To: Becky McFall, Superintendent
        Lincoln School Committee
From: Rob Ford
Re: Technology Department Update
Date: September 18, 2013

Summary Project Report

Summer Project Report

This summer, the technology department was focused on three major projects - a full network upgrade, deployment of new computers, and implementation of the BaselineEdge evaluation system. In July, new fiberoptic cabling was run on the Lincoln campus, and all network core and edge switches were replaced, eliminating network bottlenecks, improving performance, and reducing energy use. New firewalls and content filters were installed as well, followed by new wireless access points in late July and August, providing a more secure network and better wireless coverage throughout all of our schools.

During July and August, the technology department also deployed 50 new laptops for faculty, replacing a significant number of our oldest teacher laptops. Also in August, 30 new Chromebooks as well as additional iPads were set up to meet the increased number of 6th through 8th grade students in the Hanscom Middle School 1:1 program.

The technology department also participated in the introduction of the new evaluation system, through the implementation of the BaselineEdge system. This system helps educators and evaluators securely collaborate on the evaluation process through the use of online forms, due-date tracking, and the electronic collection of evidence and artifacts. We also helped assemble an online evaluation handbook and collaborated with building leaders on professional development introducing the evaluation system and BaselineEdge.

Director of Technology Entry Plan Update

Progress continues on my entry plan process. Approximately 60% of planned entry meetings have been completed including meetings with central office administrators, principals, special education coordinators, the facilities manager, technology department staff, and a number of classroom educators. Also, in early July, the Technology and Library Department faculty and staff all came together for a one-day retreat, where we worked on building our department culture and planning for the coming school year.

Over the summer, I focused on examining the district's technology asset management practices. As a result of this review, we are now preparing to launch a full inventory, including the barcoding and labeling of all technology equipment with asset tags that will both identify the equipment as the property of the Lincoln Public Schools and assist with the tracking of equipment over time.

I also spent time this summer reviewing Aspen, our student information system (SIS). As part of this process, the district Data Manager and I met with representatives from Follett, Aspen's parent company, and had a productive discussion regarding the district's needs and some of the challenges we have experienced with Aspen, particularly around the

management of assessment data. Following this meeting, the Assistant Superintendent and I agreed to halt adding any new assessments to Aspen, pending a review of upcoming assessment improvements in Aspen planned for later in the year as well as the results of a broader data systems and assessment review process.

As part of the entry plan, I have also been reviewing the district's technology policies. One immediate need that has emerged is around online services, student privacy, and COPPA.

COPPA
The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) is Federal legislation designed to protect student's privacy online by regulating what personal information the operators of websites and online services can collect from children under the age of 13. Under COPPA, the operators of online services must notify parents of any personal data that is being collected from children under 13 and obtain consent from parents to collect this data. COPPA originally applied to names, mailing and street addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers, and persistent identifiers such as government id numbers. Effective this past July 1, 2013, COPPA was extended to also cover geolocation information, photos, videos, and audio files of a child's image or their voice, user or screen names, and cookies, IP addresses, and other online tracking identifiers.

COPPA requires that website and online service operators obtain verifiable parental consent before collecting data in most circumstances. The key change to COPPA as of July 1st, is that a parent's consent is now required for even a username, therefore parental consent is generally required before a student can sign up for a service, even if they provide no other personal information. The COPPA rules contain a provision that allows school districts to provide consent on behalf of a parent, when the collection of personal information from students is solely for the use and benefit of the school or student, and for no other commercial purpose. However, the district then assumes the responsibility for notifying parents of the data collection.

In addition to the specific COPPA rules, various companies have established their own COPPA-informed terms of service. Some operators, such as Facebook and Dropbox do not allow children under the age of 13 to use their services. Others, such as Edmodo, explicitly transfer the responsibility for obtaining parental consent to the school district.

The current practice in the Lincoln Public Schools is inconsistent and runs the gamut from obtaining written parental consent, to sending notification to parents with an opt-out option, to not obtaining consent in some cases. While most of these options may meet the letter of the law of COPPA, they don't achieve the underlying goal of clearly informing parents of the collection of personal information and empowering them to opt their children out if they so choose.

Both in the spirit of COPPA, and in recognition of the critical importance of issues of student privacy to parents, we will be developing a policy for the use of online services with a focus on protecting student's privacy and obtaining parental consent. This is still in development, but we are looking at a policy that includes:

- A review process for online services to ensure they are collecting only the minimum amount of student personal information necessary (such as a username or email address) and properly protecting that data.

- A published list on the district's website of all online services used with students, including a simple explanation of what personal information each service collects and links to each service's privacy policy and terms of service.
- An annual notification to parents of online services used by the district and the personal information they collect, with an annual written parental consent form.
- A process for individual teachers to obtain written consent from parents during the school year, in the case of an online service being identified by a teacher as a valuable tool during the course of the year.

A draft policy for review and approval by the Lincoln School Committee will be presented at an upcoming School Committee meeting.

References:
http://www.business.ftc.gov/privacy-and-security/childrens-privacy
http://business.ftc.gov/documents/Complying-with-COPPA-Frequently-Asked-Questions

Example District Notification website:
http://www.mka.org/page.cfm?p=810