Frequently Asked Questions

Chromebook Devices, Personal Devices and the Parent Purchase Plan

This document is intended to serve as a source of information about potential questions regarding the Chromebook device being used in Wolf Creek classrooms.

1. What is a Chromebook?
A Chromebook is an Internet-dependent laptop with a speedy start up time (less than 7 seconds in most cases) . Chromebooks are relatively lightweight and powered by Google's Chrome operating system (OS). Documents, presentations and projects are created and stored in Wolf Apps which is a WCPS-branded version of Google Apps. All documents, projects and presentations are stored in "the cloud" or on the internet. Because WCPS has created Wolf Apps, there are more stringent regulations around the security of WCPS work stored in the cloud. The most promising point about everything being saved on the Web is that students and teachers will have access to it from any computer with an internet connection. You can read more about Chromebooks at the following website:

http://www.digitaltrends.com/computing/what-is-a-chromebook-anyway/

2. What is the purpose of the Chromebook Purchase Program at our School?
During the past three years, several schools within Wolf Creek Public School Division have taken part in an action research project investigating the impact of Cloud Based Computing and the use of Google Apps (Wolf Apps) in the classroom. Our school would like to offer parents an opportunity to purchase a device at a reasonable cost that will allow our students to participate in the same learning experiences other students have been involved with across WCPS during the past three years. Our school staff understand that the world of the present and the future will require our students to be highly comfortable and competent with using many different types of hardware and software in order to work, play and live. In order to assist in preparing our students for a world in which technology is ever-present and constantly changing, we believe it is necessary to integrate these tools of modern literacy as much as possible into learning with various technology.

3. Does this mean that students will never use a pencil, pen, or book again in their classes?
Using technology such as Chromebooks and electronic devices does not mean that we never use conventional tools like paper, pens and print books. There will be times when using these traditional tools are the most appropriate way of meeting learning outcomes. *However,* enabling student access to our network with the Chromebooks and other devices will increase 21st Century skills, giving each student confidence and competence in using technology appropriately throughout their learning and development.

4. Does this mean that I have to buy my student a device to connect to the network?
Students are not required to purchase a device, however parents are strongly urged to consider participation in the parent-purchase program for Chromebook devices or consider providing another appropriate digital computing device. Wolf Creek has a parent-purchase program that is designed to make it easy, simple and cost effective for parents. At some of our grade levels a Chromebook will be supplied to students by the school to introduce them to how the Chromebook works to assist in their learning. Students are also permitted to bring in a personal device they have purchased elsewhere. When parents ask what device they should buy for their child, we do recommend a Chromebook. Students may want a different device as they grow into older grades.

5. Will there be technical issues when using these devices and will there be assistance for students?
One of the key outcomes of our action research project is to integrate a networked environment that supports cloud computing. As this is a research project, students and parents should be aware that from time to time, technical difficulties may arise. Each school has a staff member that will be assisting teachers and students with potential technical issues. As well, our technology department is always working behind the scenes to minimize any complications, as this is a reality of any project using new technology.

5. Will the Chromebook come home with my son or daughter?
Our intention is for students to start with using the Chromebooks at school. The Chromebooks will eventually be sent home, for parents who have purchased the device in full and once students have first demonstrated their ability to responsibly care for the Chromebooks at school. Students will still be able to access their online files from any other home computer until they bring home the Chromebook.

6. Can my child continue to bring their own personal laptop or device to school?
Students will still be able to bring their own devices to school. Students will use the Chromebooks and/or other personal devices during instructional time, as directed by the teacher. One of the reasons we recommend a Chromebook is due to the startup speed and connectivity to the wireless network is very efficient and easy to access on this type of device.

7. Will students use computers "too much" for schoolwork?
Part of the goal of this program is to reach an appropriate balance of traditional and digital learning tools. This balance will be the foundation of the technology savvy culture we hope to create, in terms of appropriate computer use at school and at home. Overall, we want to shift students' perceptions of computers from "toys" to "tools" that will serve them now and in the future. Many employment and postsecondary opportunities require an understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of technology use as it pertains to the types of devices we will be integrating into our learning experiences.

8. How can Chromebooks and other devices improve learning?
Chromebooks and other devices can serve as "virtual workspaces" for students, creating opportunities for research, composition, revision and communication that are fluid and exciting. With easier access to information and feedback, students can more easily "re-think" their original ideas and go further with their conceptual development. In general, this is the main reason most of us now use word processors instead of pencils or typewriters—we can express our ideas more fluidly, and then more easily revise and reshape them. Network capable devices also open up the opportunity for students to interact with a community of teachers and learners more broadly than we are able to accommodate at our school. We hope to see students continue using devices to think critically, create, communicate and access information as well as begin to establish a positive digital presence often expected by many employers and postsecondary institutions.

9. How has the school staff been involved with training, support and preparations regarding the development of this new initiative?
In preparation for personal devices entering our classroom, teachers throughout the school division have been involved in several professional development activities for the past several months to create and leverage purposeful use of these devices in the learning environment. We have also been working for several years on establishing a culture at at our school where students and staff alike understand what it means to practice positive digital citizenship and how the use of technology is a key support in the creation of excellent teaching and learning environments at our school.

10. Does this mean my student will spend their entire day on things like online games or Facebook instead of learning?
The teacher is still the architect of the learning environment and as such is responsible to ensure the learning environment uses digital tools appropriately. Students in grade levels such as K-7 do not fit into the age category established by Facebook (meaning students under the age of 13 are not permitted to have an account). This is true of several other online resources. Our school staff continue to investigate the educational uses of social networking but only insofar as their use supports learning objectives and are age appropriate. We will be outlining appropriate use of software and hardware with the students involved in this pilot project. Ultimately our goal will be to ensure students develop as responsible digital citizens.

11. I have a few other questions about this. Who should I talk to?
As always, your school principal is available to assist you with any questions you might have about this project. As a school, and as a part of WCPS, we are excited about the potential that various technology tools bring to our learning environments and we want you to be well informed of how we are building powerful excellent learning environments that leverage the tremendous capability of technology.

Please contact your school principal if you have any further questions.