a parent/guardian is experiencing issues with using the mobile app, the parent/guardian may forward an e-mail message to myMCPSSupport@mcpsmd.org or contact the Office of the Chief Technology Officer, at 240-740-2900 for support.

Question F

Information regarding the installation of Promethean boards in the portables. How are we going to keep up with technology in the portables?

Response

The Technology Modernization (Tech Mod) project provides funding for the purchase and installation of Promethean boards in instructional spaces including portable classrooms. Each year, funds are allocated to outfit select classrooms and relocatable classrooms with Promethean boards. However, this year Tech Mod was not fully funded, and the reduction has challenged our ability to continue to outfit all identified classrooms. As enrollment and the number of instructional spaces such as relocatable classrooms in MCPS increase, we are hopeful that the Tech Mod budget will be fully funded in future years to equip all classrooms with the necessary technology.

Question G

When will the interactive harassment form be available online for use?

Response

We are working to design more efficient workflows for a number of district-level reporting needs including Child Abuse and Neglect, Bullying and Harassment, Crisis Center, and Suicide Prevention. We are in the process of prioritizing these needs in order to establish an agreed upon development schedule that includes clarifying the business requirements for the reporting workflows as we transition from paper processes to automated electronic workflows. The time line for developing an online version of the Bullying and Harassment form is contingent upon this work. Additional updates on this will be provided when these time lines are established.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Andrew M. Zuckerman, chief operating officer, at 240-740-3050 or Mr. Peter Cevenini, chief technology officer, at 240-740-2900.

JRS:AMZ:PC:sjk

Copy to:

Executive Staff

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