DCPS Technology Update: August 18, 2020

The DCPS Public Commitment

"DCPS is investing nearly $17 million in technology for learning at home this fall, and we commit to providing a device for any student who needs one. DCPS is growing its inventory to more than 45,000 devices for students in grades PK-12."
–Chancellor Ferebee e-mail, August 13, 2020

Areas of Concern/Risk

(1) **Communication of available technology resources to parents.** While DCPS has committed to providing a computer and Internet access to families who need it, we continue to encounter parents who are not aware of this commitment. Recent communication has been heavily reliant on e-mail or websites, although we expect more phone outreach as school staff reach out to families before school starts.

(2) **Distribution of newly ordered computers to families by the start of school 8/31.** Upon receiving newly ordered computers, DCPS will need to quickly execute on a sequence of actions to provide devices to families by the first day of school. We are less than two weeks away from the start of school.

(3) **IT support for families.** Details on DCPS's Family Call Center are not yet available. The extent to which the Call Center will be robust enough to address real-time IT issues and support students and families during distance learning is unclear.

(4) **Teacher technology.** Schools are on their own to fund and provide technology to teachers. Many teachers are relying on personal devices because their school cannot provide a reliable computer. We are not aware that DCPS has conducted a comprehensive survey or needs assessment of teacher technology for distance learning. At this point there appears to be no plan to centrally fund or support technology for teachers.

Information for Families

DCPS is continuing to update its technology plans, but this reflects our best understanding at this time.

- **Devices that schools will distribute include:**
  - Apple iPads for PreK
  - Microsoft Surface Go (also referred to as ELi devices, since these were purchased as part of DCPS's Empowered Learners initiative)
  - Lenovo and Dell laptops from existing individual school inventories (often purchased by individual schools, not by DCPS Central)
  - Mobile hotspots or LTE-enabled laptops. For families that indicated they do not have access to reliable Internet on the DCPS tech survey, DCPS will offer a mobile hotspot or an LTE-enabled laptop (cellular enabled with free Internet access).
- **Computer specification recommendations**
  - DCPS released recommendations on computer hardware specs, which parents can use to determine if their personal devices will be compatible with the DCPS learning platforms (Canvas and Office 365/Teams). Chromebooks and Kindle Fire Tablets will not work with all DCPS learning apps.
  - DCPS Technology Recommendations: https://45biv636w8lm1agg3ozqtqg1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/DCPS-Student-Tech-Recommendations-SY20-21-updated.pdf

- 🖥 **DCPS Tech Survey**
  - ○ The DCPS tech survey is still open. Families who cannot access the survey can call their school directly to request a computer or internet connectivity. Parents can retake the survey if, after reviewing the computer specs, they realize they need a DCPS-issued computer.
  - ○ DCPS Tech Survey link: dcps.tech/survey
  - ○ Many schools are also conducting their own tech surveys (in addition the official DCPS tech survey). We recommend school leaders continue to update the official DCPS tech survey so that there is an official, system-wide record of what families need.
- 🖥 **Device Distribution**
  - ○ Each school has its own schedule for tech pickup, so we recommend families contact their school directly. In some cases, distribution may be phased, with the school first releasing computers it has on hand and then doing a second distribution once it receives additional computers from DCPS.
- 🖥 **IT support**
  - ○ DCPS has stated: "The Family Call Center will launch this fall and cover logins/passwords or other technical issues with accessing learning platforms (i.e. Canvas, Teams) or DCPS-issued device support. More information about the call center is forthcoming."
- 🖥 **Online platforms**
  - ○ Canvas will serve as the standard learning management system for all schools. Microsoft Teams will be used for live class meetings. Students will be able to access Microsoft 365 (with apps like Word, Excel, and PowerPoint) with their DCPS login through Clever/Canvas or as a stand-alone app.

Upcoming

- ➤ The Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) has received funding to manage a free Internet program for a limited number of households. Details not yet public. (This is separate from the hotspots and LTE-enabled devices offered by DCPS.)
- ➤ SAVE THE DATE: Digital Equity's first Tech Talk will be September 8, 6 pm to 7 pm, on Zoom. Join us for an update on DCPS distance learning issues and provide input as we plan our work for the fall. Zoom registration to be provided at a later date.

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