



UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

"Home of the Golden Knights and Damsels"

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School District Technology

Dear Union School District Families,

As we begin another school year, we want to thank you for your continued partnership and support of our students and schools. Our shared goal is simple: to give every Union student the opportunity to learn, grow, feel safe, and be successful.

As part of that commitment, we want to share some information about technology use in our schools, including a recent change to our network access policy, the electronic devices provided to our students, and our optional device insurance program.

We know that technology has become an important part of the way our students learn, communicate, and access educational resources. We also recognize that changes to technology procedures can sometimes create questions for families. We hope the information below provides some helpful context.

A Change to Personal Device Network Access

Beginning this school year, students may no longer connect personal devices to the Union School District network through our former Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program.

We recognize that some families have used personal devices for school-related purposes, and we understand that this change may be an adjustment. This decision was made thoughtfully after reviewing our network activity, security needs, and our responsibility to provide a safe and productive learning environment for all students.

There are several important reasons for this change:

Student Safety and Filtering: As a school district, we have responsibilities under the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) to maintain appropriate internet filtering and protections on devices accessing our network. Personal devices made it increasingly difficult to maintain these protections consistently. The use of VPNs and other software also created opportunities for students to bypass district filtering.

A Focused Learning Environment: Our review of network activity showed that a significant amount of traffic from personal devices was unrelated to schoolwork. We want our classrooms to be places where students can focus their attention on learning, their teachers, and one another.

Network Security and Reliability: Personal devices that are not managed by the district can introduce software, security, and compatibility concerns. Moving to a district-managed technology environment allows us to better protect our network and provide reliable access for everyone.

While we understand that not everyone will be excited about this change, we believe it is the best way to support student safety, responsible technology use, and a focused learning environment.

Every Student Receives a District Device at No Cost

One of the ways Union School District supports our students is by providing an electronic device to every student at no cost to the family.

We believe that students should have access to the technology they need to participate fully in today's educational environment. Families do not pay a fee simply because their child is assigned a district device.

We are proud to provide this resource to our students and families.

At the same time, these devices are district property and are purchased with the expectation that they will serve many students over their useful life. Just as we ask students to care for textbooks, musical instruments, athletic equipment, furniture, and other school property, we ask them to treat their district-issued technology with care and respect.

Device Repairs and Replacement Costs

We want to emphasize that repair and replacement charges are not a routine part of receiving a district device.

In most school years, only a small fraction of our students experience a need for a device repair, and an even smaller number of families experience a financial charge. Most everyday wear and ordinary issues are handled as part of the district's normal technology program.

A family may, however, be responsible for repair or replacement costs when a device is lost or intentionally damaged, or when damage results from clear abuse or neglect.

Our intent is not to place an unnecessary financial burden on families. Rather, we have a responsibility to protect school district resources so that we can continue providing devices to students year after year.

Why would there be a charge for a lost or intentionally damaged device?

We understand that this may be a question for some families.

When the district purchases a computer, we do so with the expectation that it will serve one student and then, over time, be available to other students. A device that is intentionally damaged or lost cannot fulfill that purpose.

In that respect, an electronic device is no different from a textbook or other district property. If a textbook is intentionally destroyed or lost, the district must replace it so that another student can have the materials necessary to learn.

Importantly, the cost of replacing an electronic device is significantly less than the cumulative cost of purchasing individual sets of traditional textbooks for students over time.

By taking care of our technology, we help ensure that the district can continue making these resources available to students for many years.

Optional Device Insurance – \$35 Per Year

We also recognize that accidents happen. For families who would like additional protection, the district offers optional device insurance for \$35 per school year.

Participation is completely voluntary. Families who choose not to purchase insurance will still receive a district-issued device at no cost.

The optional insurance is designed to help with common minor technology expenses, such as one of the following:

- Replacement of a damaged computer screen
- Replacement of a lost charger
- Other minor repairs covered under the district's insurance provisions

What About Printed Textbooks?

We also recognize that some students and families may prefer learning with traditional printed textbooks.

Over the years, Union School District has increasingly moved toward digital textbooks because they offer several meaningful advantages. Digital instructional materials generally cost considerably less than traditional textbooks, provide enhanced and interactive features, can offer accessibility tools, and reduce the amount of physical material students need to carry between school and home.

This transition has not been about using technology simply because it is available. It has been about finding ways to provide high-quality instructional resources while being responsible with district resources and taxpayer dollars.

The reduced weight and physical space associated with digital materials also make a meaningful difference for students who would otherwise be carrying multiple textbooks between home and school.

Families who have questions about instructional materials or who would like to discuss whether a printed textbook option is appropriate for their student are encouraged to reach out to their child's teacher or building administration.

Yondr Pouches and a More Focused School Day

Another change this school year is the introduction of Yondr phone pouches at Union High School, consistent with Pennsylvania's phone-free schools initiative.

The pouches allow students to keep their phones with them while keeping them securely stored and inaccessible during the school day.

We know that phones are an important part of everyday life, and we also know how challenging it can be for young people to put them aside. Our hope is that this approach will help students spend more time engaged in their classrooms, activities, friendships, teachers, and the experiences that make school meaningful.

We Appreciate Your Partnership

We understand that technology policies can sometimes raise questions, and we appreciate families taking the time to understand the reasons behind these decisions.

At the heart of all of these changes is our commitment to our students.

We want Union schools to be places where students can learn without unnecessary distractions, access the resources they need, feel safe online and in person, and develop the skills they need for their future.

We are grateful for the partnership of our families as we continue working together to make Union School District a welcoming, safe, and engaging place for every child.

Thank you for trusting us with the education and care of your children, and thank you for your continued support of Union School District and our students.

With appreciation,

Dr. John T. Kimmel
Superintendent
Union School District