Digital Learning @ GHS

Newsletter No. 2

The response from parents and students to this exciting new initiative at Grafton High School has been absolutely outstanding. The JB HiFi parent portal has now closed after the initial ordering deadline and 93 Chromebooks have already been ordered. This is in addition to the devices some parents have brought elsewhere from other retailers and means that, all-up, we have an initial uptake in the order of 58%. From experience in other schools the normal uptake for the first run of orders on devices is less than 50%, so this is a very pleasing response and demonstrates the commitment of Grafton High School parents to their child's education. Your support in this area is greatly appreciated and we do understand that it involves a significant financial outlay; so a big thank you and well done.

The devices purchased from JB HiFi will be shipped to the school and then set up with licencing and apps to ensure they can work on our school network ready for day one next term. A reminder, if you haven't done so, for parents to pay the $30 licencing and connection fee to the front office as soon as possible so that we can order licences from Google and connect your child's device ready for day one next term.

If you are yet to purchase a Chromebook for your child then don't worry, there is still time to do so as the JB HiFi portal has now been reopened. Any devices ordered before end of term will be shipped to the school. Then all parents need do is make the payment to the school for the $30 licencing and connection fee and the device will be set up and connected to our school network and domain within the first few weeks of next term; then issued back to the child for their use.

The school's preparation for the rollout of our new Digital Learning program is also well underway. Ninety of the Acer Chromebooks have been delivered and will be set up as class sets and period-by-period loan devices for students. A further 80 ASUS Chromebooks have already arrived and been distributed to staff, who are now using these devices for a range of administrative and educational tasks. A total of almost 4 full weeks of release time have already been utilised by staff for the purpose of developing digital learning units ready for next term and we expect further days to be taken over the next few weeks. At a recent staff meeting we had a "show and tell" session where staff were able to showcase the units they have developed. There is some fantastic work being done and we are starting to see some real outcomes from the investment of time and resources. English teacher Kane Pipe reflects the attitude of other teachers involved in the program: "I'm really excited to be part of this innovative program with an emphasis on collaboration and creativity. The Chromebooks are going to allow our students to engage in an exciting 21st Century approach to learning."

Chromebook Launch

Of course, the real outcomes for students will occur when these units are put into practice in the classroom. We will start next term on Monday 20th April with the school development day for teachers focussed on further professional learning on the use of Chromebooks in the classroom. Also on Monday, from 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm we will have a "Meet the Chromebook" evening for parents, where parents can come along and have a play with one of the same Chromebook computers their child will be using. We will give parents a quick introduction to the device, where they can then have a hands-on experience with the sorts of applications and digital learning experiences that their children will take part in.

On the first day back for students, Tuesday 21st April, all year 7 will spend the day at a Chromebook "Boot Camp", where every lesson in the day will involve students being taught how to properly use their devices for learning and for organising their work. Students will also be asked to sign a Digital Device Acceptable Use Agreement that will detail the rules and requirements around the appropriate use of these devices. These agreements will then need a parent signature and be returned to school so that the students can begin using their devices connected to the school network. We are organising a special lunch for students on the day (pizza and a drink) and possibly some prizes for students to acknowledge their work.

I know that this is all very new to many students, parents and teachers. Unfortunately, we tend to base our opinions of new things on our experiences of the old. There have been many attempts in the past to utilise technology in education, including student access to mobile devices such as laptop computers. However, there is a point of difference here between past practice and the process the school is currently engaged in:

- There has been feedback and consultation with SRC, teachers and P&C along the way, which has informed the way the program has developed.
- Students have full ownership over their own devices. They are not a handout that may mean little to them or just something supplied by the school.
- The school has engaged external education consultants, with experience in implementing similar programs successfully elsewhere. By doing this, we draw upon the experience of Scott Barnham and Dr Nerida McCredie – experts in digital learning.
- We have the technology and infrastructure, including support personnel, in place. This has involved significant financial commitment from the school.
- Finally and most importantly, our focus is on technology as a tool for learning, not as the focus of learning itself. Our focus is on quality teaching and we have spent the time to ensure that staff are trained and have opportunities to collect and develop quality digital learning experiences that **enhance** learning. With this in mind we have attached a sheet that explains how aspects of digital learning and ICT skills equate to the different levels of Blooms Taxonomy. Blooms Taxonomy is an educational framework for describing the different levels of thinking skills. Our focus in education is always to develop students in higher order thinking skills. These are the skills that we use when we create and problem solve. The aim in digital learning is to utilise technology in meaningful ways that engage students at higher levels of thinking. It is not about technology to assist with simply presenting information. The value of the technology is its ability to allow students to model and experiment, to deconstruct and analyse, to create.

Frequently Asked Questions

My child has never had a Chromebook and we have never used one. How will they learn to use a Chromebook?

All children will participate in a "Boot Camp" on day one of term 2. During the day they will be taught how to use their Chromebook. We will cover topics such as digital citizenship and explain what appropriate and inappropriate use of electronic devices is. Students will be issued with a Digital Device Acceptable Use Agreement that they will need to sign and then have a parent/carer sign.

What extra software do I need to purchase for my child?

None! The $30 licencing and connection fee pays for all software licencing for connection and administration of devices at school. Each Chromebook comes with the Google Apps For Education suite of software, which includes word processing, spreadsheets and presentation software. Students can access the Internet through the Google Chrome Browser. There are thousands of free apps that students can download and the school will automatically install onto all student computers any apps teachers select for use in their classrooms. You can learn more about the Google Apps at: https://www.google.com.au/edu/products/productivity-tools/

I haven't yet purchased a Chromebook for my child?

The school has purchased a number of "loan devices". These Chromebooks are identical to the Acer model that was available for purchase through JB HiFi. These devices will be available to students for the boot camp day and, provided a student has returned their Digital Device Acceptable Use Agreement, students will be able to borrow a device for individual lessons as required. Please note that school Chromebooks cannot be lent to students to take home.

How is my child's Chromebook covered against damage at home and at school?

The Department of Education does not have any cover for any personal property. Some parents may have purchased additional cover options as part of their purchase of the Chromebook. It is also worth checking with your "Home and Contents" insurer, as some insurers will cover portable devices up to certain values. **It is strongly recommended that all students have some form of protective case or cover for their Chromebook.**

What happens if there is a fault with my child's Chromebook?

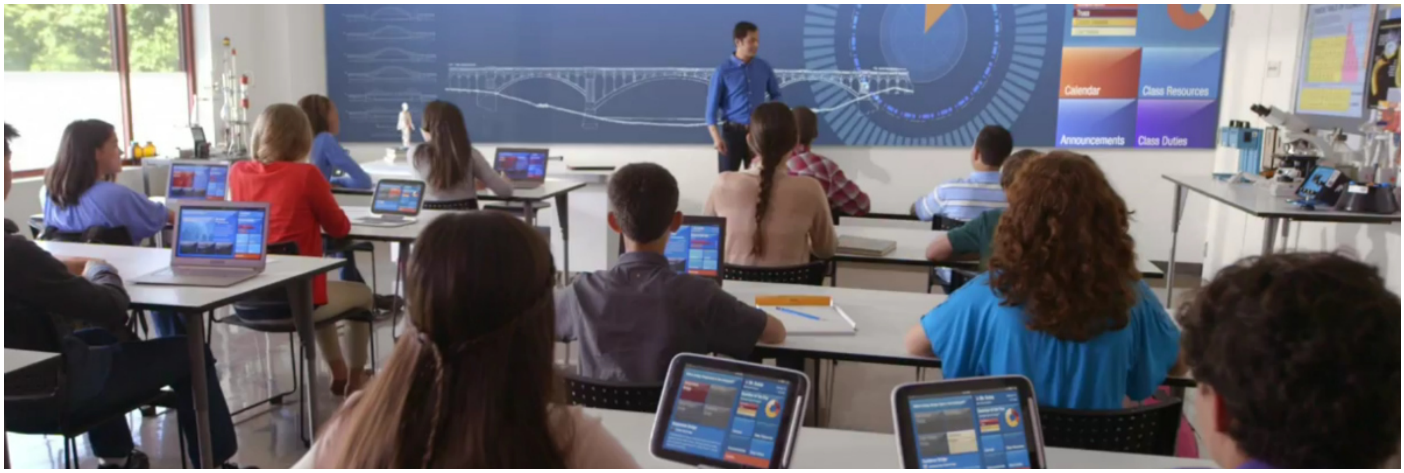
The school will check all devices are working when we licence and connect them to the network. If there is a warranty issue after the child begins using the device then JB HiFi's Education Division have processes in place for local authorised warranty repairs. We will provide further detail on this when student devices are issued next term. In the event that a student's own Chromebook is lost, damaged, or in for repairs; the student will be able to access the school loan devices for lessons.

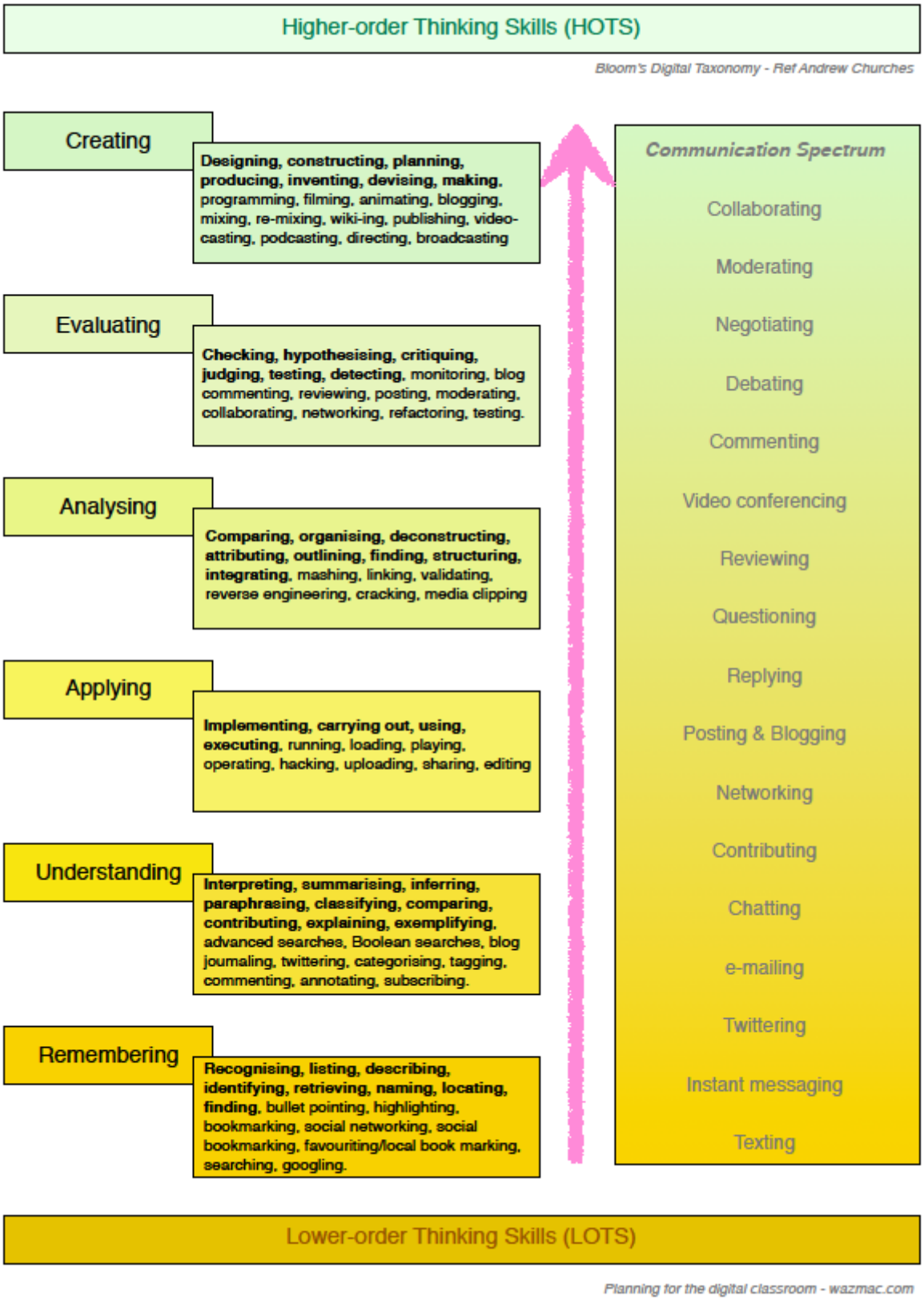
How will my child be able to print documents?

Children will not themselves be able to print documents at school. However, their teachers will be able to print documents as required. As students will have access to their files anywhere through "cloud storage" there will not be as great a need to print work. If students connect to their own network at home then there are ways of connecting to printers for printing at home.

What do I need to do at home to accommodate my child's Chromebook?

Your child will simply need somewhere to charge their Chromebook each evening. There will not be sufficient power points in classrooms for children to charge their devices during the day. One of the reasons we chose Chromebooks was their long battery charge, which is typically around 9-10 hours. Additionally, if you have Internet access at home and a "Wireless Router" or "Wireless Access Point" then you should be able to connect your child's Chromebook to your home network so that they can work fully from home (please see you Internet Service Provider for details regarding home Internet connection). Students can use most apps in "offline mode" and can physically back up their work to external USB drives and memory sticks if they wish.




Higher-order Thinking Skills (HOTS)
Bloom's Digital Taxonomy - Ref Andrew Churches
Creating
Designing, constructing, planning, producing, inventing, devising, making, programming, filming, animating, blogging, mixing, re-mixing, wiki-ing, publishing, video-casting, podcasting, directing, broadcasting
Evaluating
Checking, hypothesising, critiquing, judging, testing, detecting, monitoring, blog commenting, reviewing, posting, moderating, collaborating, networking, refactoring, testing.
Analysing
Comparing, organising, deconstructing, attributing, outlining, finding, structuring, integrating, mashing, linking, validating, reverse engineering, cracking, media clipping
Applying
Implementing, carrying out, using, executing, running, loading, playing, operating, hacking, uploading, sharing, editing
Understanding
Interpreting, summarising, inferring, paraphrasing, classifying, comparing, contributing, explaining, exemplifying, advanced searches, Boolean searches, blog journaling, twittering, categorising, tagging, commenting, annotating, subscribing.
Remembering
Recognising, listing, describing, identifying, retrieving, naming, locating, finding, bullet pointing, highlighting, bookmarking, social networking, social bookmarking, favouriting/local book marking, searching, googling.
Communication Spectrum
Collaborating
Moderating
Negotiating
Debating
Commenting
Video conferencing
Reviewing
Questioning
Replying
Posting & Blogging
Networking
Contributing
Chatting
e-mailing
Twittering
Instant messaging
Texting
Lower-order Thinking Skills (LOTS)
Planning for the digital classroom - wazmac.com