Considerations Prior to Implementation

Rationale for the Implementation of BYOD

The prospect of letting students bring their own devices to school will be a daunting one for many teachers and parents who will have legitimate concerns that the technology may be a distraction and may be used inappropriately be some students. There needs to be a sound rationale put forward, outlining how student-owned devices will enhance student learning by providing immediate access to information and opportunities for collaboration and creativity that would not exist to the same degree without the availability of student-owned devices. Teachers and principals who wish to implement BYOD would be well-advised to research the topic and develop a well-reasoned, comprehensive rationale for BYOD.

Time Frame for Implementation

Careful consideration should be given to how and when BYOD will be implemented. A good first step would be to ensure that there are teachers on staff who are ready to implement BYOD, who have planned instructional strategies and classroom activities that will enable students to make effective use of their devices. If there is not purposeful use, then the technology will very likely become a distractive influence. And if opportunities are not provided for students to use their technology in class, they may stop bringing it to school. Teachers need to have clear expectations of when the devices may be used and they need to develop cues or signals telling students that it is time to put away the device and re-focus their attention on the teacher. Teachers need to be prepared to deal with non-compliance and to have developed a clear understanding with their students of the consequences for non-compliance. Parents need to be informed of this as well.

A good first step might be to designate one day a week where students can bring their own devices to class or to start with a class project for which they can use their own technology. Most successful implementations of BYOD have started with small steps and then increased the frequency of BYOD use. The age of the students should also be considered when determining where, when, and how often BYOD should occur.

Changes in Pedagogy and Assessment Practices

It is probably fairly obvious that one of the major considerations in implementing BYOD is how instructional and assessment practices need to change. How will classroom practices need to change if students have immediate access to information? How will assessments need to change if students have access to information? A good starting point would be to examine SAMR model, which looks at how technology integration changes teacher practice.

Designation of Online Platforms

One of the big challenges with BYOD is that students will potentially have a wide variety of devices, with different operating systems. It will be difficult to find apps or programs that will work on all devices and so the use of online (Web 2.0) programs should be considered. Before implementing BYOD, teachers should research and test out some of the many programs out there to find one that best suits their needs. It might be a blog, a wiki or an online learning management system like Edmodo, GoogleDrive or D2L. Consultation with other teachers and with the IT trainers is strongly recommended.

Support for students who don't have Devices
This can be a difficult issue depending as there will no doubt be students who don't have access to a device of their own or whose parents will not permit them to bring a device to school. The best solution is for the school to have additional devices available for students to use in class. It goes without saying that we cannot require students to have a device or require them to do their work in an online environment unless we make appropriate arrangements for students who don't have their own devices. This may mean alternate activities and assignments or at least a choice of assignments, some of which do not require technology and it is probably a good idea to periodically have assignments that all students must do without the use of technology. We must be careful that technology not become a vehicle for stigmatizing students.

A Communication Plan to Inform Parents
The rationale for BYOD and the plan for its implementation needs to be clearly communicated to parents in order to explain the rationale behind BYOD and to gain their support for the initiative. This can be done in a variety of ways and a multi-faceted approach is probably best. Before a BYOD implementation is announced, consultation with School Councils and with parents generally is advisable. There should be discussion at a School Council meeting and feedback from parents should be solicited. Feedback may be requested through newsletters, at open houses, and at parent-teacher interview time, for example. When the school is ready to implement BYOD, those same methods might be used and the plan should be posted on the school website.

Professional Development
As with any new initiative, teachers will need support and encouragement in order to achieve success. While there are all kinds of resources online regarding BYOD, connecting teachers with other teachers within the school and the Board is strongly recommended. Teachers should be encouraged to share best practices and to create their own personal learning networks by connecting with colleagues who are also implementing BYOD in their classrooms. There are many websites and social networking opportunities for teacher collaboration and teachers should be encouraged to seek these out and take advantage of them.

Updated Acceptable Use Agreement
An updated Acceptable Use Agreement is attached to this Administrative Procedure. School principals and their staffs should review it and review their own student behaviour rules and codes of conduct to see if these need to be updated.

Digital Citizenship
As students do more and more work online, digital citizenship becomes critical. Not all students intrinsically understand what is appropriate and what is not and we have an obligation to teach them digital citizenship if we are going to expect them to learn in an online environment. There are all kinds of resources available online to assist teachers in teaching digital citizenship, but it is important to choose resources that are suitable for the age and experience level of the students. Most resources for digital citizenship are "universal" in nature but some do make reference to rules and laws; so care must be taken to make sure that they are relevant to Ontario and Canadian circumstances.