Better schools for our kids: technology enabled learning – Frequently Asked Questions - Schools

What's happening?

The Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Yvette Berry, announced details of the ACT Government's commitment to allocate secondary students with portable computing devices for learning under the *Better schools for kids – technology enabled learning* initiative.

Through this initiative we want to further engage our students, enhance their learning experiences, provide them with opportunities to collaborate and discover and in doing so produce responsible, literate and knowledgeable digital citizens. This directly aligns with the Australian Curriculum - ICT capability:

> "To participate in a knowledge-based economy and to be empowered within a technologically sophisticated society now and into the future, students need the knowledge, skills and confidence to make ICT work for them at school, at home, at work and in their communities. Information and communication technologies are fast and automated, interactive and multimodal, and they support the rapid communication and representation of knowledge to many audiences and its adaptation in different contexts. They transform the ways that students think and learn and give them greater control over how, where and when they learn."

The infrastructure required to support student access to technology is already in place and this program of work will build on and complement the highly successful Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and *Learn Anywhere* programs already adopted by our schools and school communities.

Why is the Government doing this?

The Government wants to ensure all of our students have the education and skills they need to thrive in the economy of the future, and this means developing strong technology skills. This initiative supports this objective. It provides all our secondary students with devices irrespective of family background or finances.

Why Chromebooks?

Schools have indicated a preference for Chromebooks, with over 12,300 devices being used across Canberra schools and trending up. Combined with digital cloud capabilities, these devices and the G Suite provide students and teachers with reliable access and safe, unlimited document storage.

Chromebooks have a long battery life, high level of processing power, are durable, light weight and compliment the G Suite for Education program across ACT public schools.

Some Multimedia courses at school may require a device with more powerful specifications which exceed the Chromebook's capabilities. Schools will still be allocated funding for student devices which can continue to support the school's specialist labs to cater for these specialised curriculum areas.

Why the same device?

Having the same device (with the same capabilities) maximises effective learning time at school and minimises down time. Teachers don't need to worry about how selected software is going to function on different devices brought to class. They will all respond in the same way.

Due to the low management overheads, cloud storage and web based functionality of the devices, school staff are not tied up in maintenance of the devices.

Who is eligible to receive one?

All students who are enrolled in an ACT Public Secondary school are eligible to receive a Chromebook.

Who owns the device?

Under this initiative the ACT Government owns the device, but secondary students are responsible for the upkeep of their device once it is allocated to them. It is theirs to use for learning, in and outside of school.

When will the devices be handed out?

In Term 1 over the next three years, Chromebooks will be handed out to:
- Year 7 to 11 students in 2018
- newly enrolled year 7 cohorts in 2019-2020

Where will they be delivered?

Devices will be delivered to schools in Term 1 2018 between Monday 5 – Friday 23 February inclusive. They will be delivered to a pre-agreed school location. Ideally this will be the site from which devices will be distributed to individual students, for example the hall, gym, library etc.

Staff from the TEL Program Team will be contacting your Business Manager, ITO and ICT Coordinator in the coming week to provide them with further details and to seek feedback on delivery arrangements specific to your school.

How best can my school support this initiative?

Getting devices into the hands of students is just a small step in the process, it is all the other work that really makes the difference. Schools are best placed to make decisions about how to get the most of technology enabled learning in their community. This is why we are calling on schools to take a holistic approach in this implementation by focussing on:
- improved learning outcomes
- parent engagement
- clear communication
- collaboration
- strategic vision
- building teacher capacity
- pedagogy and curriculum review
- digital citizenship
- monitoring progress.

What about Professional Development?

Making time for professional development is essential to build on current teacher competencies. This can be done by:
- examining current teaching practices, to identify where curriculum could benefit from the use of technologies and establish measures to assess its impact
- prioritising the building of teacher capability by allocating sufficient time for tailored teacher professional development that suits staff needs, level of expertise and subject area
- facilitating and encourage continued staff development through attendance at conferences

- identifying and supporting technology champions within the school and promoting peer-to-peer learning
- engaging in regular consultation and communication with parents

Teacher capability building needs to be prioritised and the practical measures to achieve it clearly documented in school plans and in line with *People, Practice & Performance: School Improvement in Canberra public Schools – A Framework for Performance and Accountability*

The Directorate has a made a significant investment in developing teacher capability. Over 600 staff have attended Google G Suite for Education professional learning events, including a range of short courses and three annual two day Google Summits. The Directorate will continue to run GAFE workshops each term as well as the annual Google Summit. These PD opportunities specifically support the use of portable computing devices that provide a rich, engaging learning and teaching experiences.

What will a one-to-one environment do for teaching?

Creating a one-to-one teaching environment will enable teachers to apply their digital capability consistently and concurrently across all classes they teach. The focus is on learning not on administering devices.

Who is responsible for administering this program?

The ACT Education Directorate's Digital Strategy, Services and Transformation (DSST) has formed a Technology enabled learning (TEL) Program Team who will be administering the initiative. This process will include:
- purchasing of devices and support services from a provider selected via a Request for Quote
- Contract management with the selected provider
- development of a school rollout schedule based on student numbers and school location.
- provision of program support to schools to help make the most of the initiative from a teaching and learning perspective.

Schools are best placed to engage parents and the school community. Schools will need to develop a communication strategy to achieve this.

Can parents opt out of this program?

The Chromebook Acceptance Form enables parents to opt out of the program should they choose to. Where a parent has opted out, the Chromebook becomes a school resource.

What about the Bring Your Own Device Program (BYOD) program? How does it fit in with this new initiative?

This initiative doesn't replace the existing BYOD policies and programs that are already in place across our schools. It builds on and complements portable electronic device (PED) use. If they wish, students can continue to use a device of their choice.

Can parents have the money instead of the device?

The intention of the initiative is equity - equity of opportunity brought about by equity of access. The devices used for this initiative are fit for purpose. They will support students across the curriculum and as more and more software becomes available online they will increasingly offer access to more complex, high end applications. Aiming for equity and supplying high quality devices to all students provides this. It also gives the ACT Government the ability to leverage value for money through bulk purchasing.

Why is the Government allocating students their own device, why not just have a bank of school-based devices?

Good question. The answer is two-fold:

Firstly, a personally managed device is just that – personal. The student who has it typically invests time, thought and energy in customizing it, in setting it up to optimize their preferred communication, productivity and learning styles.

Secondly - having access to a mobile device promotes a "learn anywhere, anytime" philosophy. Personal allocation affords seamless learning opportunities that bridge the formal learning in schools, with the informal, outside of classrooms and schools.

What is the expectation for usage?

It is common for students to bring devices into school to support their learning and our approach to device usage has always been balanced and focused on educational best practice and alignment to the Australian Curriculum. There are many existing programs and opportunities in schools that are on offer to provide students a rich learning experience in which teachers select the appropriate teaching tools to get the best outcomes for their students. Chromebooks are just one tool.

Teachers will be expected to let students know in advance when they are required to bring their devices to class.

Students are also expected to be ready for their classes by ensuring they recharge their devices overnight for use throughout the next school day.

Can anyone use a device allocated to a student?

The devices issued to secondary students under this program will be configured to only allow Canberra Public School students to log into them. This is not just to deter theft, but to ensure the devices are tailored best for our students,

What if the device gets damaged or needs repairing?

One device is issued per student only. It is the responsibility of the student to look after the Chromebook.

The devices will be covered by a manufacturer's warranty for 1 year through ACER. Any defects or damage that occurs in the normal use of the device will be covered during the warranty, free of charge. Damage due to negligence or malicious behaviour is not covered by the manufacturer's warranty and schools will need to manage these events in accordance with current Acceptable Use of ICT policies and guidelines.

Any issues must be reported to the school as soon as possible. As the role of school ITO's includes managing issues with ICT resources, it is expected that issues will be reported to them for follow up with the supplier within the warranty period. Vendor contact details will be provided to all ITOs at the time of device delivery and will be posted on Learn, anywhere page.

What if the device gets stolen or lost?

Lost or stolen devices must be reported to the school as soon as possible. Schools will need to manage these events in accordance with current Acceptable Use of ICT policies and guidelines.

Where should these devices be stored?

Each school will need to provide guidance on where devices should be stored when not in use while at school. Families will need to consider appropriate storage for devices when not in use at home.

What can be done to support balanced, safe and responsible device use at home?

School digital citizenship programs taught in school define and encourage responsible and productive computer use.

The Office of eSafety Commissioner's website is a great resource to go to get information on supporting young people have safe and positive experiences online. In particular, the iParent page offers a number of practical strategies to assist parents to manage internet connected devices at home. These include restricting screen time, preventing access to certain sites and games, and receiving alerts to potentially harmful social media activity. The Young and eSafe page is specifically designed for secondary students and young adults and covers online safety with respect to resilience, critical thinking, responsibility, empathy and respect

The Directorate will also be publishing information on balanced computer use and some tips on safety for parents and links to useful sites are also posted on the Learn, anywhere page.

How can students connect when they don't have internet access at home?

Secondary students who do not have access to the internet at home have a number of options - the school, public libraries, ACT Government free Wi-Fi zones all provide internet access.

What happens to the device once a student finishes or leaves school?

If a secondary student is leaving the ACT Public School system then the device needs to be returned to school. However, i
a student is moving from one ACT public school to another then the device follows the student.

What about students in our specialist schools with additional needs?

The Directorate recognises that a Chromebook may not satisfy the particular learning needs of some ACT public school secondary students. The Directorate will work specifically with schools and secondary students who have particular IT needs to ensure equity of funding and access to a personal device.

What about primary students?

ACT public primary schools will continue to receive funding to support a minimum 1 device per 3 student ratio at school.

What about Year 12 students in 2018?

These students are not in the scope of this initiative. The ACT Government allocates $1.5 million to schools to supplement access to ICT. These students will continue to have access to ICT through this allocation.

How do we contact the TEL Program Team?

If you have any further queries about the program please do not hesitate to contact a member of the TEL Program Team on 6205 4706 or via email at DSST@act.gov.au .