BYOD at WCS

Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) at WCS

Technology is playing an increasingly large role in our lives and education is no exception. Schools across the world are purchasing more and more computers in order to take advantage of online resources and to teach students the skills they need to be successful in the 21st century. A current trend in education is to break away from traditional computer labs of shared desktop computers and to move instead to each student having and using their own laptop. This type of program is known as "one-to-one" (often written as "1:1"). One way to implement a 1:1 program is for schools to purchase and lease/loan a device to each of their students. Another way to run a 1:1 program is to expect each student to bring their own device to school with them each day. This is known as "Bring Your Own Device" (often shortened to "BYOD").

Whitinsville Christian Middle School and High School both have a BYOD requirement.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does WCS have a BYOD Requirement?

In addition to the benefits of preparing students for an increasingly high-tech world, research shows that a well-run, well-supported 1:1 program can bring about academic gains, particularly in math and writing. Students in 1:1 programs also show a higher level of interest and engagement. However, an even bigger issue for WCS is that the need for computers is increasing and we've run out of room. The computer lab space we currently have can no longer accommodate the number of reservation requests and WCS does not have space for more labs. After careful consideration of all the options we decided that the best solution is a 1:1 program.

Why do parents have to supply the device, why not the school?

While there are some advantages to a school-administered 1:1 program, a Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD) program provides parents and students much greater flexibility and affordability. Surveys showed that many of our students already had devices they could use at school and would not need to purchase new ones. Furthermore students are more likely to become proficient using their own device and

they are more likely to treat their own device with care. Also, personal devices will not need to be returned at the end of the school day or the school year. Lastly, the expense of a school-administered program (purchasing hundreds of laptops and hiring additional IT support staff) would have to be passed-on through tuition increases which would be far greater than the cost of purchasing a device. Even other school districts that purchased devices for their students in the past are looking at moving to a BYOD model.

What kind of device does my child need?

The choice of device is up to you, but it must:

- Have a physical keyboard

- Have a battery that will last a full school day without the need for recharging

- Be able to run the full version of the Google Chrome web browser

- Be able to run Google Classroom and Google Apps for Education

- Have a screen that measures at least 11" diagonally

- Be able to fit in a school locker (lockers are 10.75" x 11.75")

Almost any modern Windows laptop, Apple MacBook, or Google Chromebook will meet these requirements. Please note that tablets, including iPads, are not approved devices. Also note that Windows 10S laptops (not to be confused with Windows 10) are not allowed.

Why can't students use iPads or other tablets?

With the exception of the Microsoft Surface, tablets do not have full-sized physical keyboards (which are necessary for typing large documents) and cannot run full versions of Google Chrome, Google Classroom, or G Suite for Education. WCS teachers rely heavily on these tools and students trying to use tablets would be at a distinct disadvantage and in some cases unable to complete the tasks assigned to them.

Why can't students use Windows 10S?

Windows 10S (not to be confused with Windows 10) is a streamlined version of the Windows operating system designed to compete with Chromebooks. While the concept is sound, Windows 10S does not currently allow the installation of the Google Chrome browser which would leave students unable to perform certain required tasks (such as printing).

What are some of my device options?

Google Chromebook (Recommended)

- $150 and up
- Very quick to boot up
- Built to run Google Apps
- Easy to operate and maintain, no viruses
- Good brands: Acer, Asus
- Limitations:
    - No software installs (no Skype or Minecraft)
    - Limited peripherals (can't plug in a printer)
    - Limited offline capability

Windows (PC) Laptop

- $400 and up
- Built to run Windows, Microsoft Office Suite
- You can install other software
- More storage
- Good brands: Lenovo, HP
- (Microsoft Surface is an acceptable device)

Apple Laptop (Macbooks)

- $900 and up
- Very powerful machines
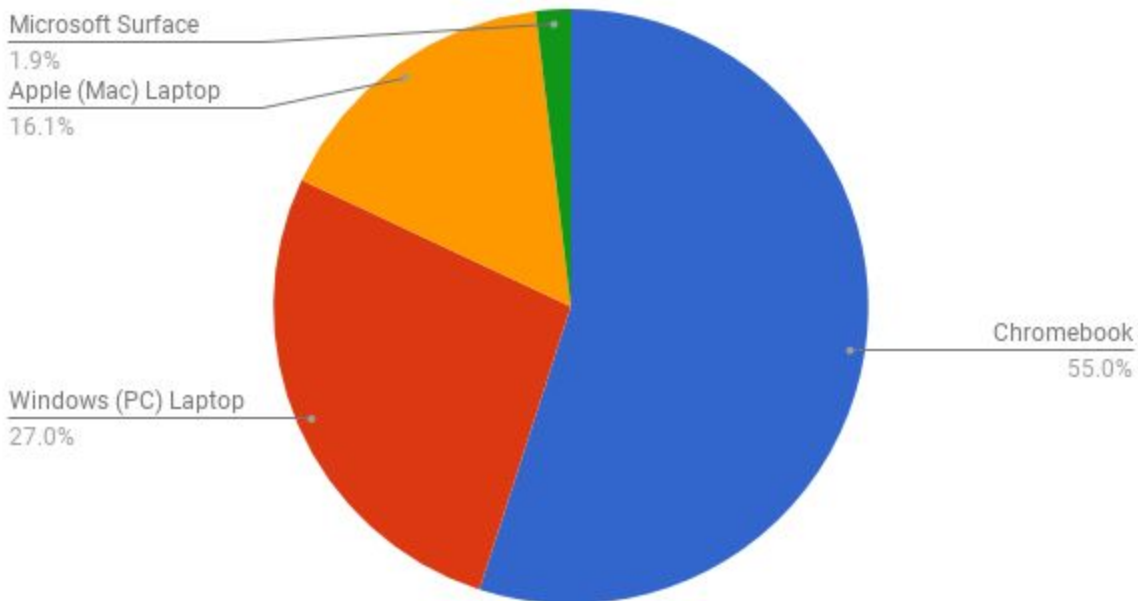- Award-winning Apple software like Garageband & iMovie

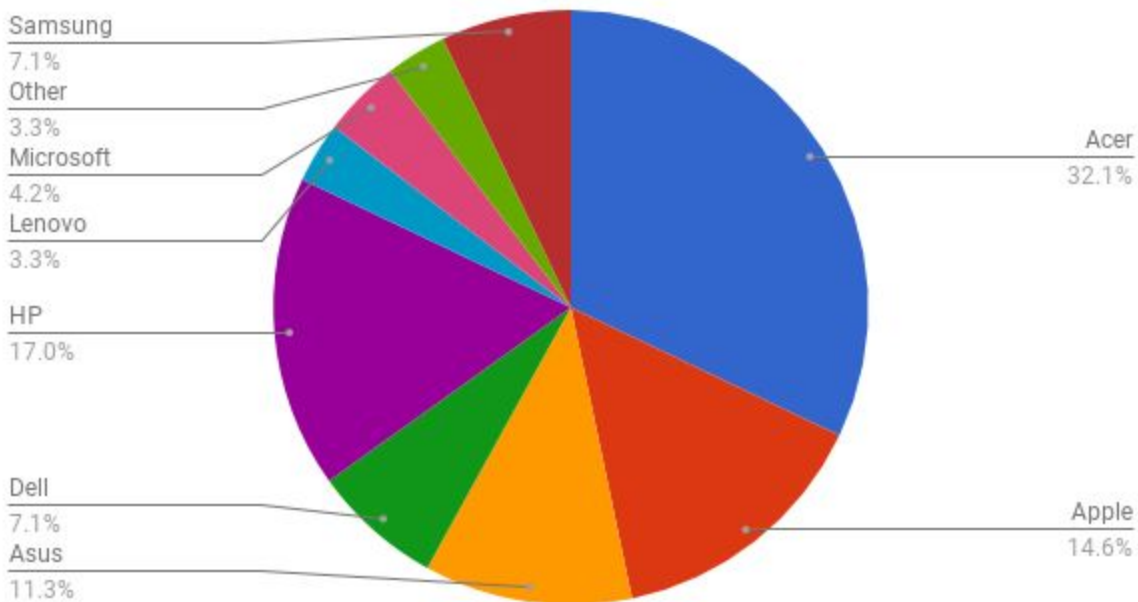*Questions about approved devices? Contact Steve Fortna, sfortna@whitinsvillechristian.org.*

What have other parents decide to buy?

A 2017 survey of middle- and high-school students shows the most popular type of laptop is a Chromebook and the most popular brand is Acer.

What kind of laptop do you use at school?

Microsoft Surface
1.9%

Apple (Mac) Laptop
16.1%

Windows (PC) Laptop
27.0%

Chromebook
55.0%

What brand of laptop do you use at school?

Samsung
7.1%

Other
3.3%

Microsoft
4.2%

Lenovo
3.3%

HP
17.0%

Dell
7.1%

Asus
11.3%

Acer
32.1%

Apple
14.6%

What else should I keep in mind?

- Case and Warranty/Protection plan - Devices are likely to get dropped. Cracked screens are a significant problem.

- USB Mouse - Clicking and dragging are difficult to do with precision using a trackpad.

- You may want to think ahead to college requirements when planning your purchase(s).

- Chromebooks are OK for WCS but students may need other software for VHS (Virtual High School) classes, and they may want to use other software in certain classes. E.g. MS Office, Adobe Software, Autodesk, Finale

What are you doing to ensure this BYOD program is successful?

WCS has been expanding our wireless (WiFi) infrastructure can handle the increased demand. Teachers and administrators have met and continue to meet to discuss logistics like storage, preventing theft, tech support, printing, and acceptable use.

Teachers are receiving ongoing training on how best to integrate technology into the curriculum. And we've been applying what we've learned from the successful launch of the BYOD program in the middle school during the 2015-2016 school year as well as from several years of allowing students to use their own devices voluntarily.

What can parents do to help?

- Help us keep the focus on education; these devices are to be used for educational purposes, not for social media, video games, or entertainment.

- Please discuss cyberbullying and online safety with your child; explain what is and isn't appropriate behavior online.

- Don't be afraid to set boundaries: Which rooms in the house are off-limits for technology? How late may your child work on his/her computer? How much total screen time is your child allowed each day? (Please be aware that while WCS has content filters on our WiFi network, filters are imperfect tools. Students are also adept at connecting to free, unfiltered WiFi networks in certain businesses and homes. WCS does not and cannot track students' Internet use when they are not at school.)

- Discourage multi-tasking. Students think they work fastest when switching back and forth between projects, but studies have shown that students perform best when they focus on one task at a time.

- Be a good role model and set good examples with your own technology use.

What if my child's device breaks or stops working?

It is your responsibility to ensure that your child has a functional, charged laptop in good working order each day. If your child's device needs to be sent away for repair WCS will provide, on a limited basis, a loaner laptop so that your child can continue working and learning at school. The loaners are for emergency use only and may not be taken home. Students may be asked to leave something behind (e.g. a cell phone or laptop) as collateral.

Students are granted ten free loaner "rentals" every school year. Each additional rental will incur a $5 fee added to your tuition payment.

Two good computer repair services are:

- Mendon Computer Outlet: (508) 478-5497
- Geek Squad