

Horry County Board of Education

Technology Committee

Technology Committee Meeting Minutes Monday, February 8, 2021

Board Members Present:

Shanda Allen, Technology Committee Chairwoman
David Cox, Technology Committee Member
Ray Winters, Technology Committee Member
Sherri Todd, Technology Committee Member
Howard Barnard

Ken Richardson, Board Chairman
Helen Smith
Chris Hardwick
Neil James

Staff Members Present:

Dr. Rick Maxey, Superintendent
Velna Allen
Mary Anderson
Lisa Bourcier
Daryl Brown
Margo Cox
John Gardner
Kandi Fleming

Kenneth Generette
James Edwards
Boone Myrick
Helen Smith
Russell Freeman

Media Present:

Unidentified

Others Present:

As required by SC Law 30-4-80, local news media were informed of the date, time, place, and agenda of this meeting. Copies of the agenda were posted at the District Office and distributed to schools for posting.

Review and Approval of Agenda

Mr. Winters moved to approve the agenda as presented. Ms. Shanda Allen seconded the motion. All voted in favor of approving the agenda. Motion passed.

Review and Approval of Minutes

Mr. Winters moved to accept the minutes of May 26, 2020, as presented. Ms. Shanda Allen seconded the motion; all voted in favor. Motion passed.

Technology Devices Update

Ms. Velna Allen updated the Committee on our current student enrollment and the number of devices issued. Our current K-12 enrollment is 43,447 students. We have issued 36,334 devices for our elementary, middle and high students. We also have a PDL Refresh Schedule. Every year we are looking at a refresh for either elementary, middle or high. We have found that our devices last about 4 years in the hands of our students. Four years is also what our vendors will guarantee. After 4 years the device is out of warranty. Our teachers as well as our students are on a refresh schedule. This year is the year we will select the device we will purchase for middle schools. Every 4 years, all teachers receive a new laptop. Our projectors also fall under the PDL Budget. All elementary and middle school projectors have been replaced with the Short Throw Projectors. We are in the process of replacing the high school projectors as well. To date we have replaced St. James High, Myrtle Beach High, Socastee High and AAST. We will complete the replacements for high schools by March 15, 2022.

Another topic is our Hot Spots. We continue to receive calls each day requesting Hot Spots. To date we have issued 613 Hot Spots. We partnered with HTC to assist families with free internet service. To date HTC has provided 260 families with free internet. In collaboration with HTC, we have provided 873 homes with access to internet. Our Technology is also responsible for our school security cameras, smartboards, phones for the entire district, monitoring our firewalls and content filtering as well as network services. Our technology team is currently working with our SOAR Academy to ensure that they are wired for all technology devices.

Discussion

Mr. Winters asked Ms. Allen to explain to the committee the process for obtaining the Hot Spots. Ms. Allen said that during the summer, we were able to work with the State Department of Education to order the Hot Spots. We were able to get AT&T, Verizon and Spectrum to obtain the Hot Spots. Guidelines were issued by the State Department that Hot Spots should only be issued to families that qualify. Once it is determined that a family qualifies, the parent is required to sign a form that they are responsible for the Hot Spot and will use it for educational purposes only. Ms. Allen turned the floor to Ms. Edi Cox to update the committee on the Refresh Cycle.

Refresh Cycle Update

Ms. Edi Cox updated the committee on the four-year refresh cycle for each grade level. This year is the refresh cycle for middle schools. Initially our first devices were issued to our middle schools as part of our Personalized Learning Initiative in 2013. They were refreshed in 2017-18. A Technology Committee was formed in 2013 that allowed us to give feedback from stakeholders. We would invite students, teachers and administrators to come into the room to work with the devices on display and provide input on their thoughts. We used their input along with other data to make decisions on how to move forward with a refresh. This year we ask middle schools to select two students representing their school in grade 6 and 7, two teachers, one being their Teacher of the Year, and one from their 6 and 7th grade Core Content Classes. We also included the Instructional Coach and Principal. On January 21st and 22nd, we had to rethink the device selection because of the need to meet virtually. Our team organized 6 on-line presentations with each of our vendors, Dell and Apple. After the presentations each group participated in a survey giving them opportunity to share their thoughts. The three devices on the table this year that were under the \$600 price point were the 8th Generation iPad, that includes 128 gigabytes, the Dell Chromebook 11, with 32 gigabytes and Dell Latitude 3190 2 in 1 laptop, with 128 gigabytes. After reviewing comments from each stakeholder groups as well as historical data, previous cost associated, and breakage rate. We also met with Superintendents Executive Cabinet. We went back to follow up with Middle School Principals as well as the Executive Director for Middle Schools. After

meeting with these groups, it is our recommendation that the device to move forward with for the 2021-22 school year would be the Dell Latitude. Ms. Cox turned the floor back to Ms. Allen for possible discussion and questions.

Discussion

Mr. Winters stated that his concern with the Dell Latitude is that it will not keep a charge for the entire day. Mr. Winters was also concerned that the Latitude does not include enough ram and is not sufficient for today's needs. He also stated that the Latitude would need to be a minimum of 16 ram and would be nice if it were 32, but I realized that 32 may put it out of our budget. Mr. Winters said he was ok with the Latitude as long those conditions are met; however, even with the complaints about the Chromebook, there are options out there that would meet the needs as well. Ms. Cox said the only difference between the new Latitude and current one is that the new one has a higher processing speed, and it includes an upgraded camera, while the current one only has one camera. Mr. Barnard asked about the cost. Ms. Cox stated that each device is in the same ballpark and under the \$600 price point. Missy Johnson said that one of the options that Dell gave us was to get an extra warranty that would allow us to get replacement batteries for those that went out at the end of 3 years. Mr. Richardson said if we decide to go with Dell, we need to be prepared to answer why, when students preferred the iPad. Mr. Winters stated that it was because of the breakage with iPads from carrying them in their backpack and the cost for repair. Mr. Richardson ask how much we need to spend. Missy Johnson said the device would be around \$600 and we currently have 13,000 middle school students. Ms. Shanda Allen asked how soon we would need to put this on the agenda for approval. Ms. Velna stated that the committee is the one that makes the decision for approval. In reviewing past minutes, it is only recommended that we share the information with the Board of Education. We only need to get the Board's approval if we are going outside of the budget. If the Technology Committee approves the recommendation, it would be presented to the Board of Education as information only. Ms. Allen also stated that we need to order as soon as possible. Due to the pandemic, recent orders were taking longer to arrive. Mr. Winters ask what we would do with the existing devices. Ms. Velna Allen stated that we do not have a plan for the Chromebooks at this time. Once the old ones are returned to the district technology department, we will determine how many devices are functioning. At that time, we will develop a plan for them. Ms. Velna Allen noted that we will share that information with the Technology Committee once a plan has been developed. Mr. Winters suggested that we allow elementary schools to utilize some of the old Chromebooks, if needed, for testing purposes.

Shanda Allen asked if the teachers would also receive a new device. Ms. Velna Allen shared that all middle school teachers and assistant principals will receive a new device.

Mr. Winters made the motion to allow technology committee to inquire if additional purchasing additional ram met with our price range and if not to proceed as is. Mr. Barnard seconded the motion.

Adjourn

Motion was moved to adjourn and met with a second; all voted in favor. The motion was met with a Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Margo Cox
Administrative Asst. – Student Services

Approved: _____