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Strategic planning key to success of iPad implementation

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There seems to be no area of our personal or professional lives that technology has not impacted. In education, we know that if implemented strategically and carefully, technology can be a powerful tool for teaching and learning.

In the past three years, Glenbard District 87 has been preparing for this semester's rollout of 2,400 iPads to each student in freshman classes. We've answered several key questions as we navigate through the logistical, technical and educational landscape in ensuring a successful 1:1 mobile device rollout plan.

1. What are the goals of deploying iPads to all students?

There are two key purposes. The first purpose centers on providing convenience and efficiencies, including digital textbooks, communicating efficiently 24/7 with classmates and the instructor, and a paperless environment.

The second key goal is to better empower each student by enhancing the learning environment. Digital devices enable learning experiences that are inquiry-based and rich in content and allow students to gain knowledge and create products they otherwise couldn't.

2. What training is in place for students and teachers?

In the past two years, all instructors received an iPad with customized training. Much of this training centered on integrating the iPad into their daily instruction. All incoming freshmen received comprehensive training regarding the use of key learning apps; Schoology, Glenbard's learning management system; and overall applications and uses.

3. Is there a strong network infrastructure and maintenance support in place?

During the 2013-14 school year, the network was upgraded, with additional WiFi access points added to every classroom. In addition, we've partnered with Comcast and AT&T for Internet service, which allows for increased delivery speeds.

4. What happens if a student breaks or loses the iPad or it's stolen?

All of the iPads that are part of our rental program are factory-laser engraved and registered and activated with a mobile device management system. These iPads are covered under our insurance program. Also, a loaner device is available if a student's iPad rental is being repaired.

5. What about training students in appropriate digital citizenship?

Students have been trained on the responsible use of an iPad, including when it is appropriate to use the device in school, honoring others' rights while using mobile devices and other rules related to the use of mobile devices.

As we move forward with deploying iPads to freshmen in the coming years, we know careful planning and attention to detail are both important. We know that a strongly supported vision, effective technical infrastructure and support, structured professional development for staff and purposeful and rigorous student-centered learning experiences are critical to the ultimate success of our 1:1 iPad initiative. We are excited about how iPads will enhance learning, enable more creative, engaging instruction and contribute to students' academic success.