Digital Learning Initiative – Frequently Asked Questions

What is Digital Learning?
A Digital Learning environment is one in which each enrolled student is issued an electronic device with which to access the Internet, use digital course materials, and collaborate with local and remote peers. This environment can also be referred to as a 1:1 program.

What is the Digital Learning Initiative?
For the 2014-2015 school year, District 203 will be implementing a Digital Learning Initiative to study the teaching and learning enablement associated with issuing an electronic device (computer) to a small sampling of students across the District. The information and results gathered from this Initiative will be used to create a future recommendation for a digital learning solution across the entire District.

Why are we doing this?
Digital Learning supports the District's mission by providing an environment for self-directed learning and collaborative working, as well as requiring complex thinking to use relevant computer technology wisely, ethically and efficiently to create quality products.

We believe that every student has a right to an education that prepares them for further education and future employment, and develops the skills they must have to be productive and responsible citizens: creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. When students have access to information that addresses individual needs, developmental levels, or interests, while allowing the student to collaborate and connect with others, the experience of schooling is enriched.

Why is the District only having select schools and classes participate instead of opening it to the whole District?
Fully scaled Digital Learning programs can be expensive and complicated to administer. By planning and conducting a study of a Digital Learning program on a smaller scale, we will be able to:

- Leverage and learn from technology efforts already in place across the District
- Learn from similar efforts made by peer districts, but in a small scale with minimized risk
- Conduct a collaborative, vigorous study to maximize discovery and findings while minimizing time and expenditure
- Define the financial, technical and operational framework required to implement and sustain a fully scaled Digital Learning program

How did you select which classes/courses to include in the Digital Learning Initiative?
A District-wide team of teachers, administrators and IT representatives collectively identified the teachers and subsequent classes that would be included in this Initiative. Those selected teachers and classes are representative of the entire District, while at the same time maintaining a financially responsible number of participants. The Digital Learning Initiative will deploy across 41 classes, taught by 50 teachers, in 13 schools across the District, involving all grade levels. Representation from dual learning, special education and gifted programs are also included.

Tell me more about the technology
Within the Digital Learning Initiative, participating students will be issued an Apple iPad, Acer Chromebook or an Asus 2 in 1 tablet to access the Internet, use digital course materials, and collaborate with local and remote peers. The selected devices were specifically chosen from the three leading computer systems vendors with strong educational products and services. The coordination of any specific vendor's hardware, operating software and back-end educational products is called an 'ecosystem'. Throughout the course of this Initiative, the District will explore the ecosystems of Apple, Google and Microsoft in all aspects from ease of use to teaching enhancement and learning enablement. Students in participating classrooms/courses will receive their device and supporting accessories (power plugs and carrying cases) in kits to be distributed during the first two weeks of the school year.

The Digital Learning Initiative is about more than giving devices to our students. District administrators, teachers and IT are working together to integrate content, instructional methods and technology to transform the teaching and learning of our students.

How has District 203 prepared for this Initiative?
During the 2012 – 2013 school year, District 203 conducted study called Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) where students were encouraged to bring their own computer from home for use in the classroom. Feedback on the BYOD program from our teachers was that the wireless network infrastructure must be upgraded and that a District sponsored, standard device across all classes is preferred.

The upgrade of District 203s wireless network is complete with a dramatic increase in coverage and bandwidth. It is also built specifically to accommodate the connectivity requirements of a Digital Learning environment.

The Initiative will help us determine which ecosystem will be the best for teaching and learning, and that ecosystem will influence a standard device selection.

How will a student be impacted if he or she is not included in the Digital Learning Initiative?
The Digital Learning Initiative has been scaled to be financially prudent while providing a sufficient student sample size necessary to generate the data required to select an ecosystem that can scale across the entire District. These two requirements resulted in a student population sample size of approximately 9 percent. That means that 91 percent of our students will not be participating. Curriculum will remain the same throughout the District and students not included in the Initiative will continue to have access to the same school provided laptops as last year.

What will this cost and who is paying for it?
All Initiative devices will be provided by District 203 at no additional charge, and will remain the ownership of Naperville Unit Community School District 203.

All devices purchased for the Initiative will be used again in the following school year. Devices from ecosystems not chosen will be used as testing stations or resold.

At the end of the school year, all Initiative devices and their accessories must be returned to the District. Note that in the event a student withdraws from a class or course included in the Digital Learning Initiative, the device and its accessories must be returned immediately.

I'm concerned about my student accessing inappropriate information on the Internet. What are you doing about that?
District 203 is in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and therefore filters all access to the Internet from District computers that access the Internet from school. District 203 does not provide Internet filtering outside of school. **When a student accesses the Internet from their Digital Learning device outside of school (at home, restaurant Wi-Fi, etc.), that Internet access will not be filtered.** Families should discuss and encourage appropriate Internet usage and filtering outside of school. At home Internet filtering information can be obtained from the company that provides Internet access at home.

What if the device is lost or damaged?
At this time, the District is maintaining a small pool of spare devices and more information on lost or stolen devices can be found in the Guidelines. All Initiative devices are the property of Naperville Unit Community School District 203 and will be appropriately asset tagged. At this point, no fee will be charged for damaged or replacement devices. Students should contact their teachers immediately regarding lost, stolen, or damaged devices and teachers will follow established protocol. Please be aware that a police report must be filed for all stolen devices.

Will technical support be available?
District technology staff will be available to assist students and teachers and are prepared for the support requirements of this Initiative. Students whose devices break or malfunction will be issued a loaner or replacement device.   Since all devices have integrated batteries, a battery swap is not possible for an uncharged device. All devices must come to school fully charged. There are limited power outlets available in the classroom.

On the first day of school, August 20, two methods for parents to ask questions will be available. Questions can be e-mailed to AskDLI@naperville203.org, or calls to (630) 548-4554. Both mailboxes will be monitored and calls and e-mails answered promptly.

Will students be able to take the device home?
Yes. As soon at a student has turned in signed copies of both the student and parent Digital Learning Initiative Device Permission and Acceptable Use Forms, the device may be taken home subject to teacher discretion.

Do I need to have Internet service at home for this device to work?
Regardless of device, Internet access at home is becoming more and more important to the educational process. Teachers are continually finding and using information, resources, tools, and programs on the Internet to enhance their curriculum. While the device can be equipped with off-line apps that can be used when the device is not connected to the Internet, there may be some projects and assignments that do require Internet access.

All participating students will need an Internet connection at home for all Initiative based homework assignments. Many Internet connection options are available, and Naperville area Comcast provides a reduced price connection program for qualifying families. That program can be found at http://www.internetessentials.com/

How will my child's privacy be protected?
District 203 takes security and privacy very seriously. The District makes all reasonable efforts and adheres to all state and federal laws to protect and maintain your child's privacy.

Can a student bring in his/her own laptop?
One of the primary goals of the Digital Learning Initiative is the selection of an ecosystem, part of which is the computing device. All students participating in Digital Learning classes must use the District-issued device.

Students not included in the Digital Learning Initiative are to comply with District policies for Bring Your Own Device (BYOD).

Why does my student need to bring the device home when we have a computer at home?
Students will often need to access resources installed on the District device. In addition, devices must be charged overnight and brought to school ready to use.

How do the devices connect to the Internet?
The devices being purchased by the District will have built-in WiFi, so they can connect to any available WiFi network. They will be set up to automatically connect to the WiFi network in District 203 locations, but will also be able to connect to any home or public WiFi network.

Can we buy the device that was issued?
There are no current plans to allow students to purchase the devices used for the Initiative.

I don't want my student to have an electronic device. Can I opt out?
These devices will be an integral part of classroom instruction, and without a device, students would be unable to participate fully in classroom activities and assignments. Just as textbooks are required for class today, an electronic device will be required for use in class in the future. A parent/guardian that chooses not to have their student participate in the Digital Learning Initiative must coordinate take-home assignment completion with their teacher.