San Diego Unified
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Darryl LaGace
Chief Information and Technology Officer
Integrated Technology and Support Services
(P) 619-260-5473
(F) 619-725-7497
dlagace@sandi.net

TO: Principals
FROM: Darryl LaGace
CC: Area Superintendents
DATE: March 1, 2012
RE: i21 year 3 update and student device selection

This memo is to provide you an update on the selection and estimated delivery of student devices for Year 3 of the i21rollout.

As you are aware, the procurement of student computers has been delayed due to Prop S bond funding issues. At this time, we have been given the approval to purchase the devices in two phases. The first phase is expected to be delivered in April with training and deployment occurring between now and the end of the school year for both traditional and year round schools. The second phase will be ordered before June 30th and installation and training will be provided over the summer and into the beginning of the 2012/13 school year.

During this extended time, we have been able to further evaluate the student device options for Year 3 and feel this is the right time to make a shift in platform from the traditional netbook to a slate form factor. Over the past 6 months, we have been piloting iPads and Android devices in a variety of settings. Although no device can do everything, the iPad clearly provides some of the best features while at the same time addresses some of the issues we have experienced with the netbook platform. After carefully weighing the pros and cons, we have decided to make the shift this year and will be using the iPad as the primary choice for Year 3. This decision is also supported by the recent review of the i21 program by Gartner, the leading IT industry analyst, who predicts that slates will prevail as the best platform for K-12 education.

Pros

Instant on –There is no waiting for the computer to boot which will allow students and teachers more opportunities to use the technology.

Larger screen size – This makes it a much more viable option to replace the traditional textbook.

Extended battery life – The 10.5 hour battery life allows for use the entire school day without needing to recharge.

Large collection of apps – The iPad currently has the largest collection of apps of any of the slate platforms.

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Promethean ActivEngage desktop – Promethean has worked with SDUSD to develop an app to use the iPad as a formative assessment tool. The app looks and feels just like the one they developed for our netbooks.

Touch interface – This feature provides for a greater interactive and engaging experience.

Cons
Not compatible with Adobe Flash – Some software we own will not run on the platform.

No physical keyboard and mouse – This presents a shift in the way users will interact with the technology.

An additional platform to support – As with any change, this creates a greater layer of complexity. We are working on a clear plan on how we support and manage multiple platforms.

Other driving factors in device selection always need to take into account the cost and sustainability projections. Our model estimates a device cost in the range of $350 to $450 and is a key to ensuring we can equip all core content area classrooms in grades 3 through 12. The price of the iPad 2 just makes it under our cost ceiling. This platform also aligns with our sustainability model looking out 24 to 36 months. Gartner predicts that these or similar devices will range from $300 to $350 and enable us to stay within the sustainability budget included in our long range technology plan using a four-year replacement cycle.

Integration with existing i21 classrooms

Over the past 6 months, we have been working with the platform to create a seamless experience for students and teachers switching between devices. The following highlights a few advancements that have been made on this front:

- We have extended access to student and staff files to the iPad using the district's private cloud infrastructure my.sandi.net. This allows users to open files created on a netbook or teacher tablet on the iPad.

- We have adopted three creation apps – Pages, Numbers, and Keynote – that will allow users to edit and create content compatible with the Microsoft Office suite (Word, PowerPoint and Excel).

- We have worked with Promethean to replicate the popular assessment tool, ActivEngage, as an iPad app. It has been tested in our environment and works just like the netbook app without the long boot times.

- We have also identified several exciting applications that will open the platform as more of a creation tool than its previous capabilities.

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- We have been able to overcome some of the Adobe Flash limitations using an app that converts the content for use on an iPad. While this does not work with some sites, it works successfully with several that we use.

Choice is still an option. Although we feel this should be the predominant selection for the Year 3 device, we realize that the netbook will be more appropriate for some settings. One example of this might be 8th grade science where USB ports are needed to interact with various probe ware. In these unique situations, we will allow for choice to be made. Although this is just one example, we recognize there may be others. We do ask that you work with your area superintendent and Ed Tech point of contact for approval if a netbook alternative to the iPad is absolutely necessary.

As with any shift of this magnitude, it will take some time to perfect and there will be stumbling blocks along the way. We do not take these changes lightly, but feel strongly that this is the time to take the leap to the next level. I look forward to working with you to make this as successful, if not more so, than the netbook deployment has been.

Please respond:

While the order of installation has not yet been solidified, it is important I hear from you <dlagace@sandi.net> by Wednesday, March 7, confirming the iPad as your school's Year 3 student device. Otherwise, please contact your area superintendent for further conversation.

DL/sel