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Bring Your Own Device to School

By Dr. Robin Hines, Superintendent of Schools
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An initiative for our schools this year is Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), which encourages students to bring their personal technology tools to school to use for learning. BYOD is a voluntary program for our teachers and students. Teachers who so choose may invite their students to bring their laptops, smartphones, tablet computers, e-readers, etc. to school. Today's youth are technologically savvy so we anticipate that their interest and ease with these tools will make them more engaged in classroom learning. Their personal devices will infuse even more technology into our classrooms, complementing our smart boards, desktops, and document cameras already in use. Our students will also learn new ways to collaborate and interact with their teachers and classmates as they conduct research, solve problems, create products,

and publish their work.

In preparation for this initiative in Houston County, we expanded our district's wireless infrastructure so that every school now has a BYOD wireless access point that provides filtered Internet access. We also piloted BYOD this past spring at four schools with excellent results and positive responses from our teachers, students and parents alike. The teachers at these schools explored innovative uses for students' technology tools through the 4 C's of Digital Age Learning - Creativity, Collaboration, Communication and Critical Thinking. These skills are essential for successful careers in today's colleges and businesses.

BYOD is being phased-in system wide this school year, beginning with seven schools the first nine weeks. Nine more schools will be added the second nine weeks. The remaining schools will begin BYOD the second semester, with all 38 schools implementing the program by the beginning of the last nine weeks. Our Curriculum Integration Specialists are supporting this effort, and we have strategies in place to address device equity, responsible use and classroom management.

With the prevalence of technology, BYOD has become the norm for many college campuses and even workplace environments. Our children and teens already embrace technology, and this program is a natural progression that will seamlessly lead them from their K-12 school years into the college setting and beyond. BYOD is just one more way we are seeking to fulfill our vision that our schools will be world class.