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Newport News Public Schools recognized for Bring Your Own Device initiative

April 07, 2014 | By Sarah J. Pawlowski and Austin Bogues, abogues@dailypress.com | spawlowski@dailypress.com

There was a time when bringing anything to school that looked remotely cool, like a cell phone or a Game Boy, was cause for swift punishment.

But now, Newport News Public Schools is being recognized for encouraging students to interact with new technology through its Bring Your Own Device initiative.

The program, called BYOD for short, lets students bring devices such as smartphones, laptops, tablets and hand-held gaming devices for learning purposes. Many other local schools have similar programs.

The Newport News initiative received an honorable mention recently in the annual American School Board Journal's Magna Awards Program. The awards recognize innovative student-learning programs.

There are a few ground rules for the program. Parents have to register the devices, and teachers still have final say on when and where it can be used, according to the school division. More than 1,000 students are registered for the program.

The initiative marks a paradigm shift for the school division — a little over a decade ago, bringing a mobile device to school was still a rules violation punishable by suspension. The decision to allow students to bring cell phones and other mobile devices has at times been contentious between students, parents and teachers.

According to James Maxlow, supervisor of instructional technology and innovation for NNPS, the program allows teachers to search a wide range of sources for information as opposed to being restricted to a textbook.

Hampton student liaison

The Hampton School Board is asking for applications for a student liaison to the board for next school year. The student weighs in on matters of policy that affect students but has a non-voting role on the School Board. The current student liaison is Phoebus High School senior Ja' Rae Bolton.

The student liaison also attends the Superintendent's Advisory Group to share input from the student body. Applications are due by April 23 and must contain two letters of recommendation, at least one from a school administrator or teacher and one from a peer.

Special education fair

Hampton City Schools is hosting a Special Education Advisory Committee resource fair on April 15.

The free event aims to provide information about community resources for parents, students, educators and families.

More than 25 resource vendors are expected to attend, including Moms in Motion, Down Syndrome Association of Hampton Roads, Adorable Blankets, Community Services Board, and representatives of Hampton City Schools' curriculum departments.

The event is being held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Ruppert Sargent Building, One Franklin Street.

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