



REPORT TO

REGULAR BOARD

## COMPUTERS FOR STUDENTS IN NEED

*And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. - Matthew 14:19*

Created, Draft	First Tabling	Review
June 9, 2020	June 18, 2020	<a href="#">Click here to enter a date.</a>
Steve Camacho, Chief Information Officer Paul De Cock, Comptroller of Business Services and Finance		

### RECOMMENDATION REPORT

**Vision:**

*At Toronto Catholic we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.*

**Mission:**

*The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.*

*We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.*



Rory McGuckin  
Director of Education

D. Koenig  
Associate Director  
of Academic Affairs

L. Noronha  
Associate Director of Facilities,  
Business and Community  
Development, and  
Chief Financial Officer

## **A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In April 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to support a new distance learning model, the TCDSB started distributing computing devices (Chromebooks and iPads) directly to students who requested them and were considered in need. As of June 5<sup>th</sup>, 10,530 have been requested and purchased for students. These devices include 6,181 Chromebooks and 4,349 iPads at an approximate cost of \$3.2M to date. These devices also included 1,222 devices for students who self-identified as needing access to the internet.

The Board of Trustees have asked staff to explore on-going loan and/or ownership options for these student devices. Using Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding to donate or give devices to students on a permanent basis may conflict with Ministry GSN guidelines, transfer payment agreements, and regulations under the Education Act. Furthermore, transferring the ownership of devices to students on a one-time basis would benefit current students, but new students joining later would not receive the same benefit. Therefore, staff are recommending that the Board of Trustees focus on other programs to benefit students in the long-term, such as a formal Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program and/or a device loan program for low-income families.

In the near term, while the COVID-19 pandemic continues, students will continue to need devices for home use and internet access. As a result, this report also recommends that the Board of Trustees continue the current TCDSB student device loan program in the fall of 2020 and furthermore, that the Board of Trustees continue to support students who are identified as needing internet access, by covering the cost of Rogers LTE data services for loaned iPads.

*The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 25 hours*

## **B. PURPOSE**

1. The purpose of this report is to respond to a Board of Trustees motion asking staff to explore lending and ownership options for student devices. The motion is as follows.

*That staff prepare a report to come back to Board in June to explore the lending or other ownership option to students who need equipment to fully learn.*

## C. BACKGROUND

1. ***In April 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to support a new distance learning model, the TCDSB started distributing computing devices (Chromebooks and iPads) directly to students who requested them and were considered in need.*** Chromebooks (simple laptops) were distributed to students in grade 4 to grade 12 who had access to internet at home. iPads were distributed to students in kindergarten to grade 3 as well as students who indicated that they had no internet at home. All iPads were enabled with cellular data service from Rogers until June 30, although only 1,222 indicated that they did not have service at home.
2. ***To maintain safety, rather than distribute devices that were in the schools, the TCDSB purchased and leased new devices for students.*** As of June 10<sup>th</sup> 10,565 have been requested and purchased for students. These devices include 6,203 Chromebooks and 4,362 iPads at an approximate cost of \$3.2M to date.
3. ***TCDSB has approximately 44,000 student devices in schools with a student to device ratio of 2.1 to 1; but many device are old.*** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the TCDSB school device fleet included computing devices including Windows laptops and desktops, iMacs, Chromebooks, and iPads, However, this inventory includes a number of older devices which, in some cases, are over 10 years old. Many of these older devices are ineffective for daily use and need to be removed.
4. ***If only newer devices are considered (4 years or newer), the total device count drops to approximately 23,000 with a ratio of student to device decrease to 3.9 to 1.*** The table below illustrated the device to student ratio using these newer devices. If only the mobile devices are considered, the ratio of student to devices declines further to 4.2 to 1.

	Desktop	Mobile Devices*	Grand Total	Number of Students**	Overall Ratio	Mobile Ratio
<b>Elementary</b>	320	16,358	16,678	63,057	3.8	3.9
<b>Secondary</b>	3,045	5,367	6,757	28,167	4.2	5.3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4,740</b>	<b>21,725</b>	<b>23,435</b>	<b>91,224</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>4.2</b>

\* Includes laptops, chromebooks, and tablets

\*\* 2020 projected ADE as presented at March 2020 Corporate Service committee

## D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

### Challenges with transferring of device ownership

1. ***Using GSN funding to donate or give devices to students on a permanent basis may conflict with Ministry GSN guidelines, transfer payment agreements, and regulations under the Education Act.*** The TCDSB currently maintains ownership of all devices it purchases for students use. This includes classroom devices as well as devices purchased for individual special needs students under the special equipment allocation (SEA) claims process. According to SEA Guidelines, equipment purchased with SEA funding is a set of physical assets which school boards have a responsibility to protect, maintain and manage as a public resource. Furthermore, the TCDSB's responsibilities include ensuring that equipment is reused by transfer to other students when no longer required by the student for whom it was purchased; and efforts are made to share equipment among several students when appropriate and possible. Purchasing devices using GSN funding to donate or give to students has never been contemplated before and could pose challenges from the Ministry of Education on the proper use of GSN funding and stewardship of public resources. If the Board of Trustees is contemplating such a use of GSN funds, a thorough legal review should be completed before any final decisions are made by the Board of Trustees.
2. ***Transferring the ownership of loaned devices from the TCDSB to students would pose a major logistical challenge because devices are currently connected to TCDSB monitoring systems.*** The Board has distributed more than 10,000 devices to students in the last 2 months. These devices are connected and monitored by TCDSB device management systems. If device ownership were to change to the students, the devices would need to be returned to the TCDSB first, cleared of all TCDSB owned software and controls, and then returned to the students once again.
3. ***Transferring the ownership of devices to students on a one-time basis would benefit current students, but new students joining later would not receive the same benefit.*** The TCDSB places approximately between 6,000 to 7,000 new students every year. If TCDSB transferred ownership of the devices only once, it would disadvantage students in future years vs. students who were placed with in the TCDSB in the current 2019-2020 school year.

### Challenges with Current Device Funding

4. *Funding devices for students on a 1-to-1 ratio would cost the TCDSB between \$37M and \$46M over a 4-year period (or \$9.25M to \$11.5M per year).* There are a number of factors that drive device cost such as exchange rates, device model options, repair rates, enrolment, etc., but staff believe it would cost between \$400 and \$500 per device (assuming a Chromebook or similar devices) and each device would last a maximum of 4 years.
5. *The Ministry of Education provides TCDSB with approximately \$3.5M for devices in annual GSN funding for classroom computers.* Funding for the classroom computers is part of the GSN per pupil funding amount and is currently set at \$34.42 per elementary student and \$45.03 for secondary student per year. These funds are also intended to cover associated network costs.

### Student Devices During Distance Learning

6. *Approximately 11% of students requested a device from the TCDSB over the course of the last 2 months to help engage in distance learning.* Of the students who requested devices from the TCDSB, most, but not all, live in lower income neighbourhoods throughout the city. However, the number of requests may have been higher than under normal conditions because of the competing demands for devices with many parents working from home. The following is a breakdown of device requests by ward.

Ward	Device with Internet	Device Only	Ward Totals
1	111	1,104	1,215
2	35	436	471
3	166	1,197	1,363
4	59	542	601
5	255	1,014	1,269
6	61	446	507
7	69	595	664
8	49	595	644
9	123	662	785
10	99	807	906
11	126	917	1,043
12	101	996	1,097
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,254</b>	<b>9,311</b>	<b>10,565</b>

7. ***The remaining 89% of students were able to access a device for distance learning without TCDSB support.*** Many students were able to access devices at home either through existing dedicated devices and by using devices shared with siblings or parents. These percentages are consistent with data received from student voice surveys in previous years.
8. ***Approximately 1.3% of students (1,254) indicated that they needed a device and internet services to access distance learning.*** To support students in need of internet service, the TCDSB provided these students with an Apple iPad enabled with LTE data services from Rogers free of charge until June 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Student Device For Summer Learning**

9. ***Many students are likely to continue to need a device during the summer of 2020 because of the Ministry's expanded use of summer schooling programs.*** On May 19, 2020 the Ministry of Education announced expanded summer learning opportunities for students. While the exact program offerings are yet to be determined, TCDSB expects many current students will need to continue to use TCDSB issued devices over the summer to take full advantage of these learning opportunities.
10. ***Staff are proposing that all students not leaving the TCDSB in June be allowed to keep devices on loan until September 2020 to support summer learning.*** Students will be allowed to keep the device without interruption over the summer. Staff will work with schools to collect devices in June for those students who have graduated or are leaving the TCDSB.
11. ***To support student with no internet over the summer, TCDSB will need to pay for the Rogers LTE data services starting in July at an approximate cost of \$60,000 per month.*** When the TCDSB leased the iPads for students, it partnered with Rogers to deliver LTE data services on those iPads. As of June 10, 2020, the TCDSB has received requests for 4,362 LTE enabled iPads based on grade and need, but only 1,254 of those students have self-identified as needing internet services. Staff suggest continuing the Roger LTE data services for those students in need over the summer and not renewing the LTE data services on the remaining iPads. The remaining iPads can continue to be used with home Wi-Fi. Families and students will be sent email notices about the changes. Further extensions will need to be reviewed in September.



## **Student Devices for Fall 2020**

12. ***Students will likely need devices at home and at school in fall of 2020.*** While the exact modality of instruction is not yet known for the fall of 2020, staff believe that a complete return to a pre-COVID-19 teaching model is unlikely and that students are more likely to be engaging in some form of online or distance learning throughout the 2020-21 school year.
13. ***Staff are recommending that students keep loaner devices until the COVID-19 pandemic is over.*** While the COVID-19 pandemic is active, staff believe students will continue to need access to devices for learning at home opportunities. As such, devices should be kept by students until such time that TCDSB returns to a full-time face-to-face teaching model. Since the iPads are leased, staff are estimating an additional cost of approximately \$525,000 to extend the lease for an additional year.
14. ***Staff are recommending that current devices for student programs be continued in the Fall of 2020 for new students joining the TCDSB.*** New students joining the TCDSB in the fall of 2020 should be given the same opportunity as current students to access a device, if they truly need one. Since the TCDSB typically admits up to 7,000 new students per year, staff are estimating the need for approximately 800 additional devices (11%) purchased at an approximate cost of \$320,000.
15. ***Staff are recommending that the TCDSB develop an on-going student device program for low-income families post-COVID-19 pandemic.*** The program would initially be seeded by the loaned student devices returned at the end of COVID-19 pandemic. In future years, the Board of Trustees would need to allocate funds during the budget process to the program to keep it active or alternatively, be directly funded by the Ministry of Education. Towards the end of the COVID-19 pandemic staff will return with a report outlining the program details and on-going costs for the Board of Trustees consideration.
16. ***Current school computers should be augmented with a formal BYOD (bring your own device) program for students.*** Should the Ministry of Education not fund a 1-to-1 device program in the future, the TCDSB could augment its current school device program with a formalized BYOD program where students, with the means to do so, purchase and bring their own device to school based on a standard set by the TCDSB. This BYOD program, in combination with current school devices and new device program for low-

income students, could significantly improve the current student to device ratio. Staff will review the possibility of such a formalized program towards the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and present the findings to the Board of Trustees for consideration.

17. *Staff will explore opportunities to keep extended technical support for students and parents.* During the COVID-19 pandemic staff extended the ICT Service Desk (Helpdesk) to support parents and students and also extended the service hours to 13 hours per day (7am to 8pm). This was possible by reallocating some underutilized field support staff that are normally supporting technology in schools and by offering over-time to some ICT Services staff. This model is not sustainable in the long-term and staff are looking to explore other options to develop a sustainable extended support model. Extending support to parents and students was part of the 3-year I&T Strategic plan presented to the Board in December 2019.

## **E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

1. Staff will update the Board of Trustees in the fall of 2020 on the progress with the current student device program and any additional changes.
2. At the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, staff will present a plan to the Board of Trustees on what to do with devices that are currently on loan to students.

## **F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the Board of Trustees continue the current TCDSB student device loan program until September 2020;
2. That the Board of Trustees continue to support students who are identified as needing internet access, by covering the cost of Rogers LTE data services for loaned iPads at an estimated cost of \$180,000 for at least 3 months (July, August, and September); and
3. That future device programs such as formal bring-your-own-device (BYOD) and low income family device loan program be explored and presented to the Board of Trustees at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.