

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers About New Kent County Public Schools' Digital Conversion

1. What is the “digital conversion” and why is New Kent County Public Schools issuing Chromebooks to all 6th - 12th grade students?

(A): The digital conversion is a vision for how we go about teaching and learning every day. Our vision is to create student centered, highly engaging classrooms that maximizes every child’s potential. To achieve this vision we have created an instructional framework where critical thinking, problem solving, information fluency, collaboration, communication, and creativity are the backbone of teaching and learning. Technology is a critical tool in implementing the instructional framework. As part of the digital conversion, elementary students will have a 3:1 student to Chromebook ratio, while all middle and high school students will be issued a Chromebook.

2. What has New Kent County Public Schools done to prepare and train teachers for the digital conversion and use of 1:1 Chromebooks in the classroom?

(A): All middle and high school teachers were offered a free, 3 credit course this summer to learn more about our learning management system, the instructional framework and how to incorporate critical thinking, problem solving, information fluency, communication, collaboration, and creativity into their lessons through the effective use of technology. Nearly half of all middle and high school teachers took the course. The teachers who were not able to take advantage of this course will be given the same instruction during the teacher work week prior to school starting and throughout the school year. All teachers will be provided regular staff development opportunities to improve upon their implementation of the New Kent County instructional framework. Elementary teachers will have a similar training during the work week before school starts and throughout the school year.

3. When will students use the Chromebook?

(A): All middle and high school students will use a program called Schoology every day. Schoology is our learning management system that will house content, assignments, handouts, tests, student polls, blogs, videos, etc. Students will also be engaging in research, problem solving, communication, and collaboration with the use of the Chromebook every day. Lastly, students will be creating projects and other assignments using the Chromebook regularly. Elementary students will also routinely use the Chromebook to reinforce learning, solve problems, and create weekly.

4. When will students get their Chromebooks?

(A): Elementary students will have Chromebooks for use as soon as school starts. Middle and high school students will receive their Chromebooks the second week of school.

5. Are 6th - 12th grade students required to bring their Chromebook to school every day?

(A): Yes, students are required to bring the Chromebook to school fully charged every day. The battery life is strong enough that students should not have to bring a charger to school if they are diligent in charging the unit each evening. This will also reduce the risk of losing or misplacing a charger at school.

6. Is there a fee for the use of the Chromebook and if so why?

(A): There is a \$40 fee for middle and high school students that will be paid at the beginning of each year. This fee helps off-set the charge we pay for each unit for *Complete Care*. *Complete Care* is further explained in questions #8-10.

7. What happens if I can't afford to pay the \$40 fee for the Chromebook?

(A): If a parent cannot afford to pay the fee for the Chromebook he or she should contact an administrator at the school who will be readily available during fee collection time. We do offer a reduced fee for those who qualify for free and reduced lunch. We also have payment plans for families who need additional time to pay.

8. What happens if the Chromebook is dropped, breaks, or malfunctions?

(A): We know accidents will happen. This is why we have purchased *Complete Care* from Dell for the Chromebooks. If a student accidentally drops or breaks the Chromebook, it will be covered by Dell and usually returned within 24-48 hours. If a student has a second accident with the Chromebook in the same academic year, he or she will owe \$25 for the repair. Students are charged \$40 for a charger replacement.

9. What happens if the Chromebook is lost or stolen?

(A): If a student loses or vandalizes the Chromebook he or she will be charged a \$300 replacement fee. The same goes for stolen Chromebooks. This has rarely happened in surrounding divisions that have had a 1:1 device deployment for many years.

10. What happens if a student is having a technical problem?

(A): Students will have two opportunities every day to take their Chromebook to the help-desk in the library. While there a quick diagnostic will be conducted to see if there is a simple fix. If it cannot be fixed, the student will be issued another Chromebook, which we refer to as a "hot swap". The malfunctioning machine will be sent to Dell which has a large repair center in Richmond. On most occasions the damaged Chromebook will be repaired and returned in 24-48 hours. This should not affect the student as he or she will simply keep the new machine that was issued at the hot swap. The only time this will not happen is if there are not enough "hot swap" Chromebooks available.

11. When will students have to turn in the Chromebook?

(A): Students will turn their Chromebook in at the end of the year so they can be cleaned up and refreshed at Dell over the summer.

12. Is there a protective case for the Chromebook?

(A): There is a new case that has just been brought to market for the new 2015 Chromebook 11. We did not order these in bulk because it did not exist when we were researching cases with Dell. Additionally the NK Chromebooks have similar specs to that of a military or police computer which were built for life in a student backpack. We certainly encourage students to buy the "Pearl" case (or others as they come to market) if they choose, but it is not required.

13. How do I know my child will be safe using this Chromebook?

(A): We plan to set clear expectations with students and have them sign the acceptable use policy. We also have a proven filtering system and teachers will be teaching from all points of the classroom so that they can see student screens. That being said, it is impossible to know what every student is doing at all times on a device. This is why we plan to focus heavily on teaching students how to use the devices responsibly. Parents will need to partner with us and do the same at home. If parents have concerns about their child's usage at home, they should have their student work in a common room where the screen is visible. Parents can also routinely look at apps students are using and the browsing history cannot be deleted. Parents will also need to determine if they want to add content filtering at their home. Internet carriers provide filtering that can easily be added to any home network.

14. Can a student purchase his/her own Chromebook or bring another personal computing device to school?

(A): Students will be required to use the NK issued Chromebook at school. Students cannot bring their own device as one is provided for them. The primary reason for this is to ensure optimal performance and student safety on our network. Additional devices will create greater strain and reduce performance. We also want to ensure students are using the same platform as the teacher and the rest of the class. Documents, apps, and websites often appear differently on varying devices.

15. Does the Chromebook mean students will no longer use textbooks?

(A): Students will still use textbooks. However, our goal is to greatly expand our digital curriculum which will eventually reduce, and in some cases eliminate, the use of a traditional textbook.

16. What does the Chromebook mean for other school supplies and the weight of backpacks?

(A): We are keenly aware of the weight of a modern student backpack, which is one of the reasons we selected a lightweight, mobile device and plan to reduce the amount of bulk that students will need to carry around. The learning management system (Schoology) will allow us to reduce paper and the use of many consumable products, which helps to modernize our work, and reduce bulk in the backpack. This is our goal over the next year, as we will need time to adjust to the more modernized, digital content.

17. What happens if a student does not have internet access at home?

(A): We had many discussions about this prior to implementing the digital conversion. We recognize that this is problematic in our rural community and are working with county officials to decrease our digital divide. In the end, we decided that all students will have internet at school so we should proceed with our work to create the most modern and engaging classroom experience that we can. Teachers are aware of this and will be instructed to not assign work that will require immediate internet access at home in the evening. Students will be able to download various assignments and other material to their Chromebook before leaving school for the day where they can work offline at home. We are committed to being sensitive and using common sense around the fact that some of our students will not have internet access at home.