

# Upper Perk Tech Pulse

## Keeping You Informed on UPSD Technology

### Special points of interest:

- New hardware and software request process
- Clever badges launched at Marlborough
- Printing / copying limits

*The purpose of this newsletter is to keep everyone informed of the goings-on of Technology in Upper Perkiomen School District. Each month the status of projects and challenges will be updated and any new changes will be announced. We hope you find it informative and beneficial!*



## Support Ticket System

*The launch of our new tech support ticket system “osTicket” on November 27 has gone very well. In the first two days, 20 tickets were created.*

*When an email is sent to support@upsd.org, a ticket is generated and automatically assigned to the appropriate tech. In addition, the assignee receives an email alert that a ticket has been created and assigned.*

*We are still closing out tickets in the old system, so if you opened a ticket there before November 27, there is no need to create it again in osTicket..*

*osTicket is open source, which means it is free and is supported by a community of enthusiasts. Open source software is analogous to open educational resources. No person or entity owns the rights to it. Instead, it is developed and maintained by a community of people who feel passionate about their work and are intrinsically motivated to keep working and improving.*

*We hope that everyone is happy with the change!*

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*Did you know? The demand for programmers is forecast to increase exponentially over the next decade. Almost every industry now employs programmers in some capacity,*

## Software & Hardware Approval Form

On November 21, Allie Stephens announced that the curriculum and instruction office implemented a new approval form for all software and hardware purchase requests. The form is located in the Staff Portal on the UPSD website. From this point forward, all requests for new and additional technology must be submitted via this form.

Up to now there has not been a straight-forward process to request new technology. That has led to delays in purchasing necessary items, inconsistency of resources being used, and purchases being made that do not fit into an overall plan or goal. This new process addresses these issues.

The curriculum and instruction office will review all requests to en-

sure academic fidelity. As curriculum review proceeds, these requests will be compared to their respective course curricula. If a request supports or enhances curriculum goals and is in alignment with a District goal in the Comprehensive Plan, then it will be examined from a financial perspective to see what the budget implications are. The Technology Department will also be involved to determine compatibility with our systems and to explore what technical supports are necessary. The requesters may be contacted for additional information or to discuss other ways of accomplishing the goal that the request is intended to address.

Please keep in mind that budgets are developed in the Fall and Winter of

the year before they go into effect. For example, the preliminary Curriculum and Technology budgets for 2018-2019 have to be developed by the middle of December 2017. They will be tweaked until about the end of February 2018, and then they will be presented to the Board between late February and April. If a request is made after January, it will be too late. Once the exact cutoff date is known it will be communicated.

Please consider items you might need next year and submit those requests with the new form as early as possible. If you have any questions about the process or want to discuss a potential request before filing it, please contact either Allie Stephens or Bryan Ruzenski.

## Clever Badges Update - Launched at MLB!

Clever Badges have been launched at Marlborough! Now, all of our students in grades K-3 at Hereford and Marlborough can log onto Chromebooks using Clever Badges.

As a quick refresher, a Clever Badge is a QR code that is held up to the camera of a Chromebook. The Chromebook then logs the student in with her/his individual Google account.

We made configuration changes to Chromebooks on Monday, and Mr. Lippincott tested badges out. He found a couple of glitches that we fixed quickly, and by Tuesday everything worked great.

The badges that Mr. Lippincott and Mr. Guellich distributed to students will work until students enter 4th grade. The badges are stored as PDF files so replacements can be printed if badges are lost or damaged.

When new students are enrolled throughout the school year, the Technology Department will generate badges for them and send them to their respective school. Mr. Guellich and Mr. Lippincott can then print out the new badge and get it to the student.

During the summer and when the new class of kindergarteners enroll, new badges will be generated for them in one

large process and provided to the schools all at once. It might take a few days for all of the last minute enrollments we usually see at the beginning of each school year, but the process is quick enough that the delay should be minimal.

After a few years of trying to find a good solution for logging on our youngest students, we are all really excited about this! Thank you Mr. Guellich for suggesting this and working on it with us, and thank you to both Mr. Guellich and Mr. Lippincott for testing it and handling the logistics of distributing the badges!



## Respondus Lockdown Browser Fix

The problems that High School students had with the Respondus Lockdown Browser are now fixed.

Lockdown Browser is a small software package installed on the 1:1 laptops that integrates with Schoology and allows teachers to literally lock down the browser so students taking tests and quizzes can't search for answers. Teachers create a quiz in Schoology, make a selection to use the Lockdown Browser, and administer the quiz. When the students launch it, their screens will only display the quiz until they submit it.

About half of our students were receiving errors when they tried to launch any quiz in Schoology using the Lockdown Browser.

The solution turned out to be quite simple, but somewhat tricky at the same time. Prior to using the enterprise version of Schoology, everyone would visit apps.schoology.com to log in. Once we switched to the enterprise version and integrated it with Active Directory and Skyward, we had to use upsd.schoology.com. The Lockdown Browser will only work when we use the latter. For students whose accounts

were created before the switch, apps.schoology.com will actually allow them to login, but they will have reduced functionality. We tried to block apps.schoology.com to avoid the confusion, but that started causing other problems with Google integration.

In short, everyone needs to log into Schoology by visiting upsd.schoology.com and everything will work as intended. Please update any bookmarks you have and instruct your students to use the proper link.

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### Printing Limits

For the third month in a row our year-to-year printing increased significantly. November 2017 printing and copying was higher than November 2016. We printed 494,148 pages in November 2017 compared to 476,757 in 2016. October 2017 was our highest month ever, at a total of 634,379 pages.

In the October 2017 Tech Pulse, we asked everyone to please make a concerted ef-

fort to print less, and warned that we would have to impose limits if that did not happen. Based on the data from September, October, and November, our printing has gone up. The situation was discussed at length among the administrative team and we concluded that we are forced to limit the amount that everyone can print and copy.

An email will be sent to all staff with the details of the

limits. To give everyone time to get used to it, we will be enforcing a monthly limit beginning December 11. That will give everyone a full month's allotment for the two remaining school weeks of December. Then the limit will refresh on January 1, and the 1st of each month from that point forward.

To prepare, please take a hard look at what you print and copy and plan to reduce it.

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### Net Neutrality

The debate over "net neutrality" is back in the news. Net neutrality refers to the concept that all internet traffic should be treated the same. No priority should be given to any companies or traffic types, and internet service providers cannot block access to websites. That has been the unofficial policy of the Federal Communications Commission, which is the government entity that regulates telecom companies. In 2015, the FCC adopted a formal policy enforcing net neutrality. Now, the FCC chairman, Ajit Pai, is proposing to reverse that policy and end net neutrality.

Why does ending net neutrality matter? There are many reasons. One is that internet providers like Com-

cast and Verizon could slow down traffic unless they are paid a premium for a so-called "fast lane." For example, Netflix could pay a higher rate for higher speed, and another organization that can't afford the fee would suffer. Imagine if TED Talks traffic was much slower than Netflix traffic. In that way, it is the consumer who is most affected.

Another concern is that innovation will be stifled. A startup company will not be able to pay a higher fee, so will receive less traffic. That in turn will make it harder to succeed, so the startup is more likely to fail. That has a knock-on effect of stifling competition too.

Comcast and Verizon could go as far as to block traffic that competes with their of-

ferings or even block websites that don't agree with their views. In other words, they could censor the internet.

Ending net neutrality is also projected to hurt rural areas. Presently, if a telecom company installs internet service, they have to provide the same service to a rural area as they would if that was in a city. With the new rules, they could choose to supply inferior service or none at all.

One of the biggest concerns for us as educators is that it will hurt access to educational resources. A lot of what we use in education is free, and it's free because the organizations and individuals offering the content are able to keep their operating costs low. If their con-

tent is suddenly crowded out by all of the faster traffic, it makes them a less compelling option. They will then either need to pay higher fees and thus charge for their services, or stop offering their services altogether. Even worse, Houghton Mifflin and the other large publishers could pay service providers to give preference to their traffic. That could be devastating for OER.

Unfortunately, the large service providers have an army of lobbyists and lawyers that have been fighting net neutrality for years. They gained a lot of momentum in 2017. Ajit Pai has argued against net neutrality for several years. He was appointed chairman of the FCC in January 2017, and has proposed a plan to end net neutrality. On December 14, 2017, the FCC will vote on Pai's plan.