GADGETS GO TO SCHOOL:
The Benefits and Risks of BYOD (Bring Your Own Device)

BY PATRICIA BRUDER
From *NJEA Review*

BYOD (bring your own device) or BYOT (bring your own technology) gives students the option of borrowing electronic devices from the school or using their own equipment. The theory is that allowing students to use technology they are familiar with encourages participation in the classroom. The concerns are that students will be easily distracted and find ways around restrictions on banned and social networking sites.

Also, implementation would widen the already significant tech gap for lower income students. Gary Stenger author of "BYOD: Worst Idea of the 21st Century?" argued that it "enshrines inequity." The benefits to schools are obvious since more funding can be directed toward other technology like smartoards and networking. But what is the impact on the classroom teacher?

"Less school-wide bans on devices, more school climate initiatives!" on the cybullying.us website suggests that banning technology devices is fruitless and an "If I see it, you lose it" policy is best. The author lists these advantages of letting students use their own phones, tablets, etc.:

- Students can use their devices to conduct research.
- Using their cell phones, they can participate in audience response systems (clickers or live polling).

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• Teachers can make interactive assignments allowing students to use their cameras and/or photo- or video-sharing sites.

• Games like *Angry Birds* can be used to teach physics, math or other principles.

• Assignments can be stored in the cloud.

• Students can play background music (through ear buds) to focus and block out distraction.

• Students can Skype in other schools/countries.

Security

A network administrator can set up separate zones for different network uses (administrative, bookkeeping, grades, etc.) to avoid a drain by multiple devices on network.

Also, bandwidth can be limited at certain times of the day. Instead of having students store information on the network drives, create accounts for online (cloud) storage of student work such as Google Docs, Edmodo, net Trekker, or Dropbox.

Personal security for devices must also be assured. Make sure that if students are separated from their devices (switching classrooms, during gym and after-school sports) rooms are locked or devices are stored in secured cabinets.

A school policy for BYOD must be created and enforced.

Funding Individual Devices

Schools can find creative ways to bridge the tech divide. Lisa Nielson, "The Innovative Educator" (innovative educatorblogspot.com) suggests ideas:

• Outreach with local business for donations of upgraded equipment they might otherwise be discarding.

• Craigslist/Facebook—students can use social media to announce that they are in need of a device that someone might be throwing away.

• Establish a mentoring program. Mentors will often act as advocates, helping students acquire needed supplies.

• Tweet for Tech—use your social network to spread the word about need in your district.

• More schools are looking at leasing as an affordable alternative to purchasing; an upside is the ability to swap out equipment when the technology becomes obsolete.

• Community Tech Day—invite the community to come to your school and donate technology for children in need.

Rules for BYOD Use

The Cyberbullying Research Center has created a list of rules for students and their devices at school, which includes laptops, cell phones, personal data assistants, portable electronic games, digital audio players, digital cameras, and gaming wristwatches:

1. Students must have portable electronic devices turned off except during prescribed times.

2. Students may not use any device to photograph or record (either in audio or video format) another person on school property without that person's permission.

3. Any unauthorized use of portable electronic devices will lead to confiscation.

4. Any confiscated portable electronic device may be searched by parents or law enforcement as necessary.

5. Students who violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

Checklist for Getting Started

- Have you informed your tech department that there will be multiple outside devices on the network?
- Have you sent information to parents about the BYOD program?
- Do you have enough devices available via the district for students who don't own or forget to bring their device?
- Do you have the proper logins and passwords for guest devices?
- Have you tested the cloud-based applications you want to use on various devices?
- Do you have lesson plans accessible for substitutes, and have you tested your lessons?
- Have students/parents signed off on the acceptable use policy as well as a waiver for theft, loss, or damage to student-owned devices?

Some additional items of interest come from Pamela Livingston in "Bring Your Own Device—Questions to Consider":

- Visit a BYOD school or district.
- Determine how you will define BYOD. Will there be a minimum device or specification?
- Address logistics.
- Use the acronym LARK (legal, appropriate, responsible, kind) to evaluate your technology use.

Curriculum Planning for BYOD

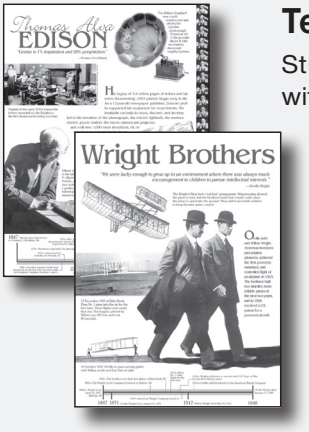
Once you're convinced that BYOD would work in your class-

room and you have permissions and guidelines in place, "How Would I Prepare to Teach a BYOD class?" on adifference.blogspot.com suggests:

- Create a class blog (for assignments, collaboration, sharing, and preservation of activities and a record of student growth).
- Create a "Hand-It-In form" that includes name, assignment, links to research sites, and assessment rubrics.
- Communicate via a private social media group (try Swaggle).
- Set up a group site for document sharing.
- Create class or assignment tags for easy searching.
- Create a diigo or Delicious account to aggregate links.
- Create a Flickr account.
- Create a list of apps you'd like every student in the class to have.
- Assign a different student to publish to the blog each week.

Pinterest is rapidly becoming a teacher's best online archive. The BYOT Pinterest Board is overflowing with policies, resources, security suggestions, infographics, videos, and case studies. ■

They showed us the light…
they taught us to fly…



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