

Clay-Battelle to get Chromebook Laptops

Laptops do not require Internet

by Conor Griffith

The Dominion Post

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MORGANTOWN, W.Va. (The Dominion Post: Friday, January 2, 2015) - Some students at Clay-Battelle High School will no longer need to spend time in the computer lab or even need an Internet connection to obtain online material.

Monongalia County Schools Technology Coordinator Chris Urban said Chromebook laptops the district recently purchased to be distributed to ninth- and 10th-grade students at the school. She said 140 Chromebooks with cases were acquired for about \$300 apiece.

Each of the new laptops comes with the software program URcast, a content distribution application that is customized for the K-12 classroom.

"URcast also allows teachers to bundle everything a student is going to need electronically," Urban said. "So if there's worksheets, Internet sites, URcast will bundle it and put it on a machine for students, so they don't have to have to use Internet at home."

Using the Internet connection at the school, students will be able to download school content, such as articles and instructional videos, directly to the Chromebooks, which can be used anywhere.

"The benefits are going to be huge for the kids and the staff," Urban said.

West Virginia Network (WVNET), an organization providing telecommunications and computing services, has spearheaded the distribution of the URcast software in the Mountain State.

Booker T. Walton III, a customer resource specialist with WVNET, said Mount Vernon Elementary School, in Barbour County, and schools in rural areas of other states such as North Carolina are also putting URcast and take-home computers to use.

"People are looking for these services," Walton said, adding that URcast got picked up by the E-Rate program in October.

The Schools and Libraries program, also known as the E-rate program, makes telecommunications and information services more affordable for schools and libraries across the country. E-Rate is implemented by the Federal Communications Commission.

Urban said Monongalia County Schools didn't pay anything for URcast, just the Chromebooks. She said there aren't any plans to provide other county Chromebooks with URcast because of Clay-Battelle's location in an area with slim Internet connectivity.

"This new way of enhancing teaching and learning has helped to motivate teachers and students," said Mount Vernon Elementary Principal Tammy Tucker, adding that all third- and fourth-graders in her school now have take-home tablets loaded with URcast.

Clay-Battelle Principal David Cottrell said December was busy, with teachers learning to use the software so they can show the students. Cottrell said he has been scheduling meetings with students' parents, so they too can get a grasp on how the new program works.

"The opportunity Clay-Battelle is being given is enormous," Cottrell said. "What our long-term goal is to have all of our high school students with Chromebooks by next school year."



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

When I was much younger, I read a story about a man who planted hope and grew happiness. The essence of it was about a young fellow living in an area where all the forests had been cut down and the rain had stopped and things were bad. Many people left, complained or cried, but did nothing more.

This fellow went out every day and planted small saplings. Over the course of his life he planted many thousands of trees. When he was old, he found himself surrounded by forests and rivers and happy, productive towns and villages.

Sometimes, at WVNET, I realize that this is exactly what we do. Whether it's with DegreeWorks, or Analytics, or building fiber to get better internet access, WVNET is every day doing things to make the future better. There is a saying that today's generation plants trees so tomorrow's generation can enjoy the shade.

As we begin another year, that's exactly how it feels to work at WVNET.

Happy New Year to you all!



CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY And this month's winner is...



WVNET hopes everyone had a safe and prosperous holiday season! While it's a new year, WVNET is still continuing the relatively new tradition of rewarding our customers who take the time to help us evaluate our customer service experience at the Network.

This month, WVNET would like to recognize Monica Shafer, Office Administration Senior for Mountwest Community and Technical College.

Monica had experienced a hardware issue with her computer and it was corrected by staff at Mountwest; however, she had lost her settings for her accounts into their Banner Production environment. She reported this to our Banner team, which responded to her quickly and gave her the necessary credentials to get her back into being productive. While that doesn't sound like it's much, the ability to be able to do your job is affected by these incidents on a day-to-day basis. The people here at WVNET, in this case Senior Administrative Applications Software Specialist Barbara Long and Applications Group Manager Dana Keith, were there to assist and make sure that her time was spent achieving her work needs instead of waiting for a response. To quote Monica: *"The staff at WVNET are always a pleasure to work with. They go above and beyond."* Thank you, Monica. No problem is small when the ability to work is affected. WVNET remembers this every day.

As always, at the end of every month, we will draw a winner, contact them by email, and share items of our appreciation in the way of WVNET memorabilia. Please complete our survey by looking within the incident email of any interaction that you have had with us. All comments are taken seriously and help to improve what we do on a daily basis.

Thank you again, Monica, and thanks again to all our customers who continue to shape and improve WVNET!! *(Guest article by Booker Walton, NOC Manager, pictured.)*



Dan O'Hanlon, Director
 837 Chestnut Ridge Road
 Morgantown, WV 26505
 304.522.7303
dohanlon@mail.wvnet.edu



Fran Barnes, Editorial Assistant
fran@mail.wvnet.edu

Also edited by:
 Mike Karolchik, Manager
 WVNET Media Services
mike@wvnet.edu



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WVNET LOWERS INTERNET PRICES

For the 6th time in 2 years, WVNET lowered its prices for Internet access. In January 2014, the price was lowered to \$19.95. Effective January 2015, WVNET has further lowered its price point for Internet access to **\$9.95 per megabit per month**, more than a **50% reduction**. WVNET constantly strives to find ways to drive down costs so savings can be passed on to our customers. Thank you for allowing us to serve you.



HIGHER EDUCATION DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE

Come see WVNET at the Capitol for *Higher Education Day at the Legislature* on *Tuesday, January 27, 2015*. Visit our booth to obtain information and materials from any one of our onsite staff members and take home free giveaways!!

WV Statewide Technology Conference 2015
 Waterfront Hotel & Morgantown Event Center
 Morgantown, WV
 Pre-conference July 20-21, 2015
 Conference July 21-23, 2015

