



Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)...

It's become a buzz phrase in schools across the country. But what does it really mean? How will it affect instruction? And most importantly, as Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) moves in this direction, what do students, parents, and teachers need to know about this topic?

In Gwinnett, we see students using their own technology more and more as part of the teaching and learning process. Together, teachers and students are learning how to best integrate a variety of personal technology devices (cell phones, tablets, laptops, e-readers, etc.) into the classroom. We also are learning which devices are “content-friendly,” as recognized platforms can vary greatly.

The Wi-Fi capabilities at several GCPS elementary schools and all Gwinnett middle and high schools are ready to support BYOD participation by students. Schools will first develop their instructional plans, and then can allow students and teachers to use their personal devices to access the Internet through the GCPS network for instructional purposes.

When it comes to questions about BYOD, they generally revolve around four issues: access; theft, loss, or damage; associated fees; and what types of devices can be used.

Access

Filtered access to the Internet at school will be provided via the GCPS network. To be granted access, students must confirm they accept the terms and conditions of Gwinnett County Public Schools' Responsible Use Policy (RUP). By accepting these terms and conditions, users agree to uphold the contents of the RUP as well as the Student Code of Conduct on their own student-owned devices while on school district property. Additionally, in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), GCPS will filter all content for users connected to the GCPS network at school.

Theft, Loss, or Damage

The owner of the device is responsible for ensuring that the device is safe and secure. GCPS and employees of GCPS are not liable or responsible for any theft, damage, or loss of any non-district device or the information on any such device.

Texting Fees

GCPS will offer Wi-Fi Internet access through the GCPS network without fees to BYOD participants. However, if a student chooses to use other functions or features on his or her device, standard device fees may be billed by the student's provider. GCPS is not responsible for any fees associated with using any personal technology devices. All fees and charges related to texting or Internet use on any student-owned device are the sole responsibility of the owner.

Device Tips to Optimize the BYOD Initiative

Screen Size: 9.5 inches or greater is considered optimal; 7 inches or greater is adequate for many instructional activities

Operating System (OS): Android 3.x or higher, iOS 4 or higher, Windows 7 or higher
(The operating system should be the version provided by the manufacturer.)

Connectivity: When used at school, the device will connect using GCPS Wi-Fi, which allows Internet access only.

Browser: The browsers listed below are typically supported. Due to the wide variance of digital materials available for access, occasional incompatibilities may be encountered.
Microsoft Internet Explorer minimum 6.0 to 8.0
Mozilla Firefox, minimum 2.0
Google Chrome, all versions
Apple Safari, minimum 2.0

Plug-ins: Applications have different plug-in requirements which affect device usability. Much of the available educational digital content requires Flash which is not available on an iOS device.

Schools coming on board with BYOD will communicate with parents about instructional uses of devices and associated device specifications as the device landscape is vast and changing constantly. To date, the following devices have been tested for the GCPS environment:

Tablets: iPad 2 or higher, Samsung Galaxy Tab, Samsung A0x, Kindle Fire, Nook Color, Lenovo Tablet 2

Laptops: Windows 7 platform

BYOD FAQs for Students

Do I need anti-virus software?

Yes. Students will need to update their anti-virus software before bringing their device(s) onto school property.

How will I connect or log on to the Internet?

Make certain that your device is charged and that you are within the range of a GCPS Wi-Fi access point. You can connect to the Internet by logging on to the GCPS network just as you would any other wireless network by following the directions in your device's owner manual. You will be prompted to enter your school login code and password. Once they have been authenticated, you will receive filtered access to the Internet under Responsible Use Policy (RUP) guidelines.

If I cannot get connected to the GCPS network, who do I call?

Support for student-owned devices is the responsibility of the owner. Classmates also may be able to help. Due to other responsibilities, GCPS staff may not be able to assist, and cannot be responsible for technical issues. Always consult the owner's manual for your device, or the "Help" menu for directions on how to access a wireless network.

Can I access Facebook on my device?

Connectivity to the wireless network is just like connecting to the district network when it comes to sites you can access. It is important to remember that even though you are using your personal technology, you must comply with GCPS' guidelines and the Responsible Use Policy.

Can I use my device in all my classes?

That is up to the teacher of each of your classes, and/or the school's plan for use.

Can I print from my device to school printers?

At this time, there is no printing allowed from student-owned devices, though this option may be added in the future. If you need to print, it is recommended that you e-mail the document to yourself or save it on a flash drive, log on to a district-owned device to retrieve, and print.

Can I save my work to the school network?

Students in the Archer, Berkmar, Duluth, North Gwinnett, and Shiloh clusters have the ability to upload files into their eCLASS course pages, as part of the eCLASS pilot. Students in non-pilot schools do not yet have storage space through the GCPS Wi-Fi network for personally owned devices. If these students have a need to have digital materials, they should use their device

storage options or a personal Internet storage space. Teachers should consider these limitations when making assignments in a BYOD environment. In the future, as a part of eCLASS, GCPS-supported storage will be available.

What do I do if my device is damaged or stolen?

The owner is responsible for keeping his or her personal technology safe and secure. Any time there is theft or damage, you should notify your teacher or the administration. GCPS and employees of GCPS are not liable or responsible for any theft, damage, or loss of any non-district device or the information on any such device.

Will I be able to charge my device at school?

Presently, no facilities are dedicated to charging personal devices, with a limited number of outlets available in any given space. Students should make it a point to charge their technology prior to coming to school each day.

I have a data plan from an outside provider on my device that allows Internet access without using the GCPS network. Is that allowable?

Students should not access the Internet through any cellular data provider while on school premises. BYOD use is allowable only on the GCPS network.

Am I still held accountable for following the district's Responsible Use Policy even though this is my own personal device?

Yes. RUP is in effect even when you are using your own technology. Each time you attempt to access the network at school or at a school event, you are expected to abide by the Terms and Conditions of GCPS' RUP. Violating the Terms and Conditions of the RUP would be a Student Code of Conduct violation and would be dealt with by school administration.

GCPS looks forward to the educational opportunities that BYOD will bring to students and staff, and understands that there will be questions, as well as challenges, as we move forward. To learn more about this initiative and how it may be implemented at your school, contact your local school technology coordinator.

