



Blackfoot School District 55

Criteria for Acceptance of Technology Donations

Local citizens often support their schools by donating time, materials, and more. Such donations support school programs in vital ways and so are an important factor in the success of our students. In the technology area these donations take many forms. Some donations are important additions to schools while others are impractical to use and end up becoming disposal problems. This advisory is intended to guide schools in deciding whether to accept a given technology donation or not. Schools need to balance the desire to be gracious to would-be benefactors with the need to avoid wasting scarce time and money on donations that will not benefit the educational program. **Consult** with the district Technology Department if you are in doubt about the usefulness or value of a prospective donation.

First Principles

Here are some important criteria you should employ in deciding whether or not to accept a prospective technology donation:

- Operational status - Does the item work? Is it broken in any way? If the donation is not fully functional, your response is to decline the donation unless there is a very compelling reason to accept it. Generally it is not a good idea to incur a repair expense when accepting a donation, as cash to pay for repairs is generally our scarcest resource.
- Completeness - Is the manual present? Are necessary cables included? Are paper trays, keyboards, software, and other required peripherals present? If the gift is incomplete you will have to buy parts or software to make the item functional, or at least download the software from the Internet. Such peripherals are often difficult or impossible to find, and if available, quite expensive. Unless the missing items are trivial or easily found, do not accept the donation.
- Usefulness - Is the item something you need? If it is, great, you already know who needs it and you can send the item directly to the classroom or office where it will be used. If not, think twice before accepting the donation, as you will have to find someone to take it or have to store, move, or dispose of it yourself.
- Supportability - Do you know how to make the item work? If not, don't accept it. **If you plan to count on district support to make a donation work, call them first and ask.** Do not assume that district support can make the item work if you cannot. **Bear in mind that donated equipment is the lowest priority for our busy support technicians.**
- Value and alternatives - is this an expensive item worth investing your time and money in to make work, or can a new one be purchased for less than \$100? If the donation is not expensive to buy, then don't accept it unless it is 100% ready and easy to use. If you really need this item, you can find \$100 to buy it and avoid all the hassle.

Computers and Peripherals

Here are some additional principles you should employ to decide whether a computer or peripheral donation is going to help the program:

- Processor - In order to run recent or current versions of computer Operating Systems (OS), the donated computer's Central Processing Unit (CPU) should be no more than two generations removed from the current advanced CPU generally available. In the PC world, where the Intel Core 2 Duo CPU now features clock speeds of 3+ Gigahertz (3,000 Megahertz), this means that donations should be Pentium 4 equipped or better to assure clock speeds of 1.8 Megahertz or better. Intel Celeron processors should only be accepted if they feature clock speeds of 2.4 Gigahertz or better as well. For Apple computers the current advanced CPU shipping is the Intel Core 2 Duo processor. Accordingly the Apple computer donation should feature a G4 CPU or better.
- Operating System Software - Computers age rapidly because of constant changes in the OS software they use. While the new operating systems do more things, they also require more computing power to do them. To get the most from a computer, it needs to be running an up-to-date OS. In the Microsoft (PC) world, this means that the computer, as donated, should be running Windows XP to be accepted as a donation. In the Apple world, Macintosh computers should be running OSX, preferably OS10.4.8.
- OS Software and drivers - Computers will not operate without OS software and device drivers loaded on their hard disk drives. Many corporations, when donating computers, 'scrub' the hard disk drives to remove any proprietary information from them. Unfortunately this cripples the computer as the OS and drivers have been removed. To prevent this from happening, ask the donor to be sure that the full operating system and suite of drivers is loaded on the computer prior to accepting it. This is much easier for the donor to accomplish than you might think. Since they use the computer, they have access to the original software and drivers that make it work now. Ask the donor to be sure the OS is installed. Otherwise, refer to the advice above regarding the acceptance of incomplete gifts.
- Proof of OS software license - Generally it is acceptable to receive computers with OS software installed without specific proof of license for the OS. While always desirable, such proof of license is often unavailable. When you receive a computer you should ask the donor if the OS copy on it is licensed and is included as part of the donation. If they say no, then you will have to purchase a license to use the OS yourself and you should strongly consider declining the gift. If they say yes, make a note of the verbal assignment of license and keep it.
- Peripherals - All of the comments above are relevant to some degree with printers, monitors, scanners, and other devices such as disk drives, video cards, etc. There are other considerations too. **Please call the District Technology Center first.**
- Monitors - this one item requires special care, as monitors cost money to throw out. Do not accept a monitor that you cannot immediately use and that does not work perfectly. Otherwise you will have to spend your funds to dispose of it. The same is true for television sets.

- Printers - Consider that very good quality inkjet printers are available new with warranties for less than \$100. Because of this, it makes little sense to accept any printer that you cannot literally plug in and use with no effort. Note that newer computers have Universal Serial Bus (USB) ports but may not have older types of ports, so be sure that the donation candidate has a USB port.
- Scanners - Tremendous advances have been made with scanners in the last few years, the most important advance being the general move to USB as the preferred connection technology. All of the prior connection technologies (SCSI, parallel, and serial) had major problems and so are not desirable to use. Scanner prices have come way down too, and as with printers, good ones are now available new for less than \$100. So, unless you know the donated scanner will plug and play with your computer, do not accept it.
- Internal components - Peripheral devices you install inside your computer typically require expert knowledge to evaluate or make operate. If you have this knowledge, proceed as you see fit. If not, the advice is to accept the device together with documentation if available and to send it to the district Computer Support department. If the device is useful, they will find a place for it, though not necessarily at the school which received it.

Software

Most of the acceptance criteria above apply to computer software as well, but there are some special considerations that must be applied to software donations because software is more intellectual than tangible property, hence proof of license is critical. In order to comply with district policies against software piracy, the original publisher's media must accompany any donated software. Without the original media, the district cannot prove that it has a valid license to use the software and could be liable to fines and other sanctions. Here are some specific guidelines with respect to accepting software donations:

- The District Technology Center and the building administrator must first approve software.
- Software - only donations - Only accept software-only donations on the original publisher's CDs or DVDs, ideally accompanied by the original publisher's license documents. Do not accept software-only copies of any kind on media other than the original publisher's CD or DVD.
- Software loaded on a computer - If application software is loaded on a donated computer's hard disk drive, it must be accompanied by some kind of certification of license (see comments above regarding software-only donations). If not, you must receive and keep an affidavit of license from the donor certifying the ownership and donation of the license to the school. If this is not available, you must remove the software from the computer and not use it. See comments above specific to OS software licenses.
- Wireless - **consult with the District Technology Center prior to any set-up.**

This document is intended to help schools evaluate the utility of technology donations. **As always, consult with the district Technology Department prior to purchasing or accepting any technology equipment.**