

# ***POLICY ON TECHNOLOGY AND LEARNING AT TRINITY SCHOOL***

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*Policy effective May 2011, revised December 2012*

## ***Technology as a Human Endeavor***

The use of knowledge to make things of beauty and usefulness is one of the fundamental acts of human beings. From the beginning, we were commanded by God to subdue the earth and to rule over it with justice and wisdom as God's regents. This is part of what it means to be created in the image of God. Technology is one of the hallmarks of humanness.

Technologies supplement and amplify our native human capacities: our physical strengths, our senses, our intellectual powers. The intellectual technologies are of particular interest to schools because they enable us to do our distinctive work of thinking and communicating in new and more effective ways. Digital tools have enormous potential for enhancing our teaching and learning; they also require careful and prudent management.

## ***Trinity School's Goals for Technology and Learning***

Trinity values digital tools and resources for education, productivity, and communication. We equip students and teachers with the knowledge and the means to evaluate and implement technologies in support of instruction and learning.

We are committed to the following:

- Developing capable problem solvers, savvy information evaluators, effective communicators, and responsible technology users
- Designing rich and meaningful learning experiences for students
- Empowering educators to create technology-enhanced learning environments
- Enabling staff to use technology to enhance their personal productivity and instruction and stimulate continuous improvement
- Providing a wide array of staff-development opportunities that address varied learning styles, levels of proficiency, and the integration of technology into the curriculum
- *Aiding equity of access to technology and resources for Trinity families, on the basis of need and according to availability\**
- Educating the Trinity community on the safe use of technology
- Promoting moderation and prudence in our adoption of digital technologies, balancing outward and connected learning with inward and disconnected experience

## *Cautions and Concerns*

All technologies influence human thought and experience in complex ways, but intellectual technologies exert the deepest and most lasting power over what and how we think. Because our intellectual technologies are employed for self-expression, for shaping our personal and public identities, and for cultivating personal relationships, they are implicated in all of the complex moral issues that attend human existence.

Research shows that digital habits do influence neural pathways. As we become more facile at skimming and hypertexting, we may neglect the habits of reading and thinking that strengthen and sustain linear, deep, and sustained thought.

The Internet, potent for connecting students with one another and with teachers, also exposes students to myriad new temptations. The connections that are possible are too often without accountability and real community. Students may access pornography by accident and intentionally. People may assume a false identity online. Cyberbullying and harassment are real. Safeguards and restrictions are necessary, especially for our younger students.

Digital technologies can never supplant the human teacher, the intellectual coach, the Socratic guide. There is no substitute for the rich human interaction between teacher and students, between student and student. Where digital technologies afford these relationships new possibilities, we embrace them; but where these technologies detract from these essentials, we are wary of them.

Further, some assumptions of digital culture must be challenged. Our goal as a Christian school is to teach our children not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed in their thinking (Romans 12:2), and this involves a dynamic questioning of the assumptions of the digital culture:

- That faster is always better. But faster is not always better in education. It is not wise to hurry children on past their childhood, when there is so much they have to learn and master. And there is no fast road to learning—it takes years for the human brain to mature and develop.
- That newer is better than older. This is an unassailable dogma of the silicon system. The latest computer is soon to be obsolete. “Old computer” is synonymous with bad computer. The danger is that this dogma may create a tyranny of the contemporary and disenfranchise the wisdom of the past.
- That being connected is better than being disconnected. Digital maximalism (the notion that it is always best to be as connected as possible) leads to distractedness, decreased productivity, and shallowness. Sometimes it is good and important to be unconnected.
- That digital is better than analog. Sometimes old technologies may actually serve learning better, and we must be wise to these critical nuances. A skilled teacher will match the technology to the task and the learning goal.

### ***Our Opportunity and Responsibility***

It is essential for Trinity to teach students to be wise digital citizens. The opportunities for creating new cultural goods are immense. Further, once a new technology is launched, there is no turning back. Our mission as a school is to teach our students to engage thoughtfully and with discernment with the culture at large, to be salt and light in the digital culture of the present and the future. Students are responsible for using technology in ways that love God and neighbor; violations of this law of love (e.g., by accessing pornography or through cheating or lying with digital devices) are as serious and unacceptable as any immoral behavior and will be subject to the school’s discipline policies. Further, because of the ubiquity and asynchronous nature of technology, and because relational conflict online outside of school can seriously impact relationships, teaching, and learning in school, the school reserves the right to discipline cyberviolations of school policies whenever and wherever they occur.

Digital tools and resources are opening up new possibilities for learning and new pedagogical capabilities:

<p><i>Pedagogy and Instruction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student-centered learning environments</li><li>• Differentiation for content, level, pace, and learning style</li><li>• New and enriched forms of assessment—from automated “audits” to complex demonstrations of understanding</li><li>• Remediation of material</li><li>• Collaborative learning</li><li>• Discovery learning</li><li>• Simulations</li><li>• Higher levels of thinking and complexity</li><li>• Enriched content otherwise difficult or impossible to provide</li><li>• Enriched lesson plans</li></ul>	<p><i>Learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connecting the curriculum to a digital, multimedia generation</li><li>• Easy access to rich, varied sources of information</li><li>• Independent/self-paced study and self-teaching</li><li>• For our older students, communication with Trinity teachers, classmates, outside experts, and other audiences</li></ul>
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We welcome and utilize information and intellectual technologies. We support disciplined use of technologies for the sake of better learning, and the cultivation of a culture that supports our classical Christian education (e.g., limiting young students’ exposure to screens; using books, pencils, and paper for certain kinds of learning activities). We also support rests and Sabbaths from connectivity and online work, for the sake of reconnecting with God, with others, and with the natural world.

### ***Equity of Access***

*Having a computer at home that is connected to the Internet has become not only a vital academic tool for our students, but also an increasingly important one for Trinity’s communication with its families. Our Technology Department supports our school’s commitment*

*to equity of access to technology for all members of the Trinity community by providing Internet-ready computers to Trinity families on the basis of need and availability. Computers in our Equity of Access to Technology Program possess the necessary hardware and software requirements to support a student's academic work and a connection to our email network and the Internet. The school does not assume responsibility for Internet access in students' homes.\**

### ***Monitoring and Accountability***

It is the responsibility of the teachers, supervised by the Division Directors and the Headmaster, to select online resources that are in accord with the school's policies (e.g., the Materials Selection, Diversity, and Nonpartisan Stance policies). Teachers should consult their respective directors when pioneering innovative technologies and digital resources that raise new and challenging issues.

### ***Research***

Research must be deep, original, and discerning. Digital skimming and hypertexting is not tantamount to careful, critical, in-depth research. The school must teach students to do serious, thorough, discerning, verifiable research, using both digital and nondigital sources.

### ***Books and Things***

The digital world opens up an endless array of new experiences, but it can never supplant the real world of nature and relationships. Nature studies are as important as online studies. Physical play is as important as digital games. There is still no frigate like a book to take us lands away.

### ***Expectations of Teachers***

We do not want these new technologies to make an already demanding job even more demanding. Our goal, in the long run, is to facilitate teaching and learning, not to burden teachers. The school will monitor the load on teachers. New requirements (e.g., the creation of websites, the incorporation of digital elements in lesson plans) will be carefully considered, well planned, broadly discussed, and supported with professional development and IT support.

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\* The italicized sections represent the Board's goal for Trinity policy. At the time of the establishment of this policy, however, the Board had not yet committed to allocating the resources necessary to put this policy in place. In the meantime, Trinity will do its best to give all students access to the technology they need for their Trinity classes.