Swanson Middle School PTA Membership Minutes

December 8th, 2015

PTA President Noah Simon welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda.

The agenda for the meeting will include:

1. Update from Brigitte Loft, Swanson Principal
2. Presentation from Terrance Proctor, Director, APS Service Support Center

We are joined by Terrance Proctor, Director, APS Service Support Center and Darrell Joiner. Ipads were rolled out to 6th and 7th graders at the beginning of the semester and Swanson has worked closely with our ASP IT team to ensure that our students can safely use the Internet. Terrance Proctor is here this evening to answer questions about the filtering system used on the APS-issued devices.

Terrance discussed the central internet filtering system and all devices are configured with a profile and when the devices are used anywhere, all internet traffic runs through the APS filter. There are many challenges. Some want us to block everything and some that want us to block very little – we are middle of the road. We cannot block pictures because they have not categorized or type. We do use SafeSearch which can help block inappropriate or explicit images from your search results. The SafeSearch filter isn't 100% accurate, but it helps you avoid most adult content. They are continually communicating with faculty and staff to update the filters. It is our responsibility to make sure our students can safely search the internet while also allowing instruction to continue.

 Darrel Joiner – Information Services

Parent question: We found that the filters in Safari on images which should be set to "limit adult content" was not set on our son's Ipad. We are concerned that this feature not properly defaulting on all of the devises. Can you confirm that it?

Answer: The profile is a system setting and it should be set properly.   All browsers have different settings for blocking/filtering adult content. The students cannot install applications that have an age-limit rating. The profile is set globally for that restriction.

Parent questions: Do all apps have a rating?

Answer: Yes. And if the rating of the application does not match the limit set in the profile, the app does not install on the device. If it falls outside of the rating, you do not get the option to download.

Parent question: How is the profile managed?

Answer: We use a Mobile Management system which has been in place since the beginning. We are able to manage the system at a granular level across the District. We will go back and confirm that the profile is working as we have stated and the configurations are set as I have described.

Parent: How do you test?

Answer: The IT team is responsible for thoroughly testing the profile to confirm it is working properly. While we do have the MMS set up, each school does its install of the configuration themselves. An issue could arise during this process. We will go back and verify the system is working as it should and then we will look at the individual issues.

Parent: Is internet access required to do homework?

Answer: The message that was delivered was that homework should not require internet access. We have found that there is some deviation from that. If is important that parents provide feedback to help us continually protect the students.

Terrance stated that we cannot ensure nothing gets through and there are constant changes with how and what we can block. We need to ensure that we protect our students. We cannot block the Apps store because the apps cannot run app unless the store is available. During the school day the Apps Store is available and "open" and it is not afterhours.

There is a list of allowed static apps that are installed and each school/teacher will adjust that list. The functionality of the App Store is required in order to run the applications. All of the apps in the app store and essentially pointers to where the application actually lives and therefore the app store "application" is required to be on the device in order for the apps to run.

Darrell Joiner discussed the process by which teacher can request new apps. There is a process that requires the teacher to justify the new app and the ITC will review compliance with the profile.

Terrance confirmed that if the application rating falls outside of the rating restrictions then the students do not get the option to download the apps. We are always trying to strike the balance between the ability to innovate and protecting students.

Parent: Who pays for the applications?

Answer: APS uses VPP (Volume Purchase Price) for applications that have a fee.

Parent: Can APS track site trends and usage overall?

Answer: We do have logs but we do not track the activity of the students. If it was required by law that we provide information/data, we could do that. We only maintain the data for a short period of time. Technology is used to enforce policy and we do not have a policy to track activity.

Parent: Have you ever heard of the locker application? This is a private storage of photos that is disguised as a calculator. Could we turn camera off?

Answer: We could turn the camera off but that outcome of that at one school was the loss of valuable instruction. They had us turn it back on. This is the reason for the Digital Citizenship program. We have to teach them how to act as responsible users.

Parent: One option would be for the parent to "opt the student out" of having an Ipad.

APS has partnered with Common Sense Media to provide lessons in Digital Citizenship and Literacy curriculum. The Acceptable Use Agreement is important to remember and note. The students sign this and are required to understand and abide by it.

Parent: What ways can parents communicate with the APS IT team?

Answer: You should discuss your concerns with your principal.

There is a draft version of the "Learning Device Handbook". There is a committee (which includes parents) reviewing this document and it should be complete after winter break.

Ms. Loft introduced Megan Kinney. She works closely with Ms. Loft and our ITC in addressing concerns

Parent: What evaluation methods are in place to determine the educational value of the tools?

Answer: It is a challenge to draw a direct line between achievement and a tool . We look at things like engagement, other data to see where changes have occurred.

We will have follow up meeting on this topic at our February meeting.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Madelon Brennan, Recording Secretary