



FAQ on Learning, Teaching, and Working with Technology September 2009

What is the District's vision?

To support learning, teaching and working in West Vancouver School District through the use of appropriate technologies

Strategies:

- Increase access and opportunities for students
- Provide reliable, efficient systems for employees to support their work
- Provide every classroom with the potential to become a blended classroom (both in the physical building setting, and through the web-based portal)
- Support access to information and communication for all partners and the broader community
 - o Supporting this vision means that, in the past two years, the District has:
 - Provided a strong infrastructure (i.e. bandwidth speed, server capacity)
 - Provided hardware for staff and for selected student areas (i.e. library, Learning Support, ESL)
 - Supported hardware purchase for a student lab at each elementary and secondary
 - Provided core software package (District-funded software licensing for all students and staff including applications such as MSOffice, Inspiration, online research databases, anti-virus, etc.)
 - Developed the portal application (Sharepoint/Scholaris) as a web-space for teaching, learning, and working (*inside45* internal portal), as well as for communication with parents and community (*new external school sites will be launched for September 2009*).

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What is the 3-year hardware replacement cycle?

In 2007 the District developed a 3-year plan to upgrade and/or replace outdated computers for staff, libraries and Learning Support areas. At the same time, the District committed to providing financial assistance to schools for the replacement of their student lab between 2007 and 2010, starting at the sites with the oldest hardware. This replacement cycle is almost complete.

Will student-use computers need to be replaced every 3 years?

No. New computers feature improvements in memory and speed from those purchased 8 years ago. We anticipate that we will have reliable performance on these computers for 4-5 years. We hope that the computers purchased in 2007-08 will be in place until 2011 or 2012, and perhaps longer.

Each year we will assess the computers' health and make recommendations to a school site, so that planning can occur well in advance of the need for replacement.

(For comparison purposes, please note that the original laptop carts at Hollyburn and Ridgeview schools are 5 years old and we anticipate they will be fine for the upcoming 2009-10 year, as well.)

Are student-use computers purchased on a lease agreement?

No. This is because the terms of a lease require that at the end of a lease all computers must be removed, regardless of whether replacement computers have been purchased.

(Note: Some District staff computers and library/Learning Support computers were purchased by the District, on a lease agreement, in order to secure ongoing financing for this project.)

Are PACs able to use gaming funds for the purchase of computers?

No. The Ministry of Housing and Social Development administers the PAC and DPAC Direct Access Program Grants. (<http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/gaming/grants/pacdpac.htm>)

In the 2008-09 school year the Ministry revised the policy to clarify that the grants are only to be used to enhance extracurricular opportunities for students. The use of computers in schools is related to curriculum purposes (e.g. supporting research in Social Studies), and therefore the funds are not available for these purchases.

Explain the cost-sharing process between the District and schools.

For this initial 3-year renewal cycle, the District is contributing 1/3 of the cost of a lab replacement, to a maximum of \$10,000.00. Schools pay the other 2/3 of the total cost of replacement. For most schools the PACs are contributing some or all of the 2/3 costs.

Prior to 2007, schools (and PACs primarily) were paying the total cost of any hardware purchases for students *without any* District financial contribution. PACs often took the lead in wanting to improve the hardware at the school site. In the past two years the District has tried to commit monies to ensure some equitable access to technology at schools. This recent District financial commitment has assisted schools and PACs in upgrading outdated hardware.

Following the completion of this initial 3-year replacement cycle in 2010, the District will consider future replacement timelines and its financial contribution.

What happens if the PAC cannot raise the funds?

Up to now, this situation has not occurred. The 3-year replacement cycle is almost completed and every school has taken advantage of the District's contribution of funding in order to replace student computers. As well, schools have not only replaced old hardware, but have *increased* their hardware inventory by purchasing additional computers beyond the existing school labs.

Many PACs already had an established fund where they set aside annual contributions for technology replacement. This allowed them to amortize their contributions over several years for these purchases.

How is the District selecting hardware models and determining costs?

The District negotiates with vendors to secure the best pricing available in an education market. This is an ongoing process and model/pricing often fluctuates due to market costs and availability. For the summer 2009 purchases the District was able to secure a pricing reduction over the previous year's levels, resulting in savings for schools, PACs and the District.

Often the question is asked as to why computers purchased through the district cost more than purchases through a retail provider. In the education setting the District has different requirements than do home users, including minimal tolerance for 'down time' by the multiple school users. The District also has to consider the total cost of ownership (TCO) which is the 'hidden' cost associated with installing the computer, 'imaging' it with software, ensuring internet access/speed, and providing ongoing maintenance and support. This is more easily enabled by having comprehensive equipment and software standards in place.

In selecting hardware, these are some of the considerations:

- Platform (primarily PC, with some stand-alone MAC installations)
- Reliability
- Warranty and maintenance provisions
- 'Value-added' training and support for District Information Services staff

Do elementary and secondary students require the same model of hardware?

Both elementary and secondary computers are installed with similar software and require the same level of access to internet browsers. For some of the Technology Education courses at secondary, there are additional requirements, but overall the requirements for speed and reliability are the same on all student computers.

There can be additional costs incurred for 'customizing' hardware and often it is more cost-effective to purchase a single model of computer that has preset specifications.

What is the installation process and timelines?

Schools and the District place the larger hardware orders in June, following adoption of the budget and compilation of orders. The District receives hardware over the summer, as it is available from the vendor. Upon arrival, the Information Services staff 'images' the machines, and then does final setup onsite at the schools, which is why hardware may arrive at a school but not be completely ready to use immediately.

Priority order for installation has been:

- Student computer labs at schools according to the initial replacement cycle
- Staff computers in replacement cycle
- Other hardware purchase orders (including those for additional student computers)

Installation occurs in the summer, and from October onward. During September the Information Services staff needs to be available to assist with new staff and student setup, and to trouble-shoot problems. We have a small Information Services staff team, and the installation of hardware is just one of many tasks they have to perform over the summer. They are also required to take some holiday time during the summer school closure.

What are the District guidelines around the purchase of printers?

All inquiries around equipment purchases should be directed to our Purchasing Manager through the school Principals.

As part of an effort to reduce the District's carbon footprint, we are encouraging greater use by teachers and students of digital documents and web-based presentations rather than photocopying. The District has supported schools in planning for access to printers at every site, and has made a financial contribution to this, wherever the technology infrastructure renewal caused printers to become obsolete.

As well, the District has a contract with Xerox that provides each site with one or more copiers that allow for secured, networked printing access by staff. We are actively discouraging an increase in printers at our sites.

What are the District guidelines around the purchase of other new technologies?

Given limited resources in terms of personnel, time, and monies available, the District has chosen to focus its attention on a few key areas. The priority right now is to maximize the opportunities that the new portal offers for students and staff in the areas of learning and teaching, and for communication with and among parents.

New tools and technologies will constantly be emerging and will be considered within the context of the vision and the available resources.

What access do parents have to the portal? What support is available to PACs for developing their website information?

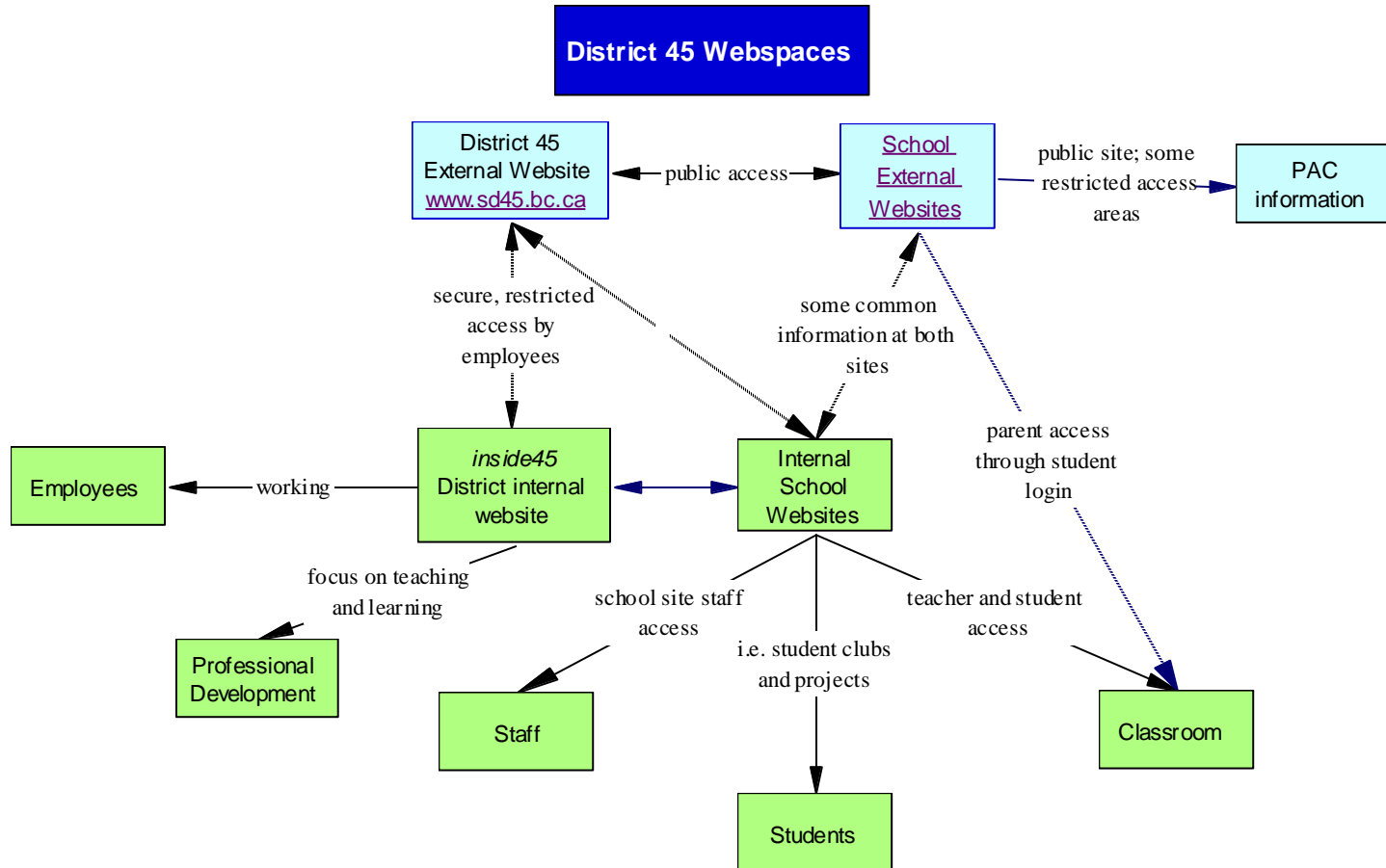
West Vancouver School District has developed new internal and public school sites. The District Principal of Technology and Innovation has provided training and support to representatives from each PAC in order to create the parent information space at each school. As the pages are part of the school site, the Principals are responsible for reviewing and approving content posted to these sites.

Parent access to the portal will primarily be through the school public sites for the purposes of communication around school and PAC initiatives. If a student is part of a secure classroom teaching portal space, parents are encouraged to view the space with their child, using the student login and password.

What challenges and opportunities are we considering at the District level?

- To respond to increased demand from end users for support and in-service from both an educational and teaching perspective, and a 'business' perspective
- To sustain the District financial commitment to the hardware replacement cycle
- To respond to increased requests for new hardware installation and support beyond the planned replacement cycle
- To communicate plan updates to all stakeholders

Map of District Websites and Purposes



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