

Looking Back

Last month I mentioned the exciting news about the upcoming massive upgrade to our K20 Internet connection. That project is now in the permitting process and this is where any delays might rear their ugly head. My understanding is that they have three different permitting agencies to deal with - Clark PUD (to use telephone poles to carry the cable), the WSDOT (to cross I-5 on the La Center bridge), and the town of La Center (to run the fiber across the LC bridge into town). In the email where this was explained, they also indicated that there were already problems getting timely responses from some of the permit issuers and it wasn't boding well for a short-timeline-all-possible-haste style project. While any delay is not to our advantage, it is an odd comfort to see my perception of government agencies is being confirmed.

After the close of the initial meeting, I asked the project manager how much this connection was costing the state. He didn't have a real and final number, but it was clear to me that this project will easily run into six figures - and not just dipping their toe into that pool either.

What's Current

There has been a major reorganization of our technology deployment and as a result, I am in the process of putting together a purchase order for about 250 additional Chromebooks to be used by students. The current plan will have us provide the core middle school teachers with a complete classroom set of devices. The high school will get a hardware refresh with new Chromebooks and the elementary will take over the iPads which the MS have been using as well as receiving almost a hundred Chromebooks. We have learned a lot about mobile computing devices and are making changes based upon that experience.

This plan will help prepare our MS students more adequately for their digital HS experience, will allow EL students to practice keyboarding/usage skills (especially helpful for taking the state computerized exams), and establish a learning environment that can leverage the best of traditional instruction with the best of digital resources. This is a huge step forward in our efforts to genuinely prepare students with 21st C. thinking skills.

Looking Forward

I will be exploring Aruba Instant wireless solution. Last month I had mentioned that my Aruba rep was going to see what a "yank and replace" solution for staying with the enterprise-class wireless solution. HP (our current wireless manufacturer) has purchased Aruba and there is quite a bit of speculation that HP will have Aruba as a new enterprise-class offering. I had the Aruba rep, the HP regional rep, an HP engineer and an Aruba engineer in for coffee this week and they seemed genuinely excited about working on a cost effective way for us to move onto new gear. While still not talking actual dollars, the indications are that my interest is aligned with an interest in their part to move customers into their Aruba line. If HP decided today to "pull the plug" on the MSM line (that's what we've been using), the 5-year clock for MSM end-of-life support would begin to tick.

I have requested two evaluation units to use for a while to see what their system looks, feels, and handles like. From there, HP has shown great interest in working with us on a transition plan because La Center has been "in the HP family" for infrastructure since day one. They also mentioned that they were aware that my HP wireless experience has been fraught with difficulties and that my lengthy and strident communications about these problems were almost infamous within their work group. I had to smile at that. Who knows from where your five minutes of fame will come? Or are we supposed to get 15 minutes of fame? I'll ask HP.