PowerUp Communications
NSPRA Gold Medallion Entry

Houston Independent School District

Special Communication Projects/Campaign
School District Over 25,000 Students
Total number of PR/Communications Staff: 10

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Project Overview

In late January 2014, nearly 18,000 laptops were distributed to students at 11 high schools within the Houston Independent School District as part of Phase 1 of the district’s one-to-one laptop initiative, known as PowerUp. In Phase 2, 18 high schools will be added during the 2014-2015 school year, and an additional 15 high schools will distribute laptops in Phase 3 during the 2015-2016 school year. When completely implemented, 65,000 laptops will have been distributed.

The introduction and launch of Phase 1 of PowerUp required an ambitious communications plan and the use of innovative strategies and multimedia tools to ensure that all stakeholders (staff, students, parents, and community members) understood that the goal of the districtwide initiative went far beyond providing computer devices for students. PowerUp is about changing the culture of teaching and learning throughout our district. PowerUp is also about creating transformational, digital-age instruction that will prepare Houston’s children to succeed in the 21st century and compete with their peers around the world.

PowerUp assembled a cross-functional team with members of various departments to research and develop a comprehensive implementation plan over several months. The group then worked together to implement the plan. HISD’s Office of Communications had a standing member on the cross-functional team who not only led communication efforts regarding the initiative, but was able to offer advice, insight, and guidance during both the planning and implementation phase.

As a result, HISD was able to roll out a multifaceted communications effort that included social media, television, parent workshops, teacher blogs, online resources and web applications, electronic newsletters, emails, printed collateral, press conferences, and media availabilities.

While other schools districts around the nation are being scrutinized by the media for scaling back, halting or revamping their one-to-one initiatives, PowerUp has received positive local, state, and national attention. “I find [Houston ISD’s] planning to be admirable,” said Leslie Wilson, the chief executive officer of the One-to-One Institute, a nonprofit based in Mason, Mich., that provides assistance to districts implementing student-computing initiatives. Wilson was quoted in a recent article in Edweek regarding PowerUp.

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/02/05/20houston_ep.h33.html

With phase one of PowerUp now successfully implemented, the HISD Communications team is taking the feedback, evaluation, and “lessons learned” to modify and improve communication efforts for Phase 2, which will begin this summer.
Research and Analysis

During his State of the Schools address in February 2013, Houston Independent School District Superintendent Dr. Terry Grier challenged the audience to imagine a classroom in which every student had their own laptop for learning both at school and at home.

“With anytime–anywhere learning, our students will have the world at their fingertips. We will make sure they learn skills that complement technology in order to prevent them from being replaced by technology.”

In April 2013, HISD’s Chief Technology Officer Lenny Schad revealed his plan to implement Dr. Grier’s vision for a comprehensive, districtwide one-to-one initiative. The plan called for the initiative to be implemented in a series of stages, beginning with 11 schools during the 2013-2014 school year. From the very beginning Mr. Schad set the expectation that in order for the initiative to be successful, it could not be just a technology project, but it had to incorporate the leadership, knowledge, and feedback of multiple district departments.

Once Dr. Grier and the HISD Board of Education signed off on the plan, a cross-functional team was immediately assembled, consisting of curriculum, information technology, instructional technology, school support, professional support and development, and communications. The group then set upon researching and gathering input and feedback from other school districts across the state and nation that both successfully and unsuccessfully implemented one-to-one and bring-your-own-device programs.

After several weeks of research and analysis, the cross-functional team determined that a successful launch of the initiative required teachers to undergo intense professional development and training on the device, the use of digital technology in the classroom, and how to use web based tools for effective and engaging instruction before students were issued laptops. The group then developed an implementation plan that provided teachers and principals at the 11 schools in phase one with an entire semester of training and professional development before students received their devices in January 2014.

Diagram 1: PowerUp Cross-Functional Team

After analyzing the communication efforts of dozens of school districts including L.A. Unified, Fort Bend ISD, Katy ISD, Klein ISD, Miami/Dade and the Mooresville Graded Independent School District, it became clear that a robust plan of internal communications was an important component, if not the most important component, when launching a comprehensive initiative that essentially changes the culture of
teaching and learning throughout a district. The research of the cross-functional team revealed that successful districts, like Mooresville, heavily focused their early communication efforts on getting buy-in and acceptance from teachers, principals, and district leaders before they moved on to parents, students, and community members. By creating a cohort of educators that truly believed in the positive benefits and changes created by a one-to-one initiative, they were able to create an internal communications force that then relayed the appropriate information and positive messaging to others—including their colleagues, students, parents, and members of their surrounding school community.

The research and analysis of the cross-functional team also clearly indicated that as school districts begin to distribute digital devices to students, parent concerns regarding safety and security must be addressed. In addition, successful one-to-one districts that had fewer incidents of student “hackings” and inappropriate online behavior had effectively communicated to parents and students the importance of the responsible use of technology, the consequences of its misuse, and the importance of being a good digital citizen.

**Planning**

After weeks of research and analysis, the cross-functional team identified the following communication goals and key messaging for both internal and external stakeholders.

**Internal Goals/Key Messaging**

- Communicate the “why” of the initiative and help all members of Team HISD understand that the device is just a tool that will allow educators to deliver more engaging instruction and personalize learning for students.
- Make all members of TEAM HISD aware of the initiative and its potential and provide resources for them to answer questions and speak about the initiative.
- Dispel myths concerning the initiative and answer frequently asked questions and concerns.
- Build excitement and support at the school level by focusing on “early adopter” teachers who are already embracing technology rather than those who are hesitant, negative or combative.
- Capitalize on the excitement of the “early adopter” teachers to spread the message to their colleagues on campus and throughout the district as well as students and parents.
- Share insights from teachers and school leaders as they attend trainings and professional developments prior to student device deployment to build a positive internal environment.
- Help staff understand the importance of good digital citizenship, the long lasting implications of a negative digital footprint, and the consequences of engaging in negative online behavior.
- Support principals in their communication efforts with staff.

**External Goals/Key Messaging**

- Provide a general overview of the initiative to help parents and students understand that the laptop, while it can be used for entertainment and social media, is being provided to them as a learning tool that will ultimately help students develop the 21st century skills they will need to be successful in a career, college, and life.
• Provide a basic overview of the device, safety and security, laptop care, installed software and online applications and resources students will be using in class and at home.
• Help students and parents understand the importance of good digital citizenship, the long-lasting implications of a negative digital footprint, and the consequences of engaging in negative online behaviors such as sexting, cyber bullying, and digital harassment.
• Help students and parents have a better understanding of how the device and digital instruction will change the dynamic of the homework and projects students will be working on.
• Support principals in their communication efforts with students and parents.

Once the internal and external audiences and communication goals related to each were identified by the cross-functional team, a member of communications developed a detailed communications plan that was shared and evaluated by the group in June of 2013. The plan incorporated a combination of traditional and new media outlets to not only communicate the initiative but to solicit comments and feedback. They included:

**Media Outlets for Communication**

• Public-facing website and individual school websites
• District news blog
• District social media channels
• District 24-hour cable access channel
• Weekly electronic employee and community newsletters
• Existing partnerships with local TV, print, and radio outlets
• Press conferences, events, and availabilities with local and national media
• Editorials in local newspapers
• Monthly principals meetings and school board meetings
• Quarterly superintendent’s meeting with all central office employees
• Parent meetings
• Weekly academic services memos to principals.
• Print collateral including banners, brochures, T-shirts, PowerPoint presentations, and informational handouts

**Implementation**

A comprehensive and detailed action plan that incorporated various media outlets along with strategies, a timeline, status updates, and project owners was prepared and shared with the cross-functional team. Team members received weekly updates on the plan as well as content they could share via their personal social media accounts and with their staff via email. The plan was also shared with a communications representative from the Mooresville Graded Independent School District, who provided feedback and guidance. Below is an excerpt from that plan.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>AUDIENCE</th>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>OWNER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>Create name and brand for initiative</td>
<td>Internal and external</td>
<td>Name and brand will appear on all internal and external documents, website, communications, etc...</td>
<td>DONE</td>
<td>Tanyia Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>Create internal Edmodo website for 11 pilot schools</td>
<td>Teachers and principals of 11 PowerUp schools, key facilitators in curriculum, PD, IT and Instructional Technology</td>
<td>Create place for all employees involved in pilot to collaborate, share information, dispel myths, gather feedback, ask questions and get the latest information on initiative.</td>
<td>DONE</td>
<td>Jennifer Lazaro Beatriz Arnillas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2013</td>
<td>Create public facing webpage in English and Spanish with vanity url <a href="http://www.houstonisd.org/powerup">www.houstonisd.org/powerup</a></td>
<td>Staff, parents, students, community members</td>
<td>Create a one-stop location for key messaging and background on initiative as well as the latest information, frequently asked questions, timeline for project, videos and news stories</td>
<td>DONE</td>
<td>SGO Rony Canales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2013-ongoing</td>
<td>Weekly story and video in employee and community electronic newsletter</td>
<td>Staff, parents, and community</td>
<td>To communicate progress on initiative to internal and external stakeholders</td>
<td>ON GOING</td>
<td>SGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2013-ongoing</td>
<td>Weekly story and video on initiative on HISD website and PowerUp webpage</td>
<td>Staff, parents, and community</td>
<td>To communicate progress on initiative to internal and external stakeholders</td>
<td>ON GOING</td>
<td>SGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2013-ongoing</td>
<td>Weekly story in English and Spanish HISD-TV newscast</td>
<td>Staff, parents, and community</td>
<td>To communicate progress on initiative to internal and external stakeholders</td>
<td>ON GOING</td>
<td>SGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-13-13</td>
<td>Press conference for local media as teachers are distributed laptops and receive training</td>
<td>Staff, parents, and community</td>
<td>To communicate initiative and its potential to staff, parents and Houston community</td>
<td>DONE</td>
<td>SGO Cantu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-13 to 8-23</td>
<td>Encourage teachers and staff at 11 pilot schools to tweet about laptop deployment</td>
<td>Twitter followers</td>
<td>To create excitement and buzz on social media regarding initiative</td>
<td>DONE</td>
<td>SGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2013</td>
<td>Create banners and posters for 11 pilot schools to display on campus</td>
<td>Staff, students, parents</td>
<td>Create excitement and buzz among school staff, students, and parents</td>
<td>ON GOING</td>
<td>SGO Tanyia Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2013</td>
<td>Create overview video on initiative including what has been done so far,</td>
<td>Staff, parents, and community</td>
<td>To use at central office, meeting, parent meetings at school, web, HISD-TV, and by staff members at conferences</td>
<td>DONE</td>
<td>SGO Crowe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2013</td>
<td>PowerUp App for 11 pilot schools’ websites</td>
<td>Staff, parents, students</td>
<td>Application that places link to PowerUp webpage on front door of 11 pilot schools’ websites</td>
<td>DONE</td>
<td>SGO Joyce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 24</td>
<td>Weekly “Educalos” Story for Univision 45</td>
<td>Spanish parents and community members</td>
<td>TV story for use on Univision, HISD-TV, website, and social media</td>
<td>DONE</td>
<td>Cantu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 9</td>
<td>Weekly student newscast for Univision</td>
<td>Spanish parents and community members</td>
<td>Student newscast for use on Univision, HISD-TV, website and social media</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>SGO Aaron Cantu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 2013</td>
<td>Dentro de HISD Chronicle Blog</td>
<td>Spanish parents and community members</td>
<td>To communicate initiative to Houston’s Hispanic community</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>Cantu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Communications

Here is an overview/summary of communication activities surrounding the HISD PowerUp initiative, as well as relative examples of each activity.

Social media: Weekly social media postings on the district Facebook page and Twitter account gave followers regular updates on the initiative (22 tweets, 22 Facebook posts in all). Key communicators in the district, including the superintendent, also shared regular updates on their social media feeds.

Example 1: Superintendent’s Twitter

Example 2: District’s Twitter

Example 3: Staff member’s Twitter
**Online resources and applications:** We launched a PowerUp web page (in English and Spanish), which included background information, videos, weekly stories, an interactive timeline, frequently asked questions and a comprehensive resource list for parents and students. The site included an email and phone number for internal and external stakeholders to call with questions or comments. A special application also was created to push the web page onto the front door of the 11 school websites involved in phase one. A special “pop up” was later added to each school’s website to remind students and parents to sign and return the appropriate acceptable use forms/loan agreement and to pay a non-refundable $25 deposit. In addition, weekly stories were posted on the front door of the district’s main website and news blog (32 articles posted to district website, blog and 11 school websites). An internal facing Edmodo site was created to communicate directly with teachers at the 11 pilot schools and to solicit their feedback.

*Example 1:* “Pop-Up” application  
*Example 2:* Interactive timeline  
*Example 3:* English and Spanish webpage

Electronic newsletters/email: All staff members received a weekly update on the initiative via the district’s employee and community electronic newsletter. PowerUp teachers at the 11 schools also shared their stories regarding trainings and professional development opportunities in special sections of the newsletters such as “Breakthroughs” and “I am HISD.” In addition, personal emails from the superintendent to all teachers at the 11 pilot schools updated them on the progress of the initiative and thanked them for their hard work.

Examples 1 and 2: Excerpts from “I am HISD” and “Breakthroughs” feature in community electronic newsletter.

Example 3: Superintendent email.
**TV programming and video:** A weekly video featuring teachers and principals from the 11 PowerUp schools, as well as district staff involved in the initiative aired on the district’s 24-hour cable access channel and was posted and streamed on the front door of the district’s website and PowerUp page. Special half-hour programming, including *HISD Up Close* hosted by the district’s board president, also addressed the initiative. Specially produced videos updating the implementation of PowerUp were shared at monthly principal meetings, quarterly central office staff meetings, parent meetings, and during monthly board meetings. In all, 47 videos were produced.

*Example video links:*

- [https://vimeo.com/73310897](https://vimeo.com/73310897) PowerUp Overview
- [https://vimeo.com/87000971](https://vimeo.com/87000971) PowerUp in action at YMCPA
- [https://vimeo.com/79308123](https://vimeo.com/79308123) Schools Preparing to PowerUp
- [https://vimeo.com/84870954](https://vimeo.com/84870954) PowerUp Launch at Madison High School
- [https://vimeo.com/84316753](https://vimeo.com/84316753) PowerUp Deployment at Sharpstown High School
- [https://vimeo.com/82134988](https://vimeo.com/82134988) Mooresville N.C. Educators Visit HISD PowerUp Schools
- [https://vimeo.com/81632644](https://vimeo.com/81632644) Discovery Education Partners with HISD to Power Up
- [https://vimeo.com/79400237](https://vimeo.com/79400237) PowerUp Parent Orientation at Madison High School
- [https://vimeo.com/78104989](https://vimeo.com/78104989) PowerUp Computer Distribution at YMCPA
- [https://vimeo.com/78078661](https://vimeo.com/78078661) PowerUp Parent Meetings
- [https://vimeo.com/76083021](https://vimeo.com/76083021) HISD Up Close with Anna Eastman
- [https://vimeo.com/73732016](https://vimeo.com/73732016) First Year Teacher Excited About PowerUp
- [https://vimeo.com/72732893](https://vimeo.com/72732893) HISD Curriculum Department to Play Key Role in PowerUp
- [https://vimeo.com/72304646](https://vimeo.com/72304646) Austin High School Teachers Receive PowerUp Laptops
- [https://vimeo.com/72283868](https://vimeo.com/72283868) Austin High School Teachers Rave About Power Up
- [https://vimeo.com/71529640](https://vimeo.com/71529640) The Computer
- [https://vimeo.com/71529324](https://vimeo.com/71529324) The Customer Service Room
- [https://vimeo.com/71039879](https://vimeo.com/71039879) Early Adopters
- [https://vimeo.com/70796378](https://vimeo.com/70796378) Learning from Mooresville
- [https://vimeo.com/70796109](https://vimeo.com/70796109) Mooresville Comments on HISD's PowerUp initiative
- [https://vimeo.com/70063090](https://vimeo.com/70063090) PowerUp Cabling and Infrastructure at Pilot Schools
- [https://vimeo.com/69993580](https://vimeo.com/69993580) PowerUp Funding
- [https://vimeo.com/69993566](https://vimeo.com/69993566) Creating Digital Citizens
- [https://vimeo.com/69993525](https://vimeo.com/69993525) Student Laptop Distribution
- [https://vimeo.com/69993508](https://vimeo.com/69993508) Campus Resources
- [https://vimeo.com/69993488](https://vimeo.com/69993488) Support for Principals
- [https://vimeo.com/69993461](https://vimeo.com/69993461) Training for Teachers
- [https://vimeo.com/69993436](https://vimeo.com/69993436) Phase 1 Schools
- [https://vimeo.com/69993413](https://vimeo.com/69993413) One-to-one learning model
- [https://vimeo.com/69993400](https://vimeo.com/69993400) Implementation Plan
• [https://vimeo.com/69993380](https://vimeo.com/69993380)  What is PowerUp?

**Existing partnerships with local media:** We capitalized on several existing partnerships with local media outlets to push out communications on PowerUp. They included: a weekly two minute story produced by HISD-TV which airs on Univision, Houston’s largest Spanish language media outlet; a weekly two-minute Spanish student newscast that airs on Univision; a weekly online blog that appears in La Voz, the Spanish version of Houston’s major newspaper; a monthly appearance on popular talk radio programs that target African-American and Hispanic audiences, the two largest student populations in HISD.

- **Example 1:** Educalos Segment for Univision  [https://vimeo.com/81509756](https://vimeo.com/81509756)
- **Example 2:** Spanish Student Newscast for Univision  [https://vimeo.com/85167740](https://vimeo.com/85167740)

**Press conferences/outreach to media:** Local members of media were invited to two press events and were given the opportunity to tour classrooms and interview teachers, students and the district’s chief technology officer and superintendent. One press conference was held in August 2013, when teachers were given their laptops. The other was held in January 2014, when students were distributed devices. An editorial was also written by our superintendent of schools and published in a local newspaper. A conscious decision was made to hold off on national media attention until the district successfully completed student laptop deployment in January.

**Examples of Local Media Coverage:**


**Newspaper Editorial:**


**Examples of National Media Coverage:**

Printed collateral: Handouts, frequently asked questions, and one-pagers with information on the initiative, as well as the district’s acceptable-use policy for electronic devices, the student loan agreement, the availability of discounted internet and Wifi, and the responsible use of laptops and proper online behavior were all translated, printed, and handed out to parents and students during a series of parent nights at the 11 schools. All documents were also posted to the PowerUp web page. In addition, all 11 schools received a special banner to display on campus and select teachers were given T-shirts at the beginning of the school year to create excitement among students in anticipation of device deployment during second semester.

Digital citizenship classes for students: Each student at each of the 11 PowerUp campuses was required to take part in a hands-on, interactive digital citizenship class provided during the school day during one of their core classes. Content for the digital citizenship lesson was developed by the cross-functional team in partnership with Common Sense Media.

Parent night/digital citizenship orientation: Each individual campus held a series of PowerUp Parent nights before deployment of student laptops to provide an overview of the initiative, a basic review of the device and its safety and security features as well as installed software, proper care of the device, and an overview of the district’s acceptable use policy for electronic services and devices. In addition, parents were given a digital citizenship orientation which explained the importance of ensuring that both they and their child have a good digital footprint, common sense rules for responsible online behavior, safety do’s and don’ts when it comes to the acceptable use of technology, and the implications of taking part in negative online behaviors such as cyber bullying, sexting, and digital harassment. All content for the parent nights was developed by the cross-functional team in partnership with Common Sense Media and the district’s Family and Community Engagement department. More than 5,000 attended the parent meetings.
Leveraging of new partnerships: During the course of the implementation of PowerUp, several new partnerships were formed which greatly aided in communication efforts. They included collaboration with Common Sense Media, which provided resources for our staff, student, and parent digital citizenship classes and Discovery Education, which provided training for our teachers. The district also developed a partnership with educators with the Mooresville Graded School District, which included hands-on training with our teachers and evaluation of their individual classroom instruction using laptops and online technology.

Leveraging of other district communication efforts: In 2012, Houston voters approved a $1.89 billion bond that will create 21st century high schools across our district. Currently, project advisory teams at each school are meeting to plan and design the new buildings and community meetings/presentations are underway to communicate the importance of incorporating the PowerUp initiative in the design of each building.

Staff meetings: A regular monthly meeting was held with all 11 phase one PowerUp principals to communicate next steps and to solicit their feedback. Other school and district leaders as well as central office staff members, and board trustees were regularly updated on the initiative via monthly board and principals’ meetings as well as quarterly central office staff meetings. A series of meetings for central office departments was also held to update district staff and provide them with talking points.

Evaluation:

To date, nearly 90% of parent/student forms have been signed, and security deposits have been collected at the 11 pilot high schools. More forms and fees are coming in daily, which is leading to the deployment of more student laptops. The results indicate that we are helping to build awareness and understanding among our families that the PowerUp laptops, when combined with digital curriculum, will help prepare students for success in college and the workforce and provide them with the 21st century skills they will need to compete with their peers on a global level.
In December of 2013, the 11 principals from the pilot PowerUp campuses were surveyed. The results to date indicate that we are helping to build awareness and understanding of PowerUp among our staff, students, and parents.

- Did HISD adequately provide communications support for your staff regarding the PowerUp initiative? 100% (Yes)
- Did HISD adequately provide communications support for your students and parents regarding the PowerUp initiative? 100% (Yes)
- Was the PowerUp web page and available resources helpful? 90% (Yes)
- Were the collateral materials for the PowerUp parent nights helpful? 79% (Yes)

In November and December 2013, parents who attended parent nights at each of 11 campuses were surveyed. The results indicate that our efforts are helping to build positive awareness among parents.

- Did you find the information received at the meeting helpful? 96.77% (Yes)
- Did we answer all your questions and/or concerns? 96.77% (Yes)

In December 2013, Discovery Education conducted a survey of more than 2,000 teachers at the 11 PowerUp pilot campuses to determine the impact of PowerUp professional development.

- 54% of the teachers received less than 9 hours of technology related professional development during the 2012-2013 academic year (before PowerUp implementation)
- 95% of teachers participated in technology related professional development since the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year (when PowerUp began)

Web metrics also show steady use of our videos and interactive resources to communicate the initiative among our internal and external stakeholders.

- 26,000 page views of PowerUp website
- 35,657 total blog page views of PowerUp stories and articles
- Total Facebook shares for blog posts: 282
- Story about PowerUp trainer got 117 shares on Facebook and 3,624 blog page views
- 8,711 views of PowerUp videos online

**What we learned:** Having a member of communications serve on the cross-functional team to help research, plan, and develop an implementation plan for such a monumental, districtwide initiative was a game changer. Not only was that individual able to offer valuable insight and advice that impacted the overall PowerUp implementation plan, she was also able to prevent and avoid communication pitfalls and complications before they happened. This we believe was a crucial component that led to a successful, incident free deployment of nearly 18,000 computers during January 2014.

Being a member of the PowerUp cross-functional team also streamlined the communications workflow process because she was quickly and easily able to research and write stories for the web and news blog,
produce videos, post to social media, design printed collateral, write talking points and speeches, pitch stories to local and national media, and serve as a spokesperson when necessary.

Constant and repetitive messaging among our “early adopter” teachers we believe was a vital step that led to the successful creation of a positive atmosphere at the school level regarding PowerUp. These teachers helped to communicate the “why” of the initiative and helped their colleagues, students, and parents understand the importance of the district’s digital transformation.

Our efforts to ensure that HISD parents and students understand the responsible use of technology and proper online behavior also has resulted in a smooth transition to digital and online instruction at each of the 11 campuses. To date, we have had no major incidents of student hackings or misuse of the PowerUp laptops.

Next Steps: Communication efforts have already begun with the 18 principals in phase two of PowerUp. Early adopter teachers and the 11 principals in phase one will play an instrumental role in communicating with the group by offering their insight and advice on how to get “buy in” from staff, students, and parents.

Communication efforts with parents and students surrounding PowerUp will now begin at the start of the school year and during summer “fish camps” for incoming ninth-graders. In phase one, parent meetings were held at the end of the first semester, which did not leave for much time to collect forms and fees. As a result there was a mad rush the week before student deployment to gather the necessary paperwork and security deposit. Now, for both Phase 1 and 2 campuses, there will be a series of parent nights, a scheduled school technology showcase, and a Laptop 101 class for parents during the 2014-2015 school year. One of the parent nights will focus heavily on the danger of sexting, cyber bullying, and digital harassment. The PowerUp website is also being redesigned to include a robust parent and student resource section on internet safety and security.
Appendix
RESPONSIBLE USE OF LAPTOPS AND PROPER ONLINE BEHAVIOR

Students are expected to follow the same code of conduct on the Internet as they do in the classroom.

- Follow copyright laws
- Use appropriate language online
- Students will make available all messages or files upon parent, administrator or teacher request
- Like a textbook or a locker, HISD owns the laptop. Students are only permitted to use it for educational advancement
- Administrators have the capability to remotely view student computers

WHAT IS PROHIBITED?

Improper use of the laptop will result in consequences such as discipline, detention, and/or limited use of the device. The following actions are prohibited:

- Bypassing the filter
- Using another student’s username or password
- Sharing passwords (other than with parents)
- Downloading or installing software that has not been approved

- Tampering with hardware
- Using chat rooms, IM, social networking; hosting non-school-approved web pages
- Accessing inappropriate material that is unacceptable in a school setting

5 COMMON SENSE RULES FOR PARENTS

1. Model good behavior  
2. Pay attention  
3. Share your values  
4. Establish limits  
5. Make kids accountable

SAFETY DON'TS FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

NEVER give out personal information
NEVER share passwords with anyone
NEVER arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone you met online
DO NOT OPEN an email if you do not know who sent it
DO NOT CLICK on banner ads or pop up ads on websites
NEVER USE bad language or send threatening emails

SOCIAL MEDIA

Although social media programs are blocked on all HISD student computers, parents should:

MONITOR all social media use
BE AWARE of which social media sites your child is using
TALK WITH YOUR CHILD about their digital footprint, which is any and all information about a person on the Internet
LOOK OUT FOR CYBER-BULLYING and notify the school immediately if you find evidence of it

Visit www.commonsense.org for more advice and tips for parents.
Come and learn more about the PowerUp Initiative

POWERUP INFORMATION SESSIONS

The PowerUp initiative goes beyond providing devices to students – it allows teachers to create more effective, engaging instruction tailored to student needs and interests and allows students to connect with resources, ideas and opportunities far beyond the classroom walls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROOM</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1E01</td>
<td>Monday, November 11</td>
<td>9am – 10am</td>
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<tr>
<td>1E01</td>
<td>Thursday, November 21</td>
<td>3pm – 4pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>1E02</td>
<td>Tuesday, November 26</td>
<td>11am – 12pm</td>
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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is PowerUp?
PowerUp is the name given to the district’s 1:1 initiative. 1:1 stands for “one to one” which means there will be one laptop for each student. When PowerUp is fully implemented in 2016, nearly 65,000 students at 44 HISD high schools will have laptops to use for learning at school and at home. The initiative, however, goes beyond just giving students computers; it’s about preparing Houston students to succeed in the 21st century and to compete with their peers around the world. In addition to providing a rigorous education, our schools must ensure that our students are digitally literate, critical thinkers, successful problem solvers, clear and effective communicators, and connected with the world around them. HISD’s PowerUp initiative will allow students to develop these skills and competencies, and will provide a key instructional tool for teachers that will allow them to engage students and differentiate instruction.

Why the decision to go with a one-to-one model?
When it comes to integrating computers and technology into the classroom, there are a number of options that public school districts are using. There is the blended learning model in which students bring their own devices to school, and there is the one-to-one model in which school districts provide computers for their students. HISD has chosen to implement the one-to-one model, because over 80 percent of HISD students are on free or reduced lunch and therefore most likely cannot afford to purchase such a device to bring to school. In addition, Core Initiative three of HISD’s Strategic Direction emphasizes the importance of providing every student with equitable access to a rigorous instructional program. Providing a laptop to every high school student moves the district significantly closer to achieving that goal.

Why aren’t all high school students receiving laptops for the 2013–2014 school year?
PowerUp is not just a technology initiative. The planning, development, and implementation of the initiative involves multiple departments including curriculum, professional development, leadership, information technology, and instructional technology. Because of the breadth of the initiative and the training, support, and cultural change required for many of our teachers and school leaders, the decision was made to roll out PowerUp in stages, with phase one (the pilot stage) beginning at 11 high schools during the 2013–2014 school year. In phase two, 18 high schools will be added during the 2014–2015 school year, and an additional 15 high schools will distribute laptops in phase three during the 2015–2016 school year.

Which high schools were chosen to be in phase one, and how were they selected?
When selecting the high schools for phase one, HISD looked at the wired and wireless infrastructure of all high schools, campus leadership, and if the schools were already embracing technology for classroom instruction. The 11 high schools selected were Austin, Bellaire, Chavez, the Energy Institute, Kashmere, Lee, Madison, Sam Houston, Sharpstown, Young Men’s College Preparatory Academy, and Young Women’s College Preparatory Academy.

Why didn’t students in phase one receive laptops at the start of the school year?
By consulting with other school districts who have implemented successful one-to-one initiatives, HISD quickly determined that a key component of the PowerUp implementation plan must be training, professional development, and support for teachers on not only how to use the device but incorporate it into their daily instruction. With that in mind, the district made the decision to distribute teacher laptops in August 2013,
Houston ISD’s One-to-One Laptop Initiative  
Teaching and Reaching the 21st Century Learner

"...It is important for the educational system to make parallel changes in order to fulfill its mission in society, namely the preparation of students for the world beyond the classroom. Therefore, the educational system must understand and embrace ... 21st century skills within the context of rigorous academic standards" — NCREL & Metiri Group, 2010

In January 2013, HISD Superintendent Dr. Terry Grier proposed a plan to provide every high school student a laptop computer as a 21st century learning tool. He said of this one-to-one computing initiative, “With anytime-anywhere learning, our students will have the world at their fingertips. We’ll make sure they learn the skills that complement technology, so they aren’t replaced by technology.”

Why One-to-One?
This one-to-one computing initiative to create transformational, digital-age instruction is grounded in the HISD Beliefs and Visions: “The world is changing rapidly, and students must be prepared to live and work productively in a new economy with new technology, new competition, and new expectations. ... We believe that [HISD] can and must do even more to keep pace with change.”

In addition, the goal of Core Initiative 3 of the HISD Strategic Direction emphasizes the importance of equitable access to a rigorous instructional program for every student. Providing a laptop to every high school student moves the district significantly towards that goal. This initiative empowers students to become the drivers of their own learning, and connects them with resources, people, ideas, and opportunities far beyond the four walls of a classroom. New avenues for student research, problem-solving, collaboration, and creative expression abound, and work can be more easily and appropriately tailored to the needs and interests of individual students. With these tools, teachers can more easily serve as guides and facilitators, counselors and questioners, and instructional materials can come from almost anywhere in the world.

What is One-to-One?
Successful one-to-one implementation transforms how teachers teach and students learn. A digital device in the hands of all students engages students in highly interactive, transformational learning. Students need to be producers and evaluators of knowledge, not just consumers. In the digital age, analyzing information is a critical skill. In a one-to-one initiative, students will regularly have the opportunity to locate, evaluate, and interpret information, and to collaborate with their peers and others to engage in authentic, real-world tasks.

In preparing students to succeed in the 21st century, schools must ensure that students are:
- digitally literate
- inventive thinkers, successful problem solvers, creative decision makers, and critical thinkers
- clear and effective communicators and collaborators
- intellectually curious, self regulators, and persistent
- connected to the world around them, and contributors to their communities

A one-to-one laptop initiative provides a key resource for teachers in helping students develop these skills and competencies.

How Does One-to-One Look?

A. Pedagogical Model
In HISD, implementation of a one-to-one program will be centered on providing students effective, engaging, and standards-based instruction using the district’s curriculum with the laptop as a learning tool. The digital content, strategies, and resources embedded in the curriculum will provide support for planning instruction with technology, not teaching the technology itself. The primary goal is always effective, engaging instruction.

In support of the one-to-one initiative, the Curriculum Department will create enhanced curriculum documents that incorporate an expanded and robust set of online instructional strategies and resources. The documents will link to the online components of currently adopted instructional materials, district online resources and database subscriptions, and other high-quality online instructional resources and materials. A package of key instructional software will be loaded on each laptop.
Transforming Teaching & Learning

“With anytime-anywhere learning, our students will have the world at their fingertips. We’ll make sure they learn the skills that complement technology, so they aren’t replaced by technology.”

— Dr. Terry B. Grier

Preparing Students to Succeed in the 21st Century

PowerUp is an initiative for the entire district, to help prepare students for the future. These computers will help with critical thinking and communication skills. Students can work with others and have the chance to develop creativity. This is critical for future success, allowing students to connect and communicate with their world.

Access to Excellent Education for All

Access to technology opens many doors for students. As students access and discover educational content, they learn how it is applied to real-life situations. Students experience how the information influences daily habits and education now fits into the student’s world.

Students to Design Their Own Learning

1:1 programs put the students at the center of education, where they become producers and evaluators of content. With one device per child, teachers have the tools for personalizing student learning — and that increases interest and participation.

Internet Safety and Security of Students

To comply with the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA), HISD has adopted and implemented an Internet safety policy to address student safety. We educate employees on cyber-bullying, appropriate online behavior, and social networking. The laptops have filters that block inappropriate content both at school or home.

Requirements:

- $25 (cash only) non-refundable security deposit fee
- Required parent and student signatures on PowerUp Agreement Form
- Student(s) able to take their laptops home
- Student(s) will be issued a laptop at the beginning of each school year
- Student(s) must return the laptop at the end of each school year
- Report lost or stolen laptop to campus teacher or administrator immediately
- Laptops secured with a LoJack® to locate or disable remotely