



Hillsborough, New Jersey

Small Pilots Lead to a Successful 1:1 Program in Hillsborough, NJ

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When the leaders at the Hillsborough Township Public Schools first started discussing 1:1, they were determined to take a careful and thorough approach to making their purchasing decisions. They opted to launch a variety of pilot projects to test out possible devices in a real-world setting.

District Needs

Based on the initial success and positive feedback from a previous pilot, Hillsborough Township Public Schools decided to try more. In 2012-2013, 60 fifth-graders received Chromebooks and 60 other fifth-graders, along with 120 seventh-graders, were issued iPads*. Several classes of high school students also received devices – half of them iPads* and half Chromebooks. In the spring of 2013, every K-4 student received a Nexus 7 tablet* as part of a Google* pilot.

“We saw great success and transformation during the pilots,” says Joel T. Handler, director of technology. “The devices helped students develop superb organizational skills and keep better track of their work.”

The groundwork had been laid for a district-wide move to one- to-one but which hardware was best for the middle and high school grades: iPads* or Chromebooks? Although both devices had successful pilots in the upper grades, Handler says that the iPads* required more manpower to configure, support, and maintain. “When an iPad* breaks, it takes three days before the student can get it back to where it was before it broke,” he says. “When a Chromebook breaks, the student is back on track in 15 minutes. That’s a huge difference.”

Additionally, the students had a harder time focusing with the iPads* and were more distracted by them. It was hard for many kids to wrap their minds around the iPad* as a school device, explains Handler. Another issue was that students couldn’t use their school ID to log in to the iPad* and had to use a personal one.

Solution Approach

In August, 2014, all 4,600 students in grades 5 through 12 received their Acer c720p Touchscreen Chromebooks* while grades K-4 opted to stick with the Nexus 7 Android tablets*. As soon as the teachers got their laptops, the IT department started using Google Apps for Education* and Gmail*. “We knew they’d need training, so we offered more than 100 two-hour courses in the summer of 2012,” says Todd MacDonald, technology integration coordinator.

More than 500 teachers attended at least one class. “The teachers learned that there were people in the district who could help them; it was the start of a positive culture shift,” says MacDonald, who taught the courses with two other people.

Because of this robust PD, many teachers embraced their 1:1 classrooms from the start and others are moving in that direction. According to MacDonald, “It’s powerful to see teachers collecting instant feedback, adjusting lessons on the fly, encouraging more collaborative classrooms, and giving students more choice when it comes to the medium to display their grasp of a concept.”

Results That Matter

Because all K-4 classrooms have Nexus* tablets, the teachers are able to work with students on problem solving and decision-making, rather than just memorization or reciting facts. “When they first got the tablets, the teachers explored apps but we wanted it to be more of a pedagogical shift,” says Handler. “We had to support them with learning goals and figuring out how to alter their teaching.” To help them learn how to integrate the tablets, teachers formed professional learning communities.

“We are seeing exciting things happening in pockets all over the district,” says MacDonald. “The children work independently, enjoy learning, and listen to their teachers, who do a lot of student-centered activities that let the kids blossom.”

Larissa McCann, who is currently out of her classroom to serve as a one-year technology coach, agrees that Hillsborough teachers are embracing 1:1. “They are learning how to teach students in a different way,” says McCann.

McCann, who piloted both the iPads* and Chromebooks in her seventh-grade science classroom, used the Nearpod* app to turn her PowerPoint* presentations into interactive slides. “My whole style of teaching changed because the students were involved in learning the whole way through. With Nearpod* I could insert poll questions that the students answered on their Chromebooks and flip my class by sharing my presentations for students to watch for homework.”

From the youngest children to the graduating seniors, students at Hillsborough Township Public Schools are learning in a 1:1 environment that will better prepare them for life after Hillsborough.

At A Glance

Hillsborough Township Public Schools serves:

- 7,350 students K-12
- 1,000 staff members
- Nine schools

Infrastructure

- Ubiquitous wireless from Aerohive*
- Laptop for all certified staff
- 1:1 in grades K-4 with Nexus 7 Android* tablets; the devices stay at school overnight.
- 1:1 with Acer c720p Touchscreen* Chromebooks in grades 5-12



Learn More

Article: [Choosing Between iPads and Chromebooks](#)

Article: [Are iPads or Chromebooks better for schools?](#)

Website: [Hillsborough Township 1:1 Program Overview](#)

Presentation: [Implementing a K-12 1:1 Learning Environment](#)

