

# Announcing: the one-to-one Laptop Initiative!!

Westmount Charter School is proud to announce to our school community a very exciting technology initiative coming up in February 2010. Throughout the past 6 months, Administration and the IT Team have been working hard developing our 1-to-1 laptop initiative for students; researching models used in schools that currently have a 1-to-1 computer program, working with Apple Canada and consulting with the Calgary Science School. Our pilot program will target Grade 10 students, where the need for access to technology is most apparent, giving us the best opportunity to test our process and program prior to mass implementation planned for September 2010.

## Rationale:

The technology initiative will provide students with immediate access to the tools they need to support teaching and learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. Our program is founded on the understanding that:

- ◆ Access to technology at Westmount Charter School is highly competitive. We currently have two computer areas, with approximately 50 computers total for which teachers compete for 45 minute time slots for their classes. This is shared amongst approximately 500 students, grades 6 – 12. Providing Students with their own laptops will offer immediate access to technology, which they can use at any point throughout the day, in any class required, at an affordable price for families.
- ◆ Innovation is a necessary part of learning for today's students. Currently, because the access to technology is limited, computers are used predominantly for basic functioning, such as research and word processing. Providing students extensive accessibility will change the purpose and use of technology as a tool, from basic processing to digital content creation. The software provided with the student Macbook laptops will allow the opportunity to create, share and research information in ways not previously used at Westmount Charter School. This includes, but is not limited to, blogs, pod-casts, e-portfolios, i-movies, research databases, and photo-projects.
- ◆ Technological literacy is almost a universally necessary skill for employability in today's job market. It is our vision that students who graduate from Westmount Charter School will be entering into post-secondary programs, and/or the work force with the technological literacy skills required to be successful. It is our belief that stu-

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dents who do not have daily access to technology are at an extensive disadvantage, as they have not invested the required time to develop their technological literacy skills.

## The Pilot Project:

Our pilot project will be introduced to all students in Grade 10 at the beginning of Term 2, 2010. Each student will be provided with his or her own Macbook, purchased by the school and leased to parents for the remainder of their high school education at Westmount (Grades 11 – 12). In order to make this a successful roll-out, parents must attend 1 of

two information sessions in January, where more details will be provided about the initiative and where parents will have the opportunity to ask questions. The Macbooks will be insured through the school at a minimal cost, and students/parents will be required to sign a comprehensive user agreement. Teachers will also receive laptops, and the professional development workshops through Apple Canada, and the Calgary Science School in order to develop the skills necessary to use the

technology effectively with students throughout and beyond the pilot project stage.

## Implementation for Grades 6 - 12

In September 2010, the 1-to-1 initiative will be extended to students in Grades 6 and 10. Students in grades 6 will lease their laptops from Westmount until their grade 9 year; students in grade 10, until they have completed high school at WCS. We plan to have full implementation complete by 2013. During this process, remaining students will still have access to technology, as computers will remain available in the school library, computer lab, atrium and specific classrooms.

Because we value wide-spread access to technology, teaching technological literacy skills to prepare students for post-secondary and the work force, as well as being at the forefront of technology in education, this initiative becomes an important piece of the education of our students.

Please watch for Updates about our technology initiative in the upcoming December and January Newsletters, as well as information about the parent sessions, to be scheduled for January, where anyone is welcome to attend. We will have representatives from Apple Canada, and the Calgary Science School there to support us in making this a successful experience for our school community. - Mrs Dani Sever