

Plainville Citizen Op-Ed, January 2013

Technology Replacement Plan

Today the use of computers is not a luxury, but a necessity if we are to prepare students to compete in a global society. Students need to understand how to use technology as a tool for learning in an age where information is doubling at an increasing rate. In addition, the expectations of the new Common Core State Standards and the upcoming Smarter Balance assessments require that all students have access to up-to-date technology. The new state assessments will actually be taken on computers with some of the scoring occurring almost immediately so that teachers will have data on their students more quickly in order to make instructional decisions. Creating a system to update our technological resources on a regular basis will prevent a situation where we are forced to upgrade all computers in a single year in order to comply with the demands of the state testing system.

With the Plainville Community Schools' Technology Replacement Plan, most computers will be replaced on a six to seven year cycle. This will help to keep the year to year cost steady and allow us to prepare for future changes as they occur. Our computer replacement plan also includes upgrades to infrastructure such as networking, wireless and projectors. In addition, the plan documents how and where our technology is being used. Finally, the plan helps us make decisions about what we need relative to technology as a district, and not school by school. In Plainville, we look at technology on a district-wide level and make decisions based on the needs of all students and staff, while trying to mitigate any inequities. With this plan we can keep our technology consistent at all schools. By funding a year to year plan, the daily productivity and reliability of technology is maximized.

Over the past summer, as part of the district's Technology Replacement Plan "year one," many of the oldest desktop computers and the district firewall were replaced, and classroom interactive whiteboards were installed in all the classrooms at the Middle School. Next year, we will improve our district-wide wireless access to facilitate additional student use of their own devices for use in the classroom, as well as a pilot of a one-to-one computing model in Plainville. In 2014-2015, the Technology Replacement Plan will focus on upgrading the infrastructure at the Middle School and Wheeler School.

Plainville students begin to learn the power of technology as tools for learning in the elementary schools and continue to hone their Internet research skills and their abilities to create a variety of technology based projects to communicate the knowledge that they have acquired. Students use voice threads and podcasts to share their ideas verbally. They create brochures, presentations, newsletters, flyers, and pamphlets to share their learning with a print audience. Art students have even used technology to produce posters and other media, and students at all grade levels are creating their own videos to communicate information. With a district technology replacement plan, we are able to maximize the resources we provide for our students, enabling them to apply the 21st century skills that will prepare them for college and career success.