



Upper Perk Tech Pulse

FLITE Chromebooks

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Last year we recommended and received approval for replacing the FLITE Chromebooks in Hereford and Marlborough. We decided to lease them to keep on a sustainable refresh cycle which meant that we needed Board approval for the lease agreement. We negotiated with several vendors and got a lease agreement from HP in August. That lease agreement was approved in September which gave us the go-ahead to place the order.

The order was placed the Monday following the Board meeting, but the tech industry is still experiencing manufacturing delays. The reasons are unclear, but the result is keenly felt. We have been waiting for four weeks for the Chromebooks to arrive, and they were finally

delivered on Monday, October 22. We'll get them setup and delivered ASAP.

The new Chromebooks are really nice. They are called "HP Chromebook x360 G1." The x360 means that the screens will flip over completely and essentially turn the Chromebook into a tablet, and the screens are made of Corning Gorilla Glass to give them more durability. The x360 is the first of a new generation of Chromebooks that can run Android apps, which gives the FLITE classes access to thousands of new resources.

We are really looking forward to getting these units into action and exploring what they can do. Fingers crossed that it should only be a few more days!



New Schoology Interface

Schoology announced that they are launching a new interface on November 19.

They are calling it the "New Experience." The timing of this launch isn't great, with it occurring in the middle of a school year, but at least it is during a week with conferences

so you will have a few days to get used to it.

Schoology says that no data will be lost or changed as a result of this change. And from what we can see, it looks like once we adjust to the change it will actually be easier to navigate.

Schoology has more information about the change on their blog:

<https://support.schoology.com/hc/en-us/articles/360006144553-What-s-changing-with-the-new-Site-Navigation-Instructors->



UPSD Website Analytics



At the October Board Communication Committee Meeting we discussed making some improvements to the UPSD Website. One of the specific topics was around the organization of the site. For obvious reasons we can't have everything on the homepage or even first-level navigation because it would be way too cluttered. We have to prioritize the content somehow to make the items that are the most commonly sought be the items that have the shortest path. In other words, if hundreds of people look for the cafeteria menu, it should be at the top level. If

only 5 people per week look for an item, that item can be on a subpage.

To figure out what those items are, we have begun using Google Analytics to track visits and behavior on our website.

We are now getting a huge amount of data regarding how many visits we have on each page, how long on average people stay on each page, where they come from (search, direct visit, link from another site, etc.), and even where in the world they are geographically located.

We have only been collecting this data for a week, so it's too

early to draw any conclusions, but a couple of things already stick out. The Staff Portal is the most frequently visited page, most visits are direct, and 20% of our visitors are using smartphones so we made a good decision when upgrading to an adaptive site design.

We are going to analyze the data after it runs for a few months and discuss what, if any, changes we will make based on that analyses. Any changes will be communicated in advance so that you don't suddenly find a resource moved without warning.

Windows Updates and Restart Prompts



“The updates are scheduled to push out near the end of the day to minimize the impact on the school day.”

Microsoft is always refining the way Windows updates are distributed. Recently, we have been given some additional tools to use to distribute updates in a less-intrusive way.

Starting in mid-October, we began to distribute updates in the background with a setting to prompt you if a restart is required. The updates are scheduled to push out near the

end of the day to minimize the impact on the school day. The prompt will give you an option of hiding it and waiting for 90 minutes, or restarting right away.

If you choose to wait 90 minutes, an icon will appear in the taskbar by the clock. If you want to restart before the 90 minutes is up, you can either do a normal restart or click on that

icon.

If you don't restart within that 90 minute window, a 20 minute countdown begins, at the end of which you will be forced to restart.

Updates are always inconvenient, but the alternative is security vulnerabilities and bugs, so they are a necessary part of the world in which we live.

Vernier Software



Vernier, the company that makes the science probes and graphical analysis software used at the High School, released a new software package in the summer. We installed it on all of the 1:1 computers of students in the science classes affected.

There are three different software packages that need to be installed. One of them can be

pushed out over the network easily. Another one can be pushed out with some effort. The third one cannot be pushed out at all.

The good news is that we are putting all Vernier software on the 1:1 images so that the computers will have it from now on. The bad news is that since we can't push out that one package remotely, we can't

push out the updates to it when they are released. We have contacted Vernier about it, but they won't commit to a specific plan to make that package distributable.

So that means, for now, we can't fully update the software remotely. When updates are released, we still need to touch each device. We're hoping for some better news next year.

Smart Notebook Bug

Many of our classrooms started experiencing a bug with Smart Notebook at the beginning of the school year. Specifically, the touch functionality of the Smart boards would not work when viewing web pages.

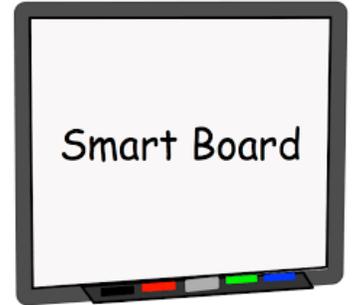
It took us a couple of weeks to figure out what was causing this. We typically update the Smart Notebook software in winter, so we thought any problems caused by the software would have been occurring since then.

Our techs discovered that a bug in Smart Notebook 17 was triggered when Chrome updated. Chrome updates in the background frequently. There was an update in the summer and another one in October. The summer update seems to have been the catalyst that caused Smart Notebook to act up.

Fortunately the fix is simple: update Smart Notebook from version 17 to 18. Unfortunately, it requires each staff computer to be visited by a technician.

At this point we have reached everyone and performed the update. We aren't sure yet if we will need to perform another update this winter or if we'll be ok for another year.

One thing we know for sure is that we have to renew our license of Smart Notebook just like we do every year. That usually means we receive a new license key that you will have to enter. Once we receive the key, the technicians will share it with you.



New iPad Management Software

In August, we started using a software product called Jamf to manage iPads.

As many of you know, especially in K-1 and Special Ed, getting apps installed and updated on iPads has been a hassle. The Technology Department has had to take the iPads away and update each one individually. Even then, sometimes things would spontaneously occur, like prompts for iTunes passwords.

Jamf solves all of that. We can now manage iPad apps and settings remotely. When an app is requested, we can push it out from Jamf to the iPads without having to touch any of them. We can also turn different settings on and off. Jamf essentially allows us to manage iPads like we manage Chromebooks.

Jamf isn't a new product, but it is new to us. We're very much in the learning curve right now.

We worked with Athletics to get their iPads setup with Jamf and pushed a couple apps out. On November 6, the techs were given a brief training. We'll learn more in the near future, but so far we are very pleased with the way it is working.

We will need to collect all iPads again one last time to get them registered in Jamf. We don't have a date for that yet, but we will give everyone plenty of notice when we do.

"Jamf essentially allows us to manage iPads like we manage Chromebooks."

Interactive Projector Installations

The interactive projectors have proven to be a challenge to install to say the least. There have been issues with the projection surface, alignment, calibration, etc.

We have a couple of them that are working at 100%. The others are in various states. In order to get a handle on it, we

have engaged the services of Whitlock, the vendor that we purchased the projectors from.

Whitlock has an installer who is going to come out and commission the two interactive projectors in Hereford. That essentially means that he is going to adjust and calibrate everything and won't leave

until we're sure it's working satisfactorily.

We're going to see how this goes and learn what we can. From there, we will either adjust the remaining projectors ourselves and proceed with the installations, or we will work with Whitlock to have them fix and install the rest.



Did you know?

Lithium-ion batteries like those in our phones and computers will age better if they are charged from 20% - 80% than if they are run down to 0% and charged fully to 100%.



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The Upper Perkiomen School District is committed to the effective use of technology to support student achievement. The Technology Department supports an environment in which students have equitable access to information, tools, and applications to engage in meaningful learning.

The Technology Department supports all aspects of information technology, including Internet connectivity, wireless networking, various databases and servers, the phone system, and the software and devices used every day. UPSD has over 3,000 devices connected to the network, which all require maintenance and support. In addition, each classroom has a projector and interactive whiteboard. Some of the applications which the Technology Department supports include Skyward Student Information System, Skyward Business System, Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Office, Google Chrome OS, Adobe Creative Cloud, and Apple iOS, as well as many different cloud applications.