



# INFORMATION CAPSULE

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### SCHOOL DISTRICT EXPERIENCES WITH ONE-TO-ONE AND BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS

#### At a Glance

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) briefly delayed its technology initiative late last year in order to carefully study what went wrong with some of the technology programs being implemented in other school districts around the country. M-DCPS' technology initiative is now back on schedule, with plans to distribute 100,000 laptops and tablets to students by no later than August 2015. The district is installing wireless systems and improving bandwidth at all of its schools and already allows students to bring their own computing devices to school. Across the country, some districts have encountered difficulties with the implementation of their technology programs, while others have had highly successful rollouts. This Information Capsule summarizes these districts' experiences and the recommendations they have provided for other districts that are preparing to launch their own technology programs.

***A companion Literature Review, available on Research Services' Website (<http://drs.dadeschools.net>), also includes a summary of best practices for school districts to follow when implementing technology initiatives, based on the experiences of districts around the country. In addition, issues that districts must resolve prior to launching their technology programs are reviewed. A full listing of references is also included in the Literature Review.***

In October 2013, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) "pushed the pause button" on its digital technology initiative, citing difficulties encountered with the rollouts of similar programs in other U.S. school districts. M-DCPS delayed the distribution of technology devices so the district could carefully study what went wrong with some of the other programs around the country. In January 2014, M-DCPS announced that it was ready to launch its technology initiative (Smiley, 2014).

Between February and April 2014, approximately 13,000 laptops will be deployed to elementary students and about 15,000 tablets will be deployed to seventh grade civics students and high school freshmen taking world history. In August 2014, all world history students will be given tablets and iPrep math students who lack technology at home will be given laptops. M-DCPS plans to distribute a total of 100,000 laptops and tablets by August 2015, if not sooner (Smiley, 2014).

M-DCPS is spending \$100 million through its November 2012 bond initiative to install wireless systems, improve bandwidth, and purchase additional classroom technology for all of its schools. M-DCPS already allows students to bring their own devices to school at all of the district's campuses, in order to ensure that every student has access to a laptop or tablet and digital content (Smiley, 2014; Herold, 2013a; M-DCPS, 2013; Smiley, 2013).

Before laptops and tablets are deployed in fall 2014, M-DCPS will study the effectiveness of the first wave of its technology program and identify any challenges associated with the initiative. The district will also evaluate the success of its small take-home program (1,000 devices this spring and perhaps 1,500 in the fall) and the air cards that will be given to students to ensure they can access the Internet at home (Smiley, 2014).

For more information on M-DCPS' BYOD program and Wi-Fi access, the reader is directed to the district's *BYOD – Wi-Fi Access* Webpage (<http://wifi.dadeschools.net>).

This Information Capsule provides a summary of several school districts' experiences with the implementation of their one-to-one and Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) technology programs. Some districts, such as the Los Angeles Unified School District and Guilford County Schools in North Carolina, have encountered serious difficulties with their technology rollouts. Other districts have had what are considered to be highly successful rollouts, including Mooresville Graded School District in North Carolina and Oak Hills Local School District in Ohio.

### **DISTRICTS THAT ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTIES WITH THEIR TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS**

The following school districts experienced difficulties when they rolled out their technology initiatives:

#### **Los Angeles Unified School District**

At the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) began Phase 1 of its Common Core Technology Project, as its iPad initiative is formally known, distributing 31,000 iPads to students at 47 schools. LAUSD originally intended to distribute iPads to students at the district's remaining 786 K-12 schools during the 2014-2015 school year. However, after the district encountered a number of difficulties with program implementation last fall, LAUSD officials decided to delay the district-wide rollout of iPads.

In January 2014, the LAUSD School Board unanimously approved Phase 2 of the iPad plan. This next phase will provide iPads to students at 38 new schools, provide high school students at seven schools with laptops, acquire keyboards for Phase 1 and 2 schools, and equip all schools with enough iPads for all students to take the new state tests in the spring. The Board's decision went against the advice of the Bond Oversight Committee, which recommended that the board limit the number of devices purchased during the 2013-2014 school year (Blume, 2014; Romo, 2014; Smith, 2014; Cavanagh, 2013; Herold, 2013b).

LAUSD experienced the following difficulties with Phase 1 of its iPad initiative:

- The Pearson instructional software installed on LAUSD iPads is incomplete. It currently consists of a few sample lessons in mathematics and English/language arts per grade level. Eventually, the software is expected to include between 145 and 150 lessons per

subject and grade, assessments, supplemental materials for students with different skill levels, and built-in tools for taking notes and annotating texts. In the meantime, there have been reports that teachers are struggling with how to use the iPads for classroom instruction, given the extremely limited scope of the digital curriculum available (Herold, 2013b).

- Many experts believe that the district rolled out the program too quickly (Herold, 2013b; K-12 News Network, 2013; Kamenetz, 2013). Leslie Wilson, chief executive officer of the One-to-One Institute, a nonprofit organization that provides support to districts implementing one-to-one technology programs, said, “What we don’t do is deploy thousands of devices into a system that is not prepared from a human capital, network, bandwidth, or security standpoint” (Herold, 2013c).
- Some observers claim that LAUSD’s lack of a clear financial plan hindered their efforts. For example:
  - Critics claim that LAUSD paid too much for its iPads. Most estimates put the total cost of each iPad, pre-loaded with Pearson software, at \$768 per iPad (Blume, 2014; Smith, 2014; Molnar, 2013).
  - District officials said they did not know how much they paid Pearson for the instructional software installed on the iPads because Pearson is a subcontractor for Apple. Pearson officials referred questions to Apple, and Apple declined to comment (Herold, 2013b).
  - The district will lose its right to use the English/language arts and mathematics curriculum installed on district iPads in July 2016. Buying a new license for the curriculum will then cost the district \$50 to \$100 each year per iPad, an additional expense that could surpass \$60 million annually. Under the district’s delayed distribution schedule, most students will receive iPads in fall 2015, shortly before the license expires (Blume & Ceasar, 2013; Herold, 2013b).
  - The district announced in September 2013 that it will spend an additional \$38 million on wireless keyboard accessories so that students will be able to take assessments on their iPads. Critics point out that LAUSD should have anticipated keyboard needs prior to finalizing the purchase of iPads (Kamenetz, 2013; Romo, 2013).
- LAUSD struggled to develop rules and protocols to guide the use of the iPads. For example, there was confusion about whether parents were liable for the iPads if they were lost, stolen, or broken (Banks, 2013; Blume, 2013a; Herold, 2013b; K-12 News Network, 2013). LAUSD required parents to sign a form acknowledging that they were financially responsible if their child broke or lost the device, but according to the *Los Angeles Times*, it is unclear if the forms were signed prior to giving iPads to the students or whether the forms were legally binding (Newcombe, 2013a).

- Teachers were not fully trained to use the tablets (Banks, 2013). Kamenetz (2013) spoke with two LAUSD contractors who claimed to have first-hand knowledge of the iPad rollout. The contractors confirmed that lack of teacher training was a major issue, stating, “Teachers were not trained in the system to manage the devices. Nobody at the school was trained.”
- Over 300 LAUSD students deleted security filters on their district-issued iPads in order to access Facebook, Twitter, Pandora, and other unapproved Websites when using the devices outside of school. In addition, over 70 iPads disappeared during the 13-school pilot program in spring 2013 (Blume, 2013a; Herold, 2013c; Westervelt, 2013).

LAUSD is taking steps to ensure the future success of their one-to-one technology program. For example:

- The LAUSD School Board decided that a slower pace will lead to a more effective program, both logistically and academically. Under the program’s original timeline, tablets would have been distributed to all LAUSD students by December 2014. The deadline has been pushed back to the fall of 2015. The School Board also requested that an evaluation be conducted to determine whether or not the project should proceed. This evaluation could result in further delays in the district-wide rollout (Blume, 2013b; Molnar, 2013; Romo, 2013).
- The LAUSD issued a statement detailing the actions it has taken to “ensure it has 100 percent control over what is accessible” on the devices. These actions include:
  - Students will no longer be permitted to take tablets off school grounds. At the three high schools where students deleted security filters, LAUSD staff ordered that all tablets be returned (Banks, 2013; Blume, 2013a; Brustein, 2013; Herold, 2013c; Leonard, 2013).
  - The district will enhance its ability to remotely control tablet content. Apple’s new operating system will include functionality that will allow the district to lock down the devices and prevent student tampering (Herold, 2013c).
  - Students, educators, and parents and guardians will be held accountable for responsible technology use. LAUSD is emphasizing a cybersecurity awareness program, incorporating digital citizenship lessons into its curriculum, updating its discipline policies, and redoubling its efforts to get acknowledgement forms signed by parents (Herold, 2013c).
- The LAUSD School Board voted to launch a pilot test of laptops among high school students to evaluate whether they suit older students better than iPads. Laptops, instead of iPads, will be provided at seven of the district’s high schools. Further technology plans will depend on the outcome of the study (Blume, 2013b; Romo, 2013).

### **Fort Bend Independent School District (Texas)**

In Texas, the 70,000-student Fort Bend Independent School District (FBISD) discontinued its iPad initiative in early October 2013. The program, iAchieve, originally launched in February 2012 and combined the purchase of new iPads and wireless network upgrades with a new set of science lessons and simulated experiments for students in grades 4, 5, and 8. FBISD spent \$16 million in bond, grant, E-rate, and general operating funds. Over 6,000 iPads were delivered to 14 schools and equipment was installed to enhance wireless connectivity at 34 schools. After 19 months of problems, the program was finally cancelled: wireless coverage was spotty; digital lessons did not match district standards; and interactive tools never got built (Herold, 2013d; Leonard, 2013; Michels, 2013; Smiley, 2013).

Concerns about the program's implementation and costs were raised by School Board members and FBISD's new superintendent, leading the district to request a formal review of the iAchieve program. Key findings of the program review, conducted by the Gibson Consulting Group (2013), included:

- FBISD established an overly aggressive timeline for the design, testing, and implementation of iAchieve.
- The iAchieve program was hindered by not having a qualified, fully dedicated staff member with expertise in large-scale project management, curriculum development, and instructional technology to coordinate the various teams and contractors involved in the program.
- FBISD employed poor contract management practices. Project deliverables and payments did not match the contract requirements, and highly unrealistic timetables were negotiated and agreed to by both parties.
- The science curriculum was not consistent with FBISD standards. The methodology used when writing the science curricula, which emphasized specific scripts for teachers and did not follow the district's lesson-building standards, resulted in content that teachers and curriculum leaders felt was unusable without substantial changes.

### **Guilford County Schools (North Carolina)**

In the 72,500-student Guilford County Schools, officials announced in October 2013 that they have suspended the use of tablets and related equipment provided by digital device supplier Amplify. The technology initiative was funded through \$30 million in federal Race to the Top - District funds and \$5 million in supplemental grants. In May 2013, Amplify won an estimated \$14 million contract to supply 17,000 students in 18 Guilford County middle schools with its devices (Ferenstein, 2013; Herold, 2013d; Leonard, 2013; Smiley, 2013).

After only two months, 10% of the district's 15,000 devices had been returned to Amplify with broken screens. Schools also reported problems with approximately 2,000 Amplify-supplied cases. A student charger overheated, causing its plastic casing to melt. Guilford County Schools suspended the use of all Amplify tablets, cases, and keyboards as a safety precaution. All tablets were recovered and secured by district officials (Guilford County Schools, 2013; Spencer, 2013).

### **Baldwin Unified School District (Kansas)**

In February 2013, the Baldwin Unified School District (BUSD) School board approved a three-year lease-purchase agreement that provided the district's high school with 475 iPads at a cost to the district of over \$90,000 per year. Families are required to pay a \$50 fee if they want their children to take their iPads home at night. No fee is charged if students leave their iPads at school in the evening (Baldwin City Signal, 2013; Jones, 2013a; Jones, 2013b).

When BUSD's technology initiative began in the fall of 2013, the program encountered numerous difficulties that frustrated students, faculty, and administrators, such as:

- Wi-Fi connectivity problems prevented teachers and students from using the iPads as planned. Problems included iPads not communicating correctly with the Wi-Fi system and Wi-Fi access points rebooting when a certain number of iPads accessed them. Although the district doubled its Wi-Fi capacity in the high school last spring to accommodate the greater demand caused by the iPads, it did not anticipate the difficulties that would occur when 400 students moved from room to room and from one access point to another.
- The school's fiber network went down.
- My Big Campus, the Web-based social media platform used by the school, experienced inconsistent connectivity (Baldwin City Signal, 2013; Jones, 2013a).

The district corrected most of the difficulties:

- Additional Wi-Fi access points were added throughout the high school.
- Engineers with the firm that manufactures the school's wireless access points and the company that installed them determined that updated software downloaded before the start of the 2013-2014 school year was faulty. The older software, which worked fine, was re-installed.
- The crash of the school's fiber network was traced to squirrels chewing through a central line. The line was repaired.
- Staff from My Big Campus are working with the school to search for solutions to their platform's lack of consistent connectivity (Baldwin City Signal, 2013; Jones, 2013a).

### **Clark County School District (Nevada)**

The Clark County School District in Nevada uses a hybrid approach for its technology program. The school district developed a BYOD policy and installed Wi-Fi networks at all of its schools. The district also began implementation of a one-to-one initiative and provided devices for low-income students in order to address equity and access challenges. Clark County's BYOD program was implemented in 2013-2014 and allows the district's 311,000 students to use their own devices at school. In 2012-2013, Clark County launched an iPad initiative that distributed over 7,000 iPads to students and staff at five low-income middle schools. The district plans to further expand the iPad initiative (Boulton, 2013; Takahashi, 2013a).

Since the start of the iPad program, police have seen a spike in the number of iPad thefts, with thieves targeting school children carrying district-issued iPads to and from school. Eighty-three iPads were stolen from students during the 2012-2013 school year. The school district has attempted to address this problem by taking the following actions:

- Students have been taught to keep their iPads hidden while walking to and from school.
- Each iPad has a serial number and “Find My iPad” recovery app installed. The serial number is used by local pawn shops to identify stolen district property, and the recovery app uses GPS and Wi-Fi signals to pinpoint the location of missing iPads. The school district’s police department uses the coordinates to dispatch officers to the iPad’s location (Crowther, 2013; Takahashi, 2013b).

### **New York City Public Schools**

In April 2013, the New York City Department of Education began paying back wages to more than 30,000 special education teachers, school psychologists, social workers, and others after an arbitrator agreed with the United Federation of Teachers that many of its members had been improperly forced to work beyond their contractually mandated workday to implement a new online system that tracks and services special education students. The problems began during the 2009-2010 school year, when New York City’s public schools began implementing a new software program called SESIS (Special Education Student Information System). Problems included:

- The SESIS program was described as “rigid” and unreliable, regularly failing to process key information and documents.
- Due to insufficient school bandwidth and slow Internet connections, thousands of educators were required to log on to the system after hours at home.
- Teachers were not provided with adequate training or technical assistance for the new program.

As of October 2013, the New York City Department of Education had paid \$41 million to over 30,000 educators to reimburse them at their hourly rate for time spent using the SESIS system outside of their contractually mandated workday. According to Doug Levin, Executive Director of the State Educational Technology Directors Association, “This is the first time I am aware of a public school system being held accountable, in a legal manner and with real dollars attached, for the quality of its broadband infrastructure, software implementation, and training” (Herold, 2013e).

The SESIS system is still in place in New York City’s public schools and the Department of Education reminds principals that staff members should not use the system once the school day ends unless the principal has committed to pay for that time. The Department of Education has not provided principals with additional money to pay teachers for SESIS work and maintains that the system does not require work outside of the school day. According to Chalkbeat New York, a non-profit news organization covering educational efforts, most principals appear to be following these new guidelines. However, some teachers report that they still work on the SESIS system at home, at night, because they don’t have time to create and update Individual Education Plans or document their encounters with students with disabilities during the day. The system received several upgrades in October 2013 designed to make the interface more user-friendly, but some teachers claim that the changes were mostly cosmetic (Darville, 2013).

## **DISTRICTS THAT HAVE IMPLEMENTED SUCCESSFUL TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS**

The following school districts successfully introduced technology programs and have offered recommendations, based on their implementation experiences, to other districts that are considering implementation of similar initiatives.

### **Oak Hills Local School District (Ohio)**

Oak Hills Local School District in Cincinnati, Ohio implemented a BYOD program at its high school in the fall of 2010. Students at the district's elementary and middle schools are finishing a BYOD pilot before the program is offered to all students. Based on their successful rollout of the BYOD program, Oak Hills has provided a framework for other school districts to use when they implement their own BYOD program. The nine recommended implementation and support steps are as follows:

1. Engage the community to acquire the support and buy-in of all parties involved, including parents, students, staff, administrators, school board members, and business leaders.
2. Develop a core team of teachers and technology staff to work with students, parents, and administrators on a regular basis to explore new technologies, plan professional development, and address overall planning and troubleshooting.
3. Develop a properly planned and designed wireless and security infrastructure.
4. Develop software tools that can be used with multiple types of devices.
5. Develop a portal or a central location that collects information on Web-based software applications.
6. Develop an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) that specifies where and when devices can be used, as well as policies for social networking and messaging. AUPs should outline appropriate behavior in positive terms, outline inappropriate behaviors, and describe the procedures involved with following or not following the AUP.
7. Build a curriculum that encourages the use of technology.
8. Consider the types of devices students will be permitted to bring to school. The ideal computing device for school use is lightweight and sturdy; is in a protective carrying case; has several hours of battery power and easy options for recharging; has wireless capabilities and appropriate software; and has USB ports and other options for expansion.
9. Monitor usage of network resources, course and content pages, and apps in order to develop a better understanding of how students use their technology (Oak Hills Local School District, 2012).

### **Forsyth County Schools (Georgia)**

Forsyth County Schools initially piloted its BYOD program in 2010 with 40 teachers in seven schools. Now, BYOD is supported in every school within the 39,000-student district (Forsyth County Schools, 2013; Lepi, 2012; Roscorla, 2011). Forsyth County Schools offered the following recommendations to districts that are considering a BYOD program:

- Survey students about which devices they own.



- Set up a task force to examine equity issues for students whose families cannot afford a digital device or Internet access.
- Get buy-in from parents and community members.
- Require students to agree to the district's Acceptable Use Policy.
- Require students to take responsibility for maintenance of their own devices.
- Prior to full program implementation, test connectivity by inviting students to bring in their devices.
- To avoid security problems, set up a separate BYOD network that acts as a security wall for student records and other sensitive information.
- Conduct multiple professional development sessions to improve teachers' ability to incorporate digital resources into the classroom (Flanigan, 2013; Scholastic, 2013; Lepi, 2012).

Forsyth County Schools learned that implementing a BYOD program required more than just changing technology policies. The district also made significant changes to its curriculum to accommodate the new technology and invested in teacher training and infrastructure. Lessons learned by Forsyth County Schools include:

- Increased technology in the classroom required that the district train and hire teachers who were willing to play the role of facilitator and allow students to direct their own learning. These teachers then showed other educators how to facilitate lessons using instructional technology in the classroom (Lepi, 2012; Roscorla, 2011).
- School administrators reported that it has been a challenge to get all teachers on board but they are working hard to help them learn new ways of interacting with their students (Lepi, 2012).
- The district had to triple its network capacity to handle the surge in demand and ensure that each school's network operated with the most up-to-date protocols so the newest devices connected properly (Newcombe, 2013b).
- Students who did not bring their own devices to school actually had more access to school-owned technology once BYOD policies were in place because there was less competition for digital devices that were owned by the school (Newcombe, 2013b).
- The district learned the value of partnering with local businesses to increase Internet access outside of school grounds (Flanigan, 2013).

### **Mooresville Graded School District (North Carolina)**

Mooresville Graded School District (MGSD), located 20 miles north of Charlotte, started their digital conversion in 2007. Over 4,500 laptops have been distributed to every fourth through twelfth grade student and all licensed staff. Students and staff have access to the laptops 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for all 180 school days. Students take their laptops home daily to complete homework assignments and projects. According to *The New York Times*, MGSD has become the "de facto model of the digital school" (Farrell, 2013; Schwarz, 2012).

Veterans of the MGSD transition urge districts to consider the following 10 lessons before implementing their own digital initiatives:

1. Build enthusiasm among stakeholders in the schools and community. Before going digital, it is crucial to convince all stakeholders that they have a vested interest in the success of the conversion.
2. Form strategic alliances. To provide the resources needed for the digital conversion, Mooresville reached out to a wide variety of partners. For example:
  - Instructional technology experts from Apple and Discovery Education conducted professional development sessions that helped teachers and administrators implement curriculum changes.
  - To provide teachers with more intensive training, MGSD worked with a nearby university to offer three graduate degree tracks, including a master's program in instructional technology.
  - MGSD worked with the local cable company to provide discounted packages to families that did not have Internet access at home.
  - By working with town officials, MGSD secured agreements for free Wi-Fi in parks, at the library, and in all municipal buildings.
3. Thoroughly think through logistics. Mooresville officials created a clear set of guidelines and operating procedures prior to the rollout of the program. For example:
  - Students are required to charge their laptops at night so the devices are powered up for class time.
  - Students must use a school-issued backpack with a laptop sleeve, in addition to another protective case, when they transport their laptop between home and school in order to minimize damage to devices.
  - Students and their families are required to take introductory classes at the beginning of each year to ensure that they understand how to operate and care for their laptops.
  - A robust firewall keeps students from accessing content that lacks educational value.
  - Families pay \$50 per year to subsidize computer repairs, though the fee is waived for those who cannot afford it (about 18% of families).
4. Rethink fund allocation. MGSD funds 98% of the digital conversion costs through its operating budget, reallocating existing resources to help support the technology initiative.
5. Ease teachers into the program. Mooresville teachers received new laptops to take home over the winter break in the first year, with encouragement to “just try them out.” The district then piloted the program with high school English teachers before distributing laptops to all of the district’s teachers. Mooresville officials believe that the steady pace of the transition “was pivotal in convincing teachers that the digital conversion wasn’t just the latest whim.”

6. Empower and educate teachers through the provision of meaningful and sustained professional development.
7. Watch the transformation, as students become more engaged in their learning and teachers embrace technology in their classrooms.
8. Collect and use data wisely. District officials believe that the ability to track students' progress in real time has been a tremendous advantage for parents, teachers, and administrators.
9. Share experiences and best practices with educational colleagues around the country.
10. Continue to evolve. Mooresville teachers, curriculum experts, and technology staff are constantly vetting new interactive learning platforms and courseware. Dozens of vendors are regularly monitored to make sure the district receives the best prices and service (Farrell, 2013; Mooresville Graded School District, 2013).

### **SUMMARY**

Some districts, such as Los Angeles Unified School District and Guilford County Schools, have encountered difficulties with the implementation of their technology programs. Other districts, including Oak Hills Local School District in Ohio and Mooresville Graded School District in North Carolina, have had highly successful rollouts. This Information Capsule summarized these districts' experiences and the recommendations they have provided for other districts that are preparing to launch their own technology programs.