

## **BYOD Case Study**

### **Levelling the Playing Field at Manurewa High School**

Today digital technology is in every aspect of our lives. But what if you're living in a digital landscape where not everyone has access to the technology they need?

For students of Manurewa High, New Zealand's largest decile one school, this problem is anything but academic. Principal, Peter Jones considered the following: "How do we bring the digital opportunities through Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) into our community in an affordable way? And how do we make sure that our students aren't falling behind and aren't disadvantaged?"

That's why the school's innovative BYOD programme, which allows students to bring their own Windows 10 devices to class with access to Office 365, is pivotal to their students' future.

### **Conquering the Digital Divide**

Within the school there were inequalities before BYOD began. Not all students were using the same computer operating systems, and there were many different devices with varying degrees of capability. In some cases, no device at all. This meant not all students were able to learn at the same level.

Deputy Principal, Lawrence Naicker, says, "The biggest inspiration would be equity. If we provide them with the BYOD experience, that gives them another skill set in terms of adapting to the changing world. So, our success will be measured in terms of their career pathways in the future."

Naicker also describes the BYOD programme as a vehicle to bring the world to them through virtual experiences. "Not all our students can easily take a trip to Japan, but what if we could bring Japan to them through tools such as Skype? This is where we see BYOD supporting us to create equitable opportunities for our students."

### **Partnering to Succeed**

To develop their long-term digital technology strategy, they enlisted the help of Microsoft and Cyclone Computers to transform learning at the school. E-Learning Coordinator, Craig Render, explains, "The relationship between Cyclone and Microsoft has been paramount to what we've been trying to achieve. We went to them and asked what they could offer the school in terms of the technology they had available. And for the last six years they've been working side by side with us, not only with our students but also our teachers."

The full-scale implementation of BYOD throughout the school began in 2017. It's phase one of an exciting three-year project. The relationship with Cyclone Computers was crucial to delivering an equitable BYOD programme for the school's students – they enabled parents to buy suitable devices with affordable weekly payments, and without credit checks.

### **Bringing the Community on the Journey**

Once the technical side of the equation had been solved, the school still had another challenge – getting buy-in from parents and the wider school community. With 80% of the roll Maori or Pasifika, community involvement and support were vital. In fact, BYOD could not succeed without it.

But right from the very first parent evening held to discuss BYOD, it was clear that the community was behind it 100%. Naicker had worried that parents might not be enthusiastic about them bringing devices and extra schoolwork home. “Many Manurewa students, beyond the normal teenage responsibilities, have extra responsibilities that they carry in their families such as supporting younger sisters and brothers. So, when they are at school or home it’s important for us to optimise their time spent learning,” says Naicker.

Craig Render also highlights affordability as a key challenge. “One of the challenges around bringing devices in is the potential cost it could have for the community. We found that our biggest supporters of the programme were our community and they’ve driven our motivation to continue it.”

As an unexpected bonus, the benefits have extended into the community too, as children can pass on their new digital skills and knowledge at home all while being able to work on or offline as Windows 10 and Office 365 continue to provide 100% functionality even without an internet connection.

### **The Right Platform with Real Benefits**

Manurewa High chose Microsoft as a vendor for several reasons. Office 365 gave their teachers greater flexibility, and their students the freedom to work either offline, or online, at home or at school. With Windows 10 they wanted to make sure their students weren’t limited with what they could do from a functionality standpoint.

For the school’s Principal, Peter Jones, future skills and success of students was a key focus too. “Every employer tells us that digital fluency is crucial, so we need to make sure that our students are agile and have the learning skills to keep learning because technology is changing so quickly.”

Render elaborates further, “We’re really mindful of ensuring our students leave Manurewa High with the digital skill sets they’ll need to be able to contribute immediately in the workforce. This influenced our decision to go with the Windows 10 and Office 365 platforms for our BYOD devices as we knew that developing familiarity and skills with these would directly benefit our students.”

Beyond this, they saw additional benefits for their teachers. “With the pressures that teachers are under such as marking, moderation and assessment, it leaves them time-poor. But when we bring in something like Office 365 which saves teachers time, they can see the real benefits coming into practice,” says Render. For their students, “Feedback is really crucial to student development. The Office 365 platform allows teachers to give real time, anecdotal feedback on student work.”

Manurewa High School’s favourite application is Classroom OneNote. “Classroom OneNote has been the tool they’ve used the most and has seen a large buy-in from the staff. It allows

students to have their own creative space, teachers to check on work and put course content that can be accessed anywhere at any time, on any device.”

### **BYOD Prepares Manurewa Students for the Future World**

Among the most dramatic impacts, Principal Peter Jones has seen is the difference BYOD has made to the self-esteem of his students.

“For the students, it's been the opportunity to access that digital world, that digital space, that global community which they haven't always been able to do in our context. It's helped them realise that they add real value.”

For their students, cultural identity is significant. “It’s important to have young people who are confident in where they come from, who they are and where they are going. The digital space helps enhance that for them and they see their value across the world and across New Zealand. This raises their expectations, their horizons, their views of what opportunities are out there for them.”

For the staff, students and parents of Manurewa High School, BYOD is more than just a way to access digital technology, it has become an essential component of their world now. It’s made a profound difference to the whole community. Now their children have a level playing field from where they can set their sights on a brighter future.