Five Questions to Ask Before Proceeding to BYOT

Feb 10 Posted by **Jason Stroh** in **IT Leadership**

Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) is all the rage these days among K-12 administrators. At first glance, it seems to solve many of the issues that districts are facing with regard to their technology. The fact is, though, there is a lot of preparation that needs to be done beforehand. Here are some reasons that your district may not quite be ready for a 1-to-1/BYOT program.

1. Lack of Wireless Density and Capacity

Wireless access points can only handle so much bandwidth at once. And by moving to a BYOT model, you've suddenly increased the number of devices connecting to your access points by an entire order of magnitude. So while you may have wireless coverage throughout your building, you'll also need a lot of wireless density, which requires more hardware and planning. Can your network core switch handle the all the new wireless traffic?

2. Lack of Network Activity Tracking

If a student brings in their own iPad, connects to your wireless network, and then accesses inappropriate material, do you have a system in place to track the activity back to that device and user? Even if you filter content, you need to ensure you have systems in place to reliably track network activity to specific devices.

3. Lack of Mobile Device Management

Can you ensure that all your students have access to the same apps on their devices? To put it another way: how do you install and maintain apps on 1200 iPads or Kindles? Unless you have a full application deployment solution in place, some students may be left behind if they are unable to use the same tools as the rest of the class.

4. Lack of VLAN and QoS Configuration

Can your IT staff manage the network? Managing the various types of traffic on your network is an extremely complex task. How are you differentiating between and prioritizing various types of traffic? (Hint: don't forget wireless traffic, regular data lines, VOIP, your guest network, and so on!) Without proper VLAN and QoS implementations, your network performance will suffer.

5. Lack of Staff Knowledge and Experience

Does your existing IT department have the knowledge, experience, and skill set to accomplish all the previous items on the list above? Moving to a 1-to-1 model should only have to happen once. Not knowing what is needed or lacking the skill sets to manage what is needed can be very costly. This can also leave the district scrambling for cash and expertise to "fix" what might have been missed or left out.

If you answered "No" to any of these questions, your district is not ready to move to a BYOT or 1-to-1 technology model. A lot of schools try to keep up with the latest trends in education technology, but heading down that path before you are ready for it can set the entire district up for failure. With budgets that continue to tighten school districts can't afford to make mistakes on projects of this scale.

- **PRINT**

Tags: **BYOT**