

# Technology Update

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JUNE 29  
CREATED BY SAM UTZ

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# So, what's going on?

*What we've accomplished, what we're planning for, what's next...*

I hope everyone is well and enjoying the extra time with family and loved ones. The purpose of this update is to provide information in regards to where the division is at from a technology standpoint. I want all staff to have as much information as possible, so I would like to address the question above in three parts: What have we accomplished thus far, what is currently in progress, and what the next steps are as we head into July.

## What We've Accomplished

Before COVID-19 even hit the tech department had many projects lined up for this summer. These projects include:

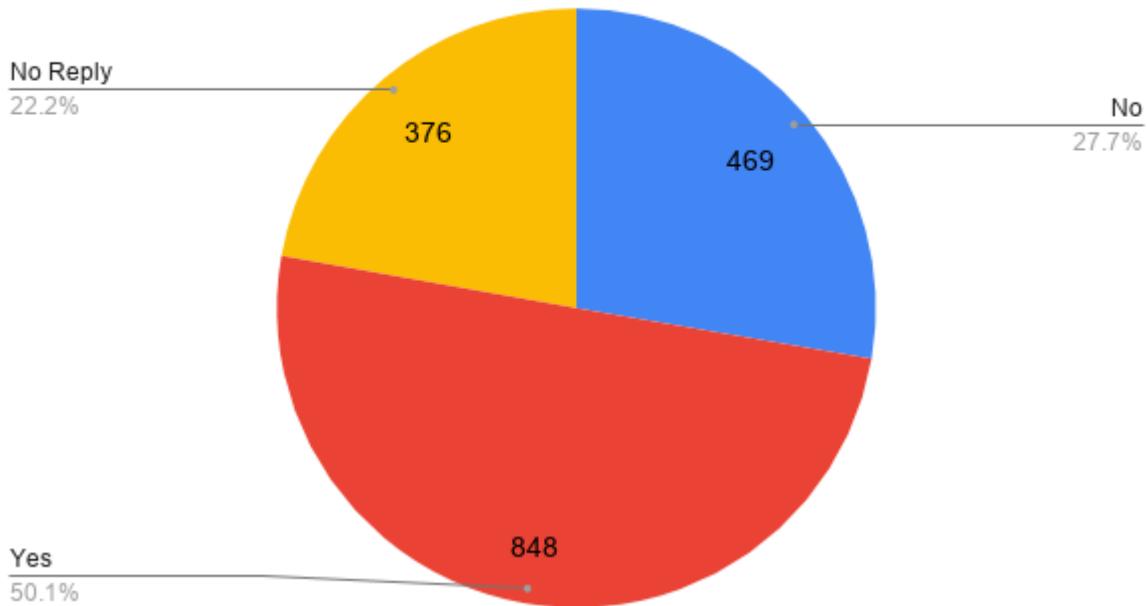
- ***Removal of technology from Madison Primary School prior to renovation***
  - Huge shout out to MPS staff, Maintenance Department, Bus Shop, and Custodians, among others, for getting this all done in house and ahead of schedule.
  - All MPS rooms have been moved and technology will be coming around in the upcoming weeks to reconnect phones, radios, and projectors in some cases.
- ***District-wide wireless refresh***
  - We were able to update wireless infrastructure in all buildings for future proofing of device wireless technologies and backup redundancy in the event of hardware failure. You may noticed that in most rooms the access points look a little different.
- ***District-wide phone system upgrade***
  - Phone hardware is the same, but everything behind the scenes to make it function has been updated. This was in an effort to align with the county phone system in the event we want to collaborate on emergencies in the future. It also will also extend the lifespan of the server already in place.
- ***Transition from PowerSchool Assessment & Analytics to Performance Matters***
  - PowerSchool Assessment and Analytics is no longer going to be supported by PowerSchool so Jessica Deboer and Instructional Coaches have led the implementation transition to Performance Matters. I am sure most buildings have seen emails about this going around this summer and we will provide more information and training as the project ends.
- ***Wiped, updated, cleaned, and repaired mobile inventory of roughly 2000 devices***

Luckily, so many parties have made the above tasks run extremely smooth in light of our current situation. So this brings up the question, what have we done to specifically address COVID-19?

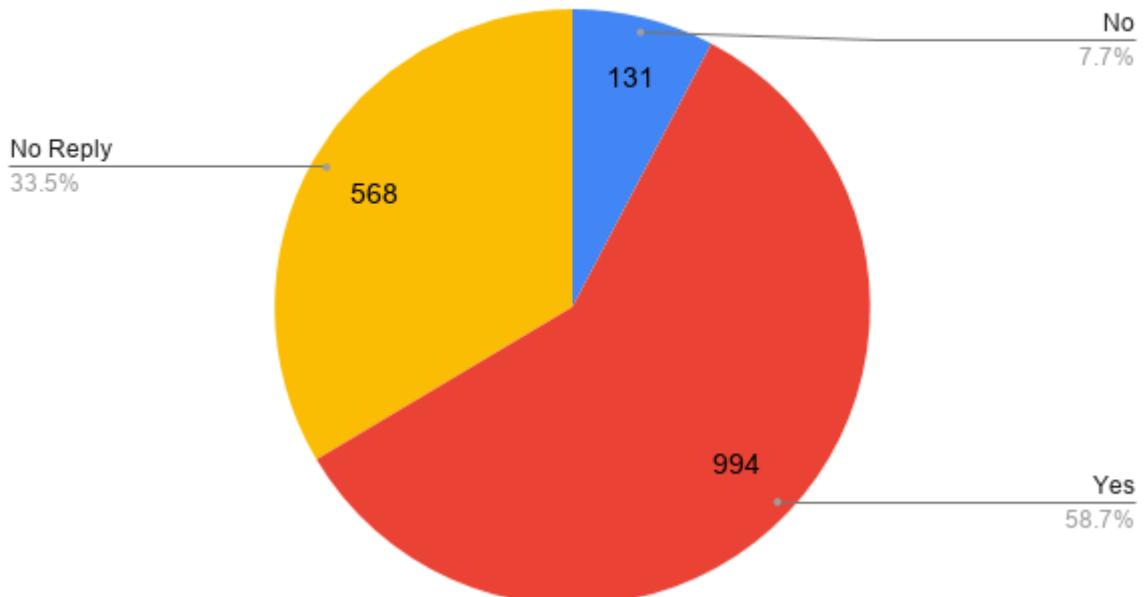
Always planning for worst-case scenario, our thought process was to be prepared for distance learning. Thus, our first task was to get a gauge on device availability for take home 1:1 and what home broadband looks like in the county.

Below is a visual representation on the data we have been able to gather as of 6/28/2020.

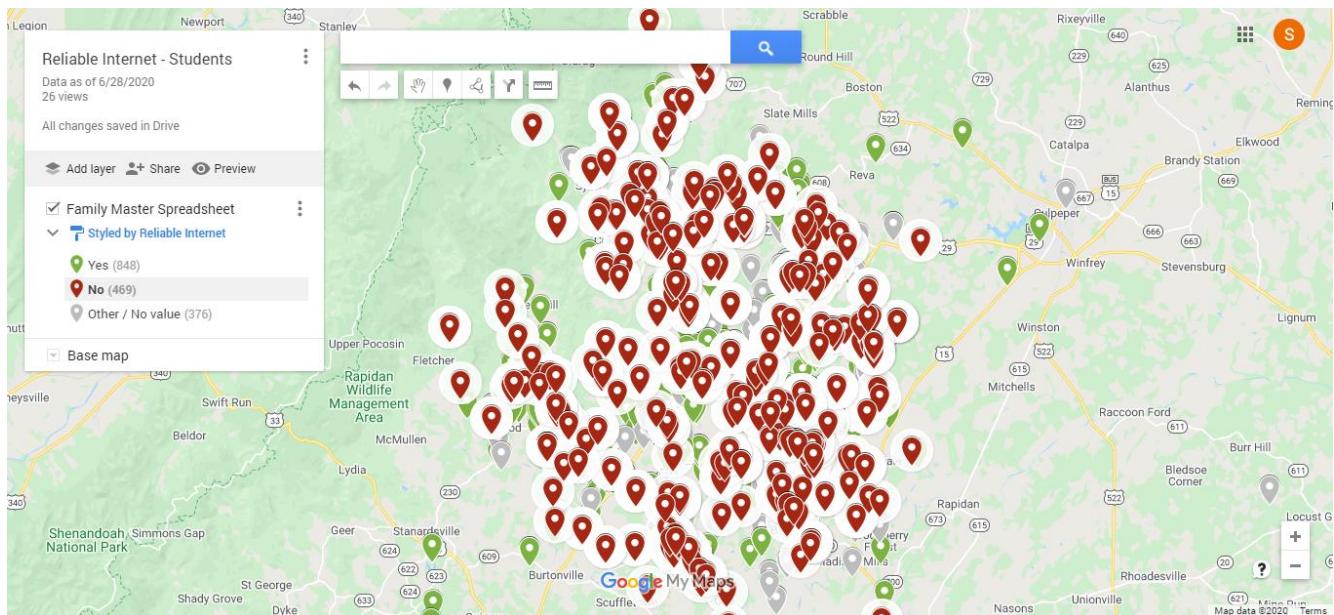
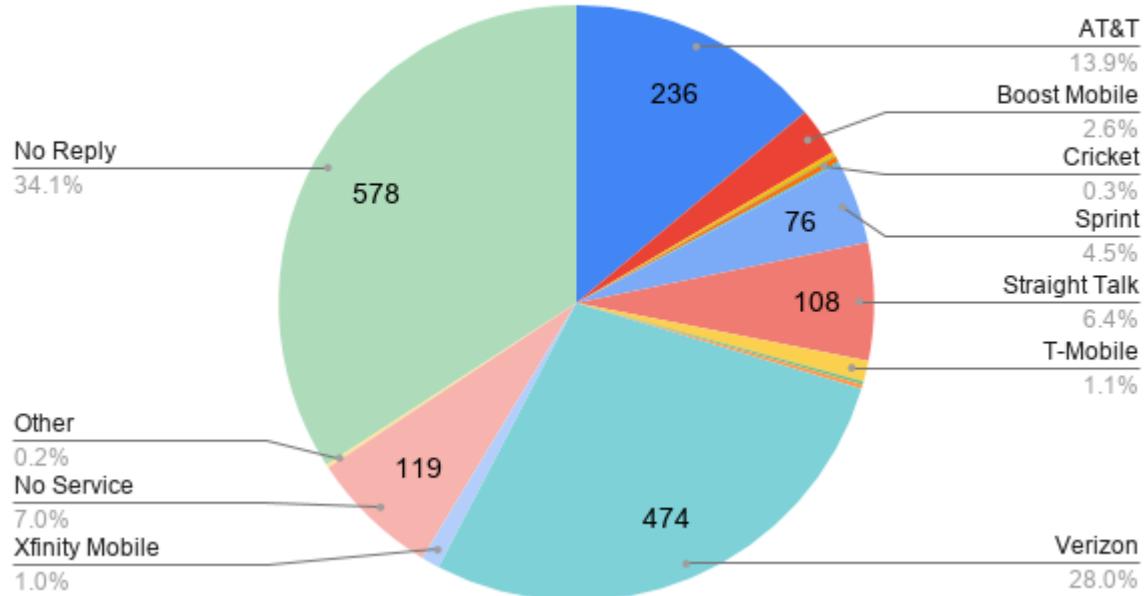
### Reliable Internet - Students



### Cell Service - Students



## Service Provider - Students



As you can see from the images above, we had two issues in our study. The first was contacting families. We have emailed, called, and in some cases both, every family with listed contact information in Madison and unfortunately, 22-34% were unaccounted for depending on survey. With that in mind, I believe we have to assume, network access is a problem for those families. This leads us to the big picture problem, broadband availability throughout the county and how to provide

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equitable instruction in the event face-to-face is off the table. Here are the action steps we have taken:

- ***Installed external Wi-Fi antennas at MCHS and WYES***
  - This at least gives families the option to park on school grounds to do work or download content offline.
- ***Investigate wireless hotspots***
  - We've purchased 25 T-Mobile hotspots
    - Study has shown units to be hit or miss throughout the county and even dependent on the weather in terms of working properly.
  - Currently investigating Wi-Fi buses
    - This will require coordination with Transportation as well as a plan to power the units.
  - Looking into different hotspot units that may at least cover some of our families
    - With over 40% of the county being covered by Verizon and AT&T, these would be the next network providers to test units. You may ask, "Why didn't we just buy those in the first place?" The answer is because everything was backordered until August. As providers start to get more units in, we hope to compete for them as every other county is doing.
- ***Purchased additional storage drives for Chromebooks***
  - Each Chromebook will come with a 32GB micro USB drive to allow for more local space on the machine to download content offline, so students can continue working at home even without network.
- ***Reach out to other school divisions and VDOE***
  - Unfortunately, we are in the same situation as many rural counties throughout the state. I have been in discussions with Orange, Greene, Culpeper, Albemarle, and Clarke, among others, and we are all attempting the same thing in terms of mobile hotspots, Wi-Fi in the parking lots, USB drives, etc. The issue we see varies though because of the lack of fiber network throughout the county and the time it would take to have things in place before the start of the school year. That is why we continue the course with hotspots and offline lessons for the time being.
  - We will also be reaching out to Internet Service Providers to see what offers are out there for discounted family bundles that may be able to help some families where high speed broadband is available.
  - In addition, VDOE is releasing some additional grant funding in the upcoming weeks to help with the purchase of mobile hotspot units.

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# What We're Planning For

We began this discussion towards the back end of the last section as we addressed the countywide broadband issues. It is clear that in home Wi-Fi for students will be an ongoing challenge for the next school year and we will continue to do all we can to get kids connected. In the meantime, we just have to be considerate of this while we map out classwork, lesson plans, and instruction. Here is how we plan to make this possible:

- ***1:1 Device for every student***
  - Grades PK-1 will receive the following
    - iPad with case
    - iPad carrying bag
  - Grade 2-12
    - Chromebook
    - 32gb micro USB drive
    - Chromebook carrying bag
    - Devices managed by Google Admin and GoGuardian
  - We'll also be buying spare parts/batteries and have some spare units for repairs.
- ***Printers are being serviced***
  - Having units checked prior to start date in cases where printing may be only option
- ***Canvas LMS***
  - This is the one most people have been curious about so I will attach a separate document to explain the process. For the sake of this document, I will just state that MCPS has decided to use Canvas as a universal LMS for the upcoming school year. By doing such, we can run all our applications in one centralized location, as well as utilize Virtual Virginia's online curriculum as a supplement to instruction.
  - Training webinar is scheduled for July 6th. More information on the Canvas document.
  - Looking to secure another round of training in early August as Canvas is currently booked through July.
- ***District-Wide Subscription to Screencastify***
  - Though Canvas has a built in screen recorder, we wanted to supplement with software that is user-friendly and automatically sends a copy to your Google drive so you always have a backup.
  - Training will be provided as well as access in the upcoming weeks.
- ***Machines for new staff members will be available earlier than normal***
  - Devices will be ready week of July 29<sup>th</sup> in an effort for new members to begin collaboration with teams.
- ***Other Notes***
  - We are working with staff on summer school items

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- If you need printer rights or door access, please submit a tech request
  - MCPS is investigating new visitor check-in systems and practices in an effort to limit the amount of interaction front office personnel will have to navigate.

## What's Next?

I know this is a lot to digest, but I want to reassure everyone that we are in this together and I will do everything I can to get you to a comfortable spot to start the next school year. With that in mind, I would encourage the following as we move into July:

- ***If you're an instructor, I encourage you to log into your Canvas account and play around a little bit***
  - See Canvas document for more information.
  - If you're non-instruction but would like an account, let me know. However, unless you really need one, I would not suggest requesting. If you are unsure, just ask me and I can let you know specifically.
- ***Stay tuned as the technology department releases training videos***
  - We'll likely start with Canvas, Screencastify, and organizational strategies. However, we're open to suggestions and would love to collaborate.
- ***PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE use the tech request form***
  - I realize it's easier to email, but you're doing us a big favor by submitting requests through the proper channels. It allows us to stay organized as a team and you have three people notified instead of one.

I want to thank you all that made it through this document for taking the time to read and I appreciate your patience as we try to do what's best for kids and staff. I know this document will likely spring more questions, but I ask that you go through building admin and not directly respond to this email. The reason being is that the question you have is likely the same question five other people have, and it would be easier to send out mass responses after building coordination. You can find the direct link below. Go ahead and copy/bookmark to your preferred browser.

Tech Request Link: <https://goo.gl/forms/wZGLaQwVhT36XayW2>