

# Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) – The St. Andrew High Experience

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BYOD at St Andrew High School for Girls (SAHS) has not taken place in isolation. It was not just about the introduction of tablet or mobile technology at all levels. Rather it is a significant stage on the journey towards a complete change in the culture of teaching and learning at the institution which began several years ago.

At some point in the course of my experience as a school leader, it became very clear to me and I have always shared this with my colleagues, that change will not take place successfully without "buy in" from the persons involved and these persons will not embrace change unless there is a change in their way of thinking. There must be a change of mind before there is a change in our actions for "as a man thinketh so is he". So the process towards change that we follow at St. Andrew is that:

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| <b>Philosophy</b> | must first be clearly articulated and this then must inform your   |
| <b>Policy</b>     | which is best developed collaboratively and policy will then guide |
| <b>Programmes</b> | the development of programmes which over time will then become     |
| <b>Practice</b>   | common practice.   |

It is within this context that I want to quickly share with you excerpts from our Focus Papers over the past few years which chronicle, in a way, the journey that we have been on as a "Community of Learners" at St. Andrew High.

Yearly 'Focus Papers' are developed as a result of our discussions as a staff and with the student body during the course of the year and significantly at the end of the year. They seek to encapsulate the way forward for the upcoming year highlighting our goals and the means by which we will achieve them. More than anything else the focus paper seeks to inspire and to put us all on the same page.

### **Focus Papers 2005 -2009**

**2005-2006** : Strategic Repositioning - References made to the 21st century learner; focus on multiple intelligences and brain based learning

**2006-2007** : Major focus - Social and Emotional Learning

**2007-2008** : eLearning and Excellence

**2008- 2009** : eLearning and Excellence with Special Emphasis on the Reluctant Learner

The "aha" moment for us as a staff came at the end of 2009 when, in our discussions, we came to the conclusion that many of those who we were labeling as reluctant learners were simply not engaged because they were not interested in the way we were teaching and we recognized that we had to do something about the delivery of instruction in the school.

The focus for the next three years 2009 -10, 2010-11, and 2011-12 therefore was '**Understanding and Responding Positively to the Needs of the 21st Century Learner**'. And as we sought to understand the learning needs of these young people entrusted to us it became very, very clear that their world was steeped in technology and therefore to engage them, educators must get comfortable with the use of technology and infuse this into the delivery of instruction.

Thank God for the eLearning initiative, because the introduction of technology is an expensive business and the input of eLearning Jamaica Ltd. in those early years was crucial as most schools, ours included, could not have gotten started on their own.

Through the school board a scheme was introduced through which laptops were purchased up front for staff who requested and they were allowed to pay back for the devices over a 12 month period. After three years possibly about 75% of staff owned their own laptops and over 4 -5 years this rose to approximately 90%. As we evolved in our understanding of these learners and as more and more our teachers bought into the use of technology and were trained by eLearning, in-

house workshops, and elsewhere both teachers and students reached a stage where access became a serious problem.

As we journeyed on the road from Technology Integration towards Technology Immersion it became clear that increased access was needed and could only come if students had their own devices at school. We examined the possibilities and chiefly because of portability, decided that tablets seemed to be the most manageable way to go.

The school could not afford to purchase tablets for the students, however, so the only solution was to go **BYOD**. This also meant though that students would not need to be restricted to tablets. They could bring whatever mobile computing device they owned.

### Steps

- 1) **Getting the right team** of bright young people in place to assist in guiding the process – (I am very aware of my limitations as a 20th century person trying to lead a 21st century institution.)
- 2) **A survey** was done of students (including the incoming Grade 7) to ascertain how many already had their own devices and their predisposition to eLearning.
- 3) **Philosophy/ rationale** clearly articulated -  
Permission sought and received from the Board.  
Several discussions held with stakeholders - staff, students, parents, old girls.
- 4) **Policy development** -  
This was spearheaded by the Head of the Information Technology Department who heads the Technology Integration team in the school.  
Review of the drafts was the focus of Senior Staff Retreat and Staff Seminar  
The policy needed to speak to what was allowed, what it was allowed for and who would have responsibility for the devices while at school  
This was long and tedious but fruitful
- 5) **The end of year (2013) letter to parents** spoke to the introduction of the BYOD programme and gave the rationale.

- 6) **A programme of bulk purchasing** was introduced to kick start the programme. Students who did not have tablets could purchase through the school. A supplier was identified to facilitate this.
- 7) **A company was contracted** during the summer to put in the necessary infrastructure to Wifi enable the Main Classroom Block which houses the entire lower school. Not long after the programme began, however, it was discovered that this was far from enough. Every Internet enabled device (every smartphone, blackberry, ipod, etc,) took up an IP address and soon there were cries from students and staff about being unable to access the Internet. We had to negotiate a new contract with an Internet Service Provider to increase the bandwidth as the 10MB we were getting was not consistent and it was no longer adequate for a school of over 1500 students
- 8) ) **Projectors were installed** in every other classroom on this block.
- 9) **The roll-out of the programme** was pushed back from September 2013 to October 2013 as it was believed that it was important to discuss the TAUP in detail with the students and to get all parents and students to sign and submit the contracts before the programme was introduced.
- 10) **A system of registration** of devices was developed. All students had to register the devices they were taking to school. They are then tagged.
- 11) **The big day, registration day** came. There were some teachers who were apprehensive, nervous about what would happen, however the policy was there to guide us.
- 12) **At first there was a lot of excitement.** However by the end of the second term the novelty had worn off and tablets/computing devices are now just one of the learning tools that students take to school. **Initially** the excitement was a little disruptive, some "showing off" did take place. We also had several incidences of theft. Students were careless leaving tablets unattended, dropping them, etc.

## Advantages

Greater engagement of students, **students love technology** they are happy that they can take their devices to school.

- 1) Several Apps available to assist in the delivery of instruction in all disciplines e.g.
  - Modern Languages** - fairy tales online, pronunciation apps
  - Visual Arts** - examples of various techniques
  - Technical Drawing** - examples of various types of architecture
  - History** - several examples of historical happenings can come alive using movies documentaries that are available.
  - Music** - piano app where students can practice on the keyboard.
  - Several games available that can be used to engage students.
  - Follow up activities after a topic has been taught.
  - YouTube has many educational and interesting videos.
  - In all areas students can together look at the various careers related to the particular discipline.
- 2) Several Textbooks are available freely online. Shakespeare plays, dictionaries, the bible, Teachers therefore have less problems with students not taking their books to class because they are too heavy.  
ELearning has provided textbooks which are being used.
- 3) Increased communication between teachers and students. All students now have a St Andrew High email address. Teachers email lesson plans, information sheets and other material pertinent to the lesson to students ahead of the class so that they come prepared for a class that can focus on the strengthening of higher order skills instead of just the delivery of content. The concept of the “flipped classroom” is greatly enabled.
- 4) There is less printing being done especially in the Upper School because information can now be emailed to students and they can access these on their devices in class.
- 5) Research has been greatly facilitated both in class and out of class. In class, teachers do not have to know everything. The culture that is developing is one of – “let’s look up the information”. Students feel good when they are the ones to contribute something new to the conversation.

Students can access current information as textbook statistics are now quickly outdated particularly in subjects like Economics and Sociology. The school also contributes to the EBSCOHOST database so students now have access to a wealth of resources in several subject areas that they can access wherever they can access wifi.

- 6) Oral presentations by students are videotaped and then discussed. Students can playback and the teacher can show where they went wrong or right. A good presentation can be used in other classes. Departments are now being encouraged to video their best lessons so that they can be used in other classes. Many times team teaching is difficult because of time tabling issues. This can now be partially resolved
- 7) Because we are not yet at the point where we have projectors in every room, a teacher can still have a successful class because the students have their own devices.

### **Disadvantages**

- 1) Not all students own their own devices. There has to be some sharing in class and teachers have to take additional laptops if they want everyone to have a computer.
- 2) We did not have HDMI cords to connect the tablets to the projectors. Not enough projectors and speakers.
- 3) No wifi in some areas of the school
- 4) The management of the devices. Teachers have to be keen and alert to ensure that students are on point and not doing something else on the device while the lesson is going on. Bags can't be on the desks. Smart phones particularly difficult to manage because they can quickly get on BBM, WhatsApp and Texting.
- 5) Integrity issues – eg: the use of Google Translator or finding the workbook with answers and trying to pass this off as your own work. Teachers encouraged to use these as teachable moments.

- 6) Some students no longer want to write, they want to type and take pictures of everything including notes and diagrams. Teachers have to lay down the ground rules from day one as to when devices are to be turned on and when they are to be turned off. As long as examinations require writing we must ensure that students practice this skill.
- 7) Full scale productivity tools and some other programs not available on the tablets e.g. EDUCOSoft.
- 8) We still need to set up charging stations.

Overall, the staff agrees that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages and it has been a good year. We are now much further up the learning curve and we look forward to next year being an even more successful one as we seek to transform our culture into one of students being engaged independent learners who are being expertly guided by teachers who are well trained and highly motivated in the use of technology.

**Sharon Reid (Mrs.)**  
**Principal**  
**St. Andrew High School for Girls**  
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