



Frequently Asked Questions

What's happening?

In 2016, The Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Yvette Berry, announced details of the Labor party's election commitment to allocate secondary students within the ACT Government School system with portable computing devices for learning under the *Better Schools for our Kids – Technology Enabled Learning* (TEL) initiative.

In late 2021 the ACT Government reaffirmed its commitment to this initiative in an ongoing capacity under the *Future of Education – Digital Access and Equity Program*.

Through this initiative we want to continue to engage our secondary students, enhance their learning experiences, provide them with opportunities to collaborate and to discover, and in doing so produce responsible, literate and knowledgeable digital citizens. This directly aligns with the Australian Curriculum - ICT capability.

“To participate in a knowledge-based economy and to be empowered within a technologically sophisticated society now and into the future, students need the knowledge, skills and confidence to make ICT work for them at school, at home, at work and in their communities. Information and communication technologies are fast and automated, interactive and multimodal, and they support the rapid communication and representation of knowledge to many audiences and its adaptation in different contexts. They transform the ways that students think and learn and give them greater control over how, where and when they learn.”
(<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/information-and-communication-technology-ict-capability/>)

The infrastructure required to support secondary student access is already in place and this program of work will build on and complement the highly successful Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and *Learn Anywhere* programs already adopted by our schools and school communities.

Why is the ACT Government doing this?

To ensure that every secondary student enrolled in the ACT Public Education System has a Chromebook device. Chromebooks are provided to support learning in schools and equitable access to the online learning environment, irrespective of family circumstances.

Why Chromebooks?

Chromebook laptops have been selected because these devices will best align with existing Canberra public school ICT infrastructure.

- **Students** are already equipped with access to a specialised Google Workspace for Education platform where they access learning through the Google Classroom as well as a wide range of Apps to support learning in all fields of study. Chromebooks are a managed device offering all students with a safe and secure platform for learning.
- **Teachers** are already familiar with these existing platforms and extending availability means they can focus on improving learning and teaching without needing to learn different technologies.
- **Support staff** already have the knowledge and skills to support students and teachers to use and get the most out of their Chromebook and the Google education platform.

Who owns the device?

Under this initiative the ACT Government owns the fleet of devices, but secondary students will be responsible for the upkeep of the device that is allocated to them. The intention is for the device is to be used for learning, in and outside of school.

Can parents/guardians have the money instead of the device?

Parents/Guardians will not have the option of money instead of the device. The intention of the initiative is equity - equity of opportunity brought about by equity of access. The devices used for this initiative are fit for purpose. They will support students across the curriculum and as more and more software becomes available online, they will increasingly offer access to more complex, high-end applications. Aiming for equity and supplying high quality devices to all secondary students provides this. It also gives the ACT Government the ability to leverage value for money through bulk purchasing.

Can anyone use a device allocated to a student?

The devices issued to ACT Secondary students under this program will be configured to only allow ACT Public school students to log into and use them. This is not just to deter theft, but to ensure the devices are best optimised for use within ACT Public Schools.

What if the device gets damaged, stolen, lost or needs repairing?

Only *one* Chromebook will be offered to each participating student. It is the responsibility of the student to look after their Chromebook. Lost, damaged or stolen Chromebooks must be reported to the school immediately. The school will request evidence about what happened, such as a statutory declaration or police report and they will advise the Education Directorate who will have the device disabled.

What is the expectation for usage?

It is common for students to bring devices into school to support their learning and our approach to device usage has always been balanced and focused on educational best practice and alignment to the Australian Curriculum. Not all learning requires a device and there are many existing programs and opportunities in schools that will always be on offer to provide students a rich learning experience.

How does the Bring Your Own Device Program (BYOD) program fit in with this new initiative?

This initiative doesn't replace the existing BYOD policy that is already in place across our schools. It builds on and complements portable electronic device (PED) use. If they wish, secondary students can continue to use a device of their choice that meets the ICT requirements set out in the school's BYOD policy.

Should the Chromebook be used at home?

Absolutely, students can use their device to engage in learning whenever they need. All that is necessary is access to Internet enabled Wi-Fi. It is, however, important to maintain a balanced approach to device use and parents should feel empowered to negotiate appropriate restrictions for device use within the home with their child.

Where should these devices be stored?

Each school will provide guidance on where the Chromebook should be stored when not in use while at school. Families will need to consider appropriate storage for the device at home.

What happens if my child goes to school without the device?

Students are expected to bring the Chromebook to school every day, fully charged. Schools have a limited bank of spare devices for student use and can provide access for students when they don't have access to their Chromebook. The number of available devices is limited and students should not rely on a spare Chromebook being available.

What about buying software?

There is no cost to parents/guardians for the applications used on the Chromebook and they do not require additional software.

Does my child have unrestricted access to the Internet?

The devices will only work on the SchoolsNET platform using the Google Chrome Operating (Chrome OS) System. The secure connection is filtered to limit the ability to access inappropriate material.

Parents/guardians should always remain vigilant around their children's Internet activity and provide appropriate support. For further information visit the [Parent page](#) on the Office of eSafety Commissioner's website.

All ACT Public schools teach students about safe and responsible online behaviour.

How can students connect when they don't have Internet access at home?

ACT Secondary students who are participating in the DAE Program and do not have access to the Internet at home can speak to the school to discuss options. Additionally, they can access the Internet free of charge at public libraries. ACT Government free Wi-Fi zones all provide free Wi-Fi enabled Internet access to students.

What can be done to support balanced, safe and responsible device use at home?

School digital citizenship programs, conversations at home and role modelling desired behaviour all help in teaching responsible and productive computer use.

The Office of eSafety Commissioner's [website](#) is a great resource to go to get information on supporting young people to have safe and positive experiences online. In particular, the [Parent page](#) offers practical strategies to assist parents/guardians to manage internet connected devices at home. These include restricting screen time, preventing access to certain sites and games, and receiving alerts to potentially harmful social media activity. The [Young People](#) page is specifically designed for secondary students and young adults. It covers online safety with respect to resilience, critical thinking, responsibility, empathy and respect.

We encourage parents to ensure responsible use at home and support school efforts in promoting responsible online behaviour. Tips for parents/guardians and links to useful sites are also posted on the ACT Education Directorate's [Learn, Anywhere: ICT for Students](#)

Schools will continue to provide their school community guidance about safe online engagement and students will explicitly be taught safe and responsible online behaviour.

What about students in our specialist schools with additional needs?

The Directorate recognises that a Chromebook may not satisfy the learning needs of every ACT Public School secondary students. The Directorate will work specifically with schools and secondary students who have particular ICT needs to ensure equity of funding and access to appropriate technology to meet their learning needs.

What about primary students?

ACT public primary schools will continue to be supported to maintain the recommended ratio of 1 device for every 3 students.

What happens to the device once a student moves, finishes or leaves the school?

If a secondary student is leaving the ACT Public School system permanently then the device and its accessories needs to be returned to the school before they leave.

Where a student moves from one ACT Public Secondary School to another, the Chromebook will move with the student to the new school. As they have received a device, they are not eligible for another one.

What personal information does the Territory collect, use and disclose in relation to the use of the Chromebooks?

Privacy and safety of personal information is important to the ACT Education Directorate. The Chromebooks connect to the existing Google Workspace for Education platform used in ACT Public Schools, which was subject to a full independent Privacy Impact Assessment prior to its launch in 2014. The assessment was led by a former Commonwealth Privacy Commissioner and has been made publicly available on the ACT Education Directorate's [Publications A-Z webpage](#), listed at the letter 'G'.

We protect student information and work with schools and parents to achieve this. The information we provide is to give parents informed choice prior to the service being enabled for their child. Information regarding student use of privacy associated with Google apps and Office 365 are located on the [Resources anywhere: Digital Backpack](#) webpage.

Where can I obtain further information?

Additional information about this initiative can be found on [Future of Education – Digital Access and Equity Program](#) webpage.

The ACT Education Directorate's policies that apply to the use of Chromebooks in schools are available on the ACT Education Directorate's [Publications and Policy](#) webpage.