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Understanding Your School's Technology Culture

I. Technological Capacity and Capabilities

1. What kind of technology is available to you?

At Thunder Mountain High School (TMHS), we have access to the following technology:

- Two PC labs, four Mac Labs, three Mac carts*
- Microphones in the classroom, projectors (for computers and DVDs, etc.), digital cameras, scanners and DSL cameras.*
- Teachers with specialty electives have certain programs (graphic/web design) and electronics (GPS).*

2. What internet capability is available?

Teachers and students at TMHS have access to wireless internet.

We called the Juneau School District (JSD) Information Technology phone number (housed at Juneau Douglas High School) and asked about download/upload speed and got the following information:

TMHS has a:

- 6 megabit/sec connection.*
- Which connects to a 30 megabit/second connect at the JSD central office.*
- However, TMHS has limited capabilities with its bandwidth due to the amount of users at any given time.*

3. How is computer and internet access provided? Dispersed computers? 1 to 1? Labs? Can students use their own equipment?

Computer access and Internet access is provided by:

- WiFi (used to need password, but now open to public)*

-1 to 1 (for Freshmen only). Freshmen teachers keep computer carts in their classrooms (these are not accounted for in question number 1 because they are not accessible schoolwide).

-Computer carts and labs.

-Students can use small personal devices; however they cannot use their own PCs or Macs (this is school policy, but is not consistently enforced).

4. What kinds of filters are in place, and how do they restrict what you might want to do?

TMHS (like most schools in the JSD) has a filter in place. The filtering system blocks social sites, music, movies, games, and other sites deemed inappropriate for school or that take up too much bandwidth. With the appropriate name and password, teachers can attain access to "Youtube," "Pandora," "Facebook," and other restricted sites.

-The school district bans certain websites so that students don't use up all the bandwidth and so they are not distracted.

-The filtering system is also necessary for their federal grant money (Children's Internet Protection Act 2003).

5. If resources like social media are blocked, are there "intranet" options? Are there ways to get special permission to use blocked resources?

TMHS does have intranet options that teachers and students can easily access from school. Access from home is possible, but would take considerable time and effort (working with the IT department going through certain security measures.) However, intranet doesn't seem to be commonly used by anyone.

Teachers and administrators can gain access of blocked sites using a firewall system called "Sonicwall. Technically, students cannot get past Sonicwall (though many of them do); however, staff can (with name and password).

6. Who has the specialty gear (cameras, scanners, etc.) and can you use it?

Mrs. Neimeyer, an art teacher at TMHS, has one specialized digital art class. She has DSL cameras, a smart board, and specific programs on the computers in her lab.

Mrs. Galau, a science teacher at TMHS, has one specialized GPS class. She has a classroom set of GPS equipment.

Mr. Mearing, a math teacher at TMHS, has one photography class. He has a classroom set of digital Nikon cameras.

Classes have priority over specialized technology. If you wanted to use it, you could talk to these teachers and borrow the equipment if it is available.

7. What is your best sense of the technology that your students have at home? To what extent can you expect them to have access to technology and internet access outside school to work on school projects?

It seems like all our students have access to the Internet. We have not spoken with any kids who do not. However, some students do seem to have restrictions or limitations at home.

We do not depend on their ability to use the Internet outside of school. Our students are given time and access to computers and Internet during class time. If they do not use that time wisely, it becomes homework.

II. Leadership and Policies

8. Does your school have a mission statement and an educational technology plan? If so, when were they last updated? Attach them or provide a link to them from your blog.

TMHS does not have mission statement, nor do we have an educational technology plan. TMHS does have individual policies for cell phone/ipods and electronics found in the student handbook, which is updated annually (see below).

CELL PHONES/IPODS

*Cell phones may be used before school, at lunch or after school and during the school day with teacher permission. If a personal electronic is used during class, the item may be confiscated and turned over to the Vice Principal. Disciplinary action may result, such as lunch detention or Saturday school. Parents may be required to retrieve these items. **Students may not use their cell phones when being disciplined by staff/administration. Staff assume no responsibility of loss or theft of personal electronics, including laptops.***

ELECTRONICS

Personal laptops are not allowed at TMHS. The Juneau School District manages its computer network infrastructure with an emphasis on virus prevention. This includes but is not limited to viruses, adware, intrusion detection and malware. All JSD computers attached to our network have Enterprise class virus detection

software installed. Students may not connect to our network with their own personal electronics.

8. Are missions and plans used and generally valued at school? Do you use them?

TMHS does a some planning for their Professional Learning Communities. Our early release days offer departments to collaborate for one and a half hours twice a week. Departments plan outlines to attain SMART Goals. Other than that and generic lesson planning (which may or may not be in written form), there is not a lot of missions or plans being used (unless initiated by individual teachers).

We use lesson plans. Because we have a class focusing on Backwards Design, our plans tend to be laid out in this fashion. We also use the lesson plan format given to us in the MAT Handbook to help guide us.

9. Do the missions and plans address the issues of digital citizenship, or of developing a balanced view of technology adoption?

Not Applicable (no missions or plans).

10. Is technology well-funded at your school? Do you see signs of technology rotation, professional development and on-going maintenance of existing equipment?

Compared to other schools (specifically other high schools) in the JSD, TMHS has a significant amount of new technology. The building and everything in it is considered to be brand new (by teachers, students and the general community). However, the technology at TMHS is actually five years old, which is considerable in technological terms.

-There is no current plan to update technology.

-Technology gets updated when there is a renovation of a school and funds for new technology get dispersed.

11. Does your school have Internet use and parent permission policies? When were they last updated? Attach them or provide a link to them from your blog.

TMHS has an Internet use and parent permission policy called the "JSD Net Code of Conduct." The permission slip refers to using the JSD network, access to email, and publishing student work on the Internet (student's name, writing, photographs) Students and parents fill out appropriate forms at the beginning of the school year.

-To see more information and forms:

<http://homebridge.juneauschools.org/uploads/18/forms/enrollment/jsdnet.pdf>

12. Has your school adopted or established competencies for students? When were they last updated? Attach them or provide a link to them from your blog.

TMHS does not have any goals outlined for student competencies (formally or informally).

-Students seem to be technologically proficient when it comes to technological skills in social realms (social media, email, games, blogs, etc.); however, students are not expected to be able to create websites, videos, podcasts or other technology-based projects in regular classes. Some electives give students the opportunity to be technologically creative.

13. Who are the ed tech leaders within your school? Does your school have an ed tech committee? Is it active? What are its responsibilities?

TMHS does not have an education technology committee. There are no "official" educational technology leaders. Teachers with electives specializing in technology are available and may or may not be able to help a teacher in need.

14. Who are the student leaders in technology? Are there programs that allow them to use their expertise to help teachers and other students? Are there special programs that allow them to pursue their interests?

There are no designated student leaders for technology at TMHS. Other than elective classes, some after school clubs (art, robotics, etc.) and individual motivation to incorporate technology into content/elective assignments/projects, there are no programs for students to use their technology skills.

15. Are community members involved in regards to using technology in your school?

Through a program called Community Schools, any member of the Juneau community has access to the school during off-school hours and if the room/area is not being used for a school activity. Through Community Schools, organizations utilize rooms for certain activities or family's can have birthday parties in the commons or other areas. The community can therefore use the technology in the school, if they prearrange it with Community Schools.

-For instance, Mara's classroom is used for church activities on Sundays and they could use the projects or DVD player if they prearranged it with Community

Schools. They would have to bring in their own personal community. They can also access the Internet.

16. If something breaks, who fixes it? How do you contact them? Are corrective and on-going maintenance well supported?

There is no one housed at TMHS to help with technology, but the JSD does have Information Technology services. It seems as though the IT Department has a lot of responsibilities and work orders take a long time (one teacher has been waiting for a new Elmo since last year.) Teachers are better off if they can find someone to fix their own problem.

-The JSD IT Department phone number is 907-523-1790. Someone is always there to answer and are quite helpful, though not necessarily friendly.

-Or we can fill out a work order form and email it to a specialist.