

December 5, 2014

Dear Parents and Guardians of Jay M. Robinson Middle School Students:

I have exciting news for our students! Very soon each of our students will each be issued a Chromebook (laptop computer).  Only a few middle schools in CMS have been given this opportunity as an application process was completed. We were accepted! The anticipation of our teachers and staff has been building over the last several weeks while planning and preparation has been underway.  Jay M. Robinson Middle School teachers and I would like to invite you to attend an informational meeting on **December 9, 2014** at Robinson to discuss the 1:1 (chromebook:student) roll-out.  We will host two sessions this day; you choose which one you would like to attend, either **9:00 AM or 6:00 PM** (both will be in our cafeteria).

We are very excited to have been afforded this opportunity to provide students with an additional resource to gain the necessary skill set of the 21st century.  With this great opportunity also comes a great responsibility and as such Jay M. Robinson Middle School teachers and I have been working diligently to create appropriate expectations, procedures, and trainings for the release and use of these devices.  Prior to releasing the devices to students, we want to discuss the benefits, protocols, and responsibilities with you, our parents.

Students have been learning computer skills throughout their experience at Jay M. Robinson, and we have been functioning under a BYOT agreement for several years.  The integration of computer use into instruction will expand to new levels this year with the advent of our 1:1 initiative.   In accordance with our planning, it is imperative that students receive specific training on the appropriate use and handling of the Chromebooks.  This training will be conducted in classes and during homeroom over the next few weeks.

As parents you need to be informed and confident about the growing use of technology with students at our school.  We hope you accept this invitation to come and hear about the initiative, to receive answers to any questions you may have, and to share the excitement about the opportunities these devices will allow for our students.

Did I mention the device is at no cost to you? Please share your excitement with us on December 9!

Sincerely,

Mike Miliote

Principal

Jay M. Robinson Middle School

**Information and Recommendations to JMR Parents**

**Accessibility:**

Chromebooks will remain at school at all times. Students will pick up their device during homeroom each day and will return it to their 4th block teacher.

**Additional Technology:**

Students will still have the opportunity to bring their ipads, smartphones, Nooks, Kindles, etc. to school, if they wish. Our BYOT policy will remain in effect.

**Back Packs:**

Parents are encouraged to send their child to school with a traditional back pack which has two shoulder straps. We will be permitting students to move throughout the building with back packs in order to prevent damage to the Chromebooks. Students will not be allowed to carry their Chromebooks in their hands during class changes.

**Chromebook Student/Parent Agreement Forms (District & JMR):**

Both forms need to be signed by the student and parent/guardian and returned to school before a device is assigned.

**Ear Buds:**

Students are asked to bring ear buds to school daily. This will eliminate any possible distractions with noise levels.

**Early Dismissal:**

Your child will follow the same early dismissal process. However, they will be expected to turn in their Chromebook to the Front Office before they leave campus.

**CMS Digital Learning Initiative**

Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools is committed to meeting Goal 1 of Strategic Plan 2018, which calls upon us to “Maximize academic achievement in a personalized 21st-century learning environment for every child to graduate college- and career-ready.”  This commitment will require new strategies to inspire and nurture learning, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship through technology and strategic school redesign. [Strategic Plan 2018](http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/mediaroom/strategicplan2018/Pages/StrategicPlan2018.aspx) has established the expectation that by 2018 all CMS students will be able to access the worldwide classroom using technology tools to foster learning everywhere, all the time.

**Why CMS has begun with middle schools?**For several years, CMS has used a digital techbook in middle schools for science and social studies.  Jay M. Robinson has received several carts of mobile learning devices to support the curriculum, so teachers have built a familiarity with teaching using mobile devices.  Embedded professional learning is provided by professional development facilitators at each middle school.

**How was Jay M. Robinson selected?**

A rigorous selection process focusing on seven key readiness factors were examined to guide schools to a successful Digital Learning implementation.

1. Leadership Readiness: Principal promotes a culture of technology integration, has clear purpose and vision for the use of technology in learning.
2. Teacher Readiness:  Teachers have received training on best practices in using tech tools to stretch learning. Faculty assessments indicate strong readiness.
3. Student Readiness:  Students are taught how to use tech tools to extend their learning as well as digital citizenship.
4. Hardware Readiness: Process to manage existing devices is robust and school reported inventory is accurate and sufficient to support a Digital Learning Early Adopter school.
5. Tech Support Readiness:  School identifies resources to support a shift to learning and teaching with a device for each student.
6. Tech Integration Readiness:  Students actively use devices in core subject areas for assignments, assessments and project research.
7. Collaboration Readiness:  Students are actively encouraged to partner online to share information, work together to complete online assignments.

**Why Digital Learning?**

Technology in the form of devices, and internet connectivity is embedded in nearly all career paths in the 21st Century.  State and National Learning Standards are requiring students to be agile learners capable of using digital tools for communicating, collaborating, critically thinking and creating.  But most importantly, digital learning has the power to motivate learners and provide learning environments that:

* enhance student engagement
* provide personalization
* extend learning time
* provide equitable access to learning resources
* prepares students for college and careers

**How is the Digital Learning Initiative funded?**

The first phase of the Digital Learning Conversion initiative has been funded primarily by one-time Race To The Top Funds. Additional schools will join the digital learning initiative as technology funds are available.

**Why Chromebooks?**

In the fall of 2013, CMS equipped all middle grade schools with 60 to 240 Chromebooks to deliver Discovery Education’s Techbook for Social Studies and Science classes.  These Chromebooks not only provided students access to the virtual and interactive textbook resources, but they also gave students access to limitless file storage in Google Drive and a modern productivity suite of services in Google Apps for Education. The Chromebooks also required minimal technical support, stood up to daily student use, and were cost effective. For these reasons, it was decided that Chromebooks are a suitable computing device for middle grade students.

**How are teachers being prepared?**

Principals selected teams of three to four school leaders who have participated in four days of engaging professional development in the content strands of Classroom Management and Best Practices, Digital Citizenship, Blended Learning, and Google Apps for Education. The team has planned and is facilitating school-based PD with the assistance of a district provided instructional technology specialists. This model has allowed Jay M. Robinson Middle School to differentiate the professional development based on the needs of the individual school staff members.

**Will students take the devices home?**

Initially, CMS will focus on establishing and reinforcing a standard of care and appropriate use for devices. CMS believes this is a critical step to proactively reduce the number of incidents related to damages, theft and misuse. After the initial phase is complete, data and recommendations from each school will be taken into account when assessing whether devices will be released for home use.

**How will damages to devices be handled? What is the cost to students/guardians?**

Jay M. Robinson will maintain a device use policy. Students are governed by the district’s Acceptable Use Agreement. Parent/Guardians are asked to sign the school specific policy before devices are released to the student. Policies include cost of device if damaged and disciplinary procedures for misuse.

**What are the consequences for device misuse? How will disciplinary actions be handled?**

Jay M. Robinson will address issues relating to device misuse.  In the case of damage, an administrator will determine if the damage is an accident or negligence.  In the case of negligence, the school will ask student’s family to address replacement.

**What is a Chromebook?**

A Chromebook is a laptop computer using a Google operating system.  CMS uses Chromebooks in part due to cost and in part, due to extensive services provided in Google Apps for Education, free to students. [Learn more about Chromebooks](http://www.google.com/chrome/devices/features/): http://www.google.com/chrome/devices/features/

**What happens when students move to high school?**

The Digital Learning Conversion for 2014-15 is in middle grades.  High schools allow students to bring their own devices much like we have at Jay M. Robinson.

**Can students bring their own technology?**

Yes, Jay M. Robinson Middle School provides wireless access and students are bringing many different types of devices such as smart phones, tablets, laptops, and e-readers.  CMS follows the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium assessment device guidelines as a minimum standard (see chart on the next page for specifications) and encourages parents to use these specifications.

**Is Google Apps for Education safe? Does Google sell my students’ data?**

Google’s explanation of their Data Policies are very clear, they are committed to being [transparent](http://www.google.com/edu/trust/#a-commitment-to-transparency) about [providing no advertisements](http://www.google.com/edu/trust/#no-ads-in-google-apps-for-education-services-period) in their Google Apps for Education services and [Google Apps for Education users own their data, not Google](http://www.google.com/edu/trust/#data-ownership-and-management). They also provide [world leading security](https://support.google.com/googleforwork/answer/6056693) technology and practices. (<http://www.google.com/edu/trust/>)

**Why Middle Grades?**

Research has shown that Middle Grade students may experience a loss of proficiency when transitioning from the elementary to middle grade levels. Devices have been strategically placed in middle schools to address these challenges with a focus on two key levers: increasing student engagement and providing opportunities to extend the learning through the flexible use of devices.

**Learning Beyond School**

CMS provides adaptive software to extend learning beyond the classroom, free for students.  Being engaged in interactive tools helps strengthen math and reading skills.  Software that is adaptive stretches learners because as students answer correctly, the questions become more difficult.  Conversely, when students miss answers, questions become easier, so the learning experience is personalized for each student.  These tools can be used anytime, anywhere there is connectivity.

CMS students in grades K-8 can use DreamBox Math. Students in grades 6, 7, 8 also can use Compass Odyssey Math.  Students in grades K-5 have access to Reading A to Z (RAZ Kids), which provides over 1,000 books, matched to students’ reading levels.  Compass Odyssey software provides support for reading and language arts skills for students in grades K-8.  Students’ log in information are shared at their schools. The following chart lists current standards for help in choosing a device for school use.

[Smarter Balanced Device Requirements](http://www.smarterbalanced.org/test-taking-devices-approved-secure-browsers/) (http://www.smarterbalanced.org/test-taking-devices-approved-secure-browsers/?\_sm\_au\_=iVVJRJQJVSRPskFP)