



Much Ado About BYOD

A few years ago, BYOD arrived with bang: heralded by many as the salvation of modern education. But despite the hype, BYOD is also easy to dismiss due to worries regarding technical difficulties such as bandwidth issues and managing different platforms as well as pedagogical constraints like distraction, off-task behavior, and classroom management).

BYOD is a commitment across the board in adapting teaching styles to enhance learning outcomes. Using technology (especially student-owned technology) helps students to make a transformational shift in learning and in demonstrating their learning. The quality of student work increases through real-time review and feedback as well as deeper research. Every implementation of this scale has issues to be sure, but through research and planning, most every problem can be met with a swift solution.

In a BYOD classroom, every student has equal access to the technology and teaching may be more personalized in an electronic, nearly paperless, classroom. IT might actually end up having fewer problems with BYOD than with school-owned laptops has students have a tendency to take better care of their own devices. With each student bringing a tablet or laptop from home, issues of theft decrease as personal responsibility increases as well. The cost of having BYOD is also much less than a conventional 1:1 laptop or tablet program.

But what does BYOD look like in a typical classroom?

Students have their own tablets and laptops open. For students who do not have devices, the school issues them devices for school and home use. Teachers have multiple activities in play during the class period. The teacher lectures using slides projected on the front screen covering key points: putting unfamiliar words to a running list on front board along with relevant anecdotes. Meanwhile, students listen and click away: taking notes, asking

questions and making comments. During the lecture, the teacher reminds students to complete review worksheets.

An assignment is given requiring students to pair up and use a specific format in which to create stories based on topics in their textbook, what they found on the Internet, or from the teacher's lectures. Students carry their open tablets to the front of the room and read from their screens what they have written, or project their work on to the screen.

Your school's technical capacity must accommodate different devices to maintain an uninterrupted class flow and support seamless learning from multimedia lectures, whole group Q & A, students taking notes, filling in blanks on online worksheets, and students working on projects before sharing their work with the class.

BYOD allows teachers and students to collaborate in doing assignments, writing, and projects. For example, constant use of Google Docs makes student cooperation integral to assignments and aids teachers in the monitoring of student work.

BYOD, overall, allows teachers to be instantly responsive to student's needs. It also lets teachers revise lessons with much greater regularity allowing for a better workflow of curriculum revision.

Some issues to be watchful of, however, when implementing a BYOD program include:

1. Technical difficulties. Most every network fails at some point. Be prepared so that learning can continue in spite of network outages.
2. Distractions for students. Monitoring students by walking around the classroom to see what's on their screens may be necessary. A Learning Management System can also help

you keep students focused. More often than not, though, students will be so engaged that they won't feel compelled to stray. Also, the odd infraction or accident can lead to a meaningful discussion on digital citizenship.

3. Copying. Cut-and-paste may increase, though these infractions tend to be fairly obvious. Solutions that monitor the time stamp of a student's work can insure that student work remains original.

4. Expertise and funding. Introducing BYOD into a teacher's curriculum might require additional funding or professional development. Even more vital to learning than access to devices is the teacher's expertise and experience, his or her pedagogy, the socioeconomic background of students, and the culture of the school.

5. Widening the digital divide. For lower-income schools, BYOD may not be viable. Student cellphones might not be allowed and laptops and computer labs could be few and far between due to budgetary constraints. For BYOD, there must be labs for testing and for the kids that do not own or do not bring a device.

But, despite the issues, when students leave school, their whole lives will be BYOD. So it makes sense to prepare students with the skills they need to navigate both college and the working world.