## Staying Up To Date With Technology

Like many things in an active world, there is always something interesting developing in the world of technology. Nowadays many day-to-day activities are so intertwined with technology that we don't always realize technology impacts almost everything in our lives, which makes it even more challenging within the world of education.

Upon coming to K Christian more than a decade ago, KCSA had just entered into the world of a "1:1 Program" (one technology device per one student, instead of a shared lab setup, etc.) by deploying new iPads to junior high students. Much of the funding for this ambitious project was underwritten by proceeds from the sale of the Westnedge campus, as the middle school was being relocated to the new 12th Street campus. So in the fall of 2013 we continued to advance the program by distributing iPads to all high school students at a considerable expense, but as a school we were committed to providing quality education that also incorporates some of the latest and most up-to-date technology to enhance education.

Our iPad use continued for several years as we evaluated the positives and negatives of always being connected (and the same thing has happened in the world with the explosion of personal cell phones). An electronic device is great for consistency of document creation and help with organization and submission of assignments for students and teachers, and maybe not so great for the temptation as a distraction (games or general web surfing), all of which require better establishment of policies for use.

With so many students using the web, during my time here the internet pipeline into our schools has been upgraded several times from a meager 50 megabit pipeline to a 1 gigabit (or 1000 megabit) fiber line. Thankfully we have utilized CTS (now MetroNet) which was one of the early adopters of fiber for internet delivery, so we were one of the first schools in the area to have fiber service.

As students continued to find different ways to use (and sometimes abuse) their tech devices, we started gaining consensus that as handy as iPads were, it was relatively easy to break them (especially for middle school students!), and it would require a significant amount of funding to sustain such a program. So after further study, we moved to the new Chromebook devices which had been developed by Google and were just starting to take the education world by storm. Those laptop devices literally took over the market share within only a few years because they were about one-half the price of an iPad or other laptops, and from a tech administrator's perspective, they offered far greater control and management of the device. So in 2015 we adopted Chromebooks as our primary device and began deploying them grade by grade for those in the 1:1 Program, and also started setting up classroom sets of the devices in the elementary grades. Overall this has been a wonderful technology tool for education (even though every device has positives and negatives). As with all things technology, I continue to

preach usage in moderation, that we don't want to use a tech tool for everything, but certainly when it can be used in a helpful manner.

We are now at a point where KCSA is utilizing the latest 9th-generation Chromebooks, and over the years with the increased use of Chromebooks, we have also seen a huge increase in our teachers and students using online applications, or the ever-popular "app" (there is indeed an app for that!). We have leveraged those online educational tools quite a bit as things like Accelerated Reader, RocketMath, and SeeSaw are used every day in the elementary classrooms, and the whole world of Google Apps (Google Drive, Google Documents, Google Classroom, etc.) is used for our secondary grades (5-12) where each student has their own personal device.

I am thankful we have been able to build our technology infrastructure steadily over the years, as that was unknowingly preparing us for that trying time known as the COVID years! Between our technology infrastructure and a positive administrative approach, KCSA pivoted within one day and was ready to move to online education as much as feasible. As a tech director, those COVID years also afforded many opportunities for me to "teach an old dog new tricks" as we all worked to become online experts. And even better, consensus among our administration and teachers was that face-to-face instruction was even more important, and we were one of the few schools in the area that remained open and in person for the majority of COVID. I believe God blessed that commitment by bringing even more families and students to KCSA in the years following that time.

So now K Christian has reached the point where we have an enrollment of more than 1100 students, and I have more than 1200 Chromebooks that are in use and "phone home" on a daily basis. It's a busy task to keep all of this going, and making sure that the teacher tech tools and equipment in the classrooms is ready and functioning to provide an optimum learning environment in the 21st century. I have no doubt that we will continue to see unexpected developments in technology, as there is really no way to anticipate what might pop up next, the key remains not what the tools are, but who are the people using them, and with a Christian basis that says all of the world and all of its tools submit to God, I think we are well positioned to stay up-to-date with both our technology tools and our educational efforts.

- **Dan Cooke, Director of Technology**