

Holy Cross Academy

6th Grade Chromebook FAQ

Dear 6th Grade Families,

During my interview process for the principal role, I was excited to learn about the 6th grade Chromebook initiative that is planned for the 2019-2020 school year. I applaud and support the efforts of HCA to embrace technology as a learning tool to enhance the experience of our students. I have led one-to-one technology initiatives in my past three schools and am very comfortable supporting our faculty and students in this process.

A program like this brings about some changes and raises many good questions that must be addressed. To help both students and parents prepare for these changes, we have prepared answers to a few frequently asked questions that may help illustrate how the 6th grade Chromebooks will be implemented.

Bring Your Own Device:

Why is the Chromebook program mandatory?

In order for an instructor to fully utilize the benefits of Chromebooks in their classroom, it is important for each student to have a device to use. This allows students to begin assignments in school and seamlessly complete work at home. Our BYOD (bring your own device) program also allows students to select a Chromebook device that works best for them and that they are comfortable using.

Chromebooks were chosen for our BYOD program because they are relatively inexpensive (basic models can be found on sale around \$99 periodically). They are also perfect for utilizing Google Classroom which provides a whole host of free online tools for students. Many of our Holy Cross Academy teachers attended Google Education Training this summer in preparation for this program.

What type of device should my student bring?

One thing you will notice when shopping for a Chromebook is that there are many options available. While students may enjoy features like a 15 inch or wider display and touch screen, they are not necessary for their use in the classroom. Consider the weight of the device as students will be carrying it throughout the day and to/from school. You should also research the battery life of the device as larger displays are likely to drain the battery more quickly.

How will students carry their devices during the school day?

It will be recommended that students carry their materials between classes in a backpack. The backpack lessens the chances of a device being dropped and offers protection for the machine. To lessen the perception of favoritism, students in grades 7 and 8 will be permitted also to carry backpacks during the day.

How will Holy Cross Academy protect our students online?

The wireless network at Holy Cross Academy is connected to an extensive firewall program that prevents students from accessing inappropriate content on the web while at school. Internet safety and best practices will continue to be emphasized in the classroom and we encourage parents to monitor their child's use of their Chromebook at home where your home network may not have the same firewall filtering protections.

What type of software is necessary?

We anticipate using Google Classroom and the many free online resources available to our students. As long as students can access the internet, they will have access to free online programs for word processing, database, spreadsheet, and others. It is not necessary for devices to come loaded with Microsoft Office or other programs.

How will students charge their devices?

It will be important for students to come to school each day with their device adequately charged to last through the school day. One of the reasons we selected Chromebooks for this technology initiative is because the machines are known for having long battery life. Students who come to school without their device charged will not be able to participate in classroom technology activities and may need to complete assignments for homework.

When will students use their devices?

Chromebooks will be used to enhance the curriculum for middle school students. It is not the intention of the program for students to use their devices every period of every day, but teachers will find ways to utilize technology to enhance student learning opportunities. Students will use their devices to perform internet research, create presentations, access a variety of online learning tools, and type papers and essays.

Will my child be behind a computer screen all day?

We are eager to teach our students that Chromebooks are a valuable educational tool. However, it does not replace the absolutely vital instruction they receive from their teachers and the interaction with peers in the classroom. The classroom teacher will let the students know when it is appropriate to be using their Chromebooks. Technology will not become the sole method of presenting or displaying knowledge, but it will allow teachers the greater flexibility in how they engage students in the classroom.

How are middle school faculty preparing for Bring Your Own Device?

Middle school teachers elected to implement a pilot BYOD program with the current 6th grade class. This has allowed teachers to begin finding the best ways for students to harness the power of the internet and various programs as learning tools. The middle school staff has visited one BYOD device this year and a trip is in the works to visit Trinity High School to visit a few of their teachers who regularly utilize technology in their classrooms. Finally, middle school teachers will be participating in a two day Google Educator training this summer to further strengthen their technology muscles.

Other Questions:

No attempt to answer potential questions will ever be all inclusive. If you have additional questions about the Chromebook program, I encourage you to reach out to me or Angie Tomayko atomayko@holycrossweb.com at your convenience. Having spent the vast majority of my career working with Middle School students, they hold a special place in my heart and I'm excited about how this initiative will help enhance their learning experience.

Have a blessed day,

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