



DeWitt Public Schools
Technology Committee Notes
March 19, 2008

I. Telephone System

The current voice mail system is 10 years old. The vendor has discontinued support. Incidents with the system require high price maintenance calls from our service provider. We have obtained a quote for a system upgrade. Since technologies have changed, the quote includes equipment needed to transition to IP based phones. Although we were hoping just to replace the voicemail server, we are finding compatible systems less available as well as costly in that when we do decide to transition to IP phones, a server compatible with our current system would have to be replaced. We are still evaluating the situation. Although the costs will fit within the current technology budget, there may be projects that are delayed if we elect to do this one. Phones and voice mail are a very high priority.

II. Video Distribution System

The system that allows us to re-broadcast cable TV stations to classrooms is aging as well. We routinely receive helpdesk calls on this system complaining about poor signal. Direct cable comes into 5 of 6 buildings, and so a temporary low cost solution may be to send cable directly from our provider to the classroom. We are working to develop a broadcast cart replacement. Due to the current situation with video distribution, as well as the new transition to digital video by the US government, there are many questions about direction for our video system. The tech department will begin gathering information about video usage in classrooms to answer such questions as:

How much live cable is actually used in classrooms?
What are the ways that video is used (e.g. DVD, Web streaming etc) and where can we spend our small \$\$ to best support classroom instruction?

III. Infinite Campus Progress

Infinite Campus purchasing has passed board approval. A technical planning team as well as a PD planning team have met to help steer the next steps. From this a core team has been selected, and will meet in April to set policy and programming standards for the roll out. Training for office staff will be at the start and end of summer. Training for instructional staff will be conducted by teacher coaches (1 per grade) who will be compensated for a half day session in the late summer. Teacher coaches will then train staff in a half day session just prior to the start of school.

IV. Cell Phone Use-Administrative Guidelines

Current Administrative Guidelines do not clearly state support for the use of electronic devices when used as instructional tools. The technology committee recommends that the following language be added to AG 5136:

ECD/ESD may be incorporated into lessons by teachers or may be used to transfer homework assignments between home and school. All such use will be approved in advance by school staff.

V. Technology Plan Updates

One building has turned in their Technology Integration Plan Update. They are due April 16th.

VI. Open Office Training and Tips

Recent feedback on the Open Office Newsletters that the technology department has been sending out has prompted us to change format and go to a weekly tip via e-mail. There will also be a training session on April 9th after school at the JH school. All staff are invited to attend, sign up via the web:

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/survey.zgi?p=WEB227KWVMCQCS>

VII. Blackboard

The Blackboard consortium will be moving the existing service to Genesee ISD in July. Training will be provided at Winding Brooke Conference Center in June (16-20) and August (4-8). See <http://onlineschool.edzone.net/> for details. The new system will be Enterprise class and will have a wide variety of new features.

VIII. Telecommunication Pole Tags

DPS is required by the telecommunication companies that own the poles that carries our networking fiber between buildings and to Ithaca to apply tags identifying our organization to the fiber. We are working in consortium with MMNET to meet this requirement. The process should be complete in the next few months.

IX. MACUL Report

5 staff members were able to attend this years Michigan Association of Computer Users in Learning conference in Grand Rapids during March. The reports on the conference have been very positive, including comments about Learnport and ideas on classroom implementation. As part of the MI Champions grant, a video was put together for the project by our tech department, and is currently being hosted on the MACUL social networking site for technology using educators:

<http://maculspace.ning.com/group/michampions>

X. Lab Software

DPS has one lab at the High School currently enabled with a program called LANSchool, which allows the teacher to observe student computers, to blank screens in the lab and to project their teacher screen out to the students for giving directions. The cost of the software has made it prohibitive to install on other computer labs. Recently a software called Italc, that has similar capabilities has become available. Italc is an Open Source software and so is free for the district to use. We are currently testing the tool and will likely implement it on lab computers over the summer. We are excited about the potential instructional opportunities this software will provide for our teachers and students.