

Hoover City Schools' Technology Initiative

Hoover School Community Information Network report

July 27, 2007

Hoover City Schools' Board of Education approved a major Technology Initiative in March 2007 at a cost of \$4.7 million, after seeing a demonstration of the proposed technology during their Regular Work Session last February held at Berry Middle School.

Click here to read the [Birmingham News article, "Hoover Schools Tech Redo: How Soon?"](#) from April 6, 2007, for additional information.

The Technology Initiative provides cutting edge technology to be utilized in middle and high school classrooms (grades six through 12). While no timeline has been set for expanding the initiative to Hoover's ten elementary schools, they are in a pilot exploration phase. The project is expanding, and some pieces of technology have now been made available to every grade level team in every building, but they are moving more slowly because they are still working to determine what technology will be most useful at the elementary level.

The Technology Initiative was piloted in middle and high school classrooms during the 2006-2007 school year. During the pilot phase, fourteen teachers used their classrooms to try out equipment such as:

- Ceiling-mounted digital projector with 100" screen
- Interactive pad to allow teacher control of the computer screen from anywhere in the classroom. [Click this link for more information on interactive pads.](#)
- Student response system ("clickers") to assess student knowledge in real-time. [Click this link for more information on clickers.](#)
- Digital document camera to replace traditional overhead projector
- Sound amplification system for teacher voice and media devices
- Three (3) laptop computers per classroom for student use
- Laptop docking computer for the teacher

Teachers then evaluated what was useful. The surprise turned out to be how teachers used the different pieces together in different ways. This made it difficult to rate one piece more highly than another. For example, the document camera can't be used if there isn't a digital projector.

The two items judged least useful were the teacher docking laptop and the student laptops. The pilot teachers were combining their three laptops to make larger sets that could be shared and swapped around, so the recommendation for implementation was to provide a cart of 30 wireless laptops per grade level at each middle and high school.

The teacher laptops were highly valued by the pilot teachers, but weaknesses were discovered with the database software that the state requires all school systems to use (STI) that made real use of these laptops impractical for now. The recommendation for implementation was to not replace teacher workstations with docking laptops.

During the 2006-2007 year, the group of pilot teachers met once a month to share feedback and prepare for mass training. A schedule of meeting times has not yet been set for the coming school year, as they are currently involved in the mass training that is being led by those pilot teachers.

This summer, all 6th through 12th grade classrooms were wired for all of the equipment listed above. Everything on the list will be available in each classroom except the teacher docking laptop and the three student laptops per room. As suggested by the pilot teachers, the three laptops per room were replaced with wireless carts at each grade level available for teachers to check out and use in their classrooms. The wiring itself required an intense effort, as power and audio-video connections had to be added to over 500 classrooms. Only academic core classes (English, Math, Science and Social Studies) and Foreign Language classes were fitted with student response systems, or “clickers”.

Also this summer, teachers received training on the new equipment through two training sessions of four days each. Hoover City Schools’ teachers taught the sessions and attendees received \$63/day to attend.

Teachers are also learning the “SharePoint” web page format system to implement during the 2007-2008 school year for “classroom/home interactive support”.

Technology coaches have been hired to continue training and help implement usage at individual schools. These coaches will be available to help individual teachers learn not only how to use the actual equipment, but how to best utilize that technology in their daily lesson plans. To date, technology coaches have been added at:

- Spain Park High School (one coach)
- Hoover High School/Freshman Center/Crossroads Complex (two coaches)
- Bumpus and Simmons Middle Schools (one coach)
- Berry Middle School and the Central Office (one coach)

Be sure to ask your children about the great equipment they’re using to learn better and faster what they’ll need to be successful students in Hoover City Schools. Our school community is extremely fortunate to have both the funding and the support to make this possible for our community’s children.

Our thanks to Ron Dodson, Director of Secondary Curriculum for his help in putting this information together.