Independent Study

Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)

INF W381

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Executive Summary

In recent years mobile technology has become a fundamental part of our everyday lives. Today’s students are growing up with mobile technology the way their parents grew up with television and telephones. Therefore it is only natural that mobile technologies should be integrated into their daily school activities. While some school districts have banned mobile technology in school other school districts have carefully considered allowing students to bring their own devices into school. During the 2012-2013 school year the Leander Independent School District has implemented a BYOD program that has permitted their students to bring their own devices into the school classrooms and libraries. While many studies have examined BYOD in the classroom this study will examine factors that facilitate and hinder how the integration of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) has affected the role of the school librarians and the campus libraries. Is BYOD an opportunity for school librarians to rethink and recreate dynamic learning opportunities in the school library or is BYOD counterproductive to learning? The school librarians on all thirty-eight campuses of the Leander Independent School District have been emailed an online survey that was preapproved by the District Information & Library Services Coordinator. After reviewing the data collected and reading the supporting literary reviews the study will conclude with recommendations to the Leander Independent School District and to teacher-librarians interested in learning more about how the current trend known as BYOD effects school librarians and the library environment.
Introduction

Educational institutions have been experimenting with ways to incorporate mobile technology into their classrooms and libraries without diminishing their budgets. Along the way educators saw the potential in initiating a premise known as BYOD. The acronym stands for Bring Your Own Device. “In recent years, BYOD has taken on a new aspect: that of mobile devices, particularly driven by the popularity of tablets and SmartPhones.”\(^1\) BYOD in school libraries was based on the simple premise that asserts since the students are bringing their own mobile technology devices into school anyway why not allow them to productively use these devices in the school libraries to conduct research and complete their assignments.

Leander school district Superintendent Bret Champion acknowledged the need to permit BYOD in schools. “We're also dipping our toe in the water of Bring Your Own Tech — that's what we're calling it. For years, our schools had the big signs in front that said "cellphones" with a big red slash through it: Leave your cellphones at home. We recognize that we now have more computer power in our pockets than we had on our desktops 10 years ago. So instead of trying to provide a device for every student, why not leverage the resources students already have? ... We have done a mass improvement to our wireless network for that effort.”\(^2\)


In 2012, the progressive Leander Independent School District created a 21st century learning environment by implementing a BYOD program that authorized the use of the student’s personal devices when they were in the classroom, the library or anywhere in the school building. The district provided the necessary infrastructure and monitored the students when they were using their own devices to access the internet and to execute specific tasks. Posters were installed on all of the campuses throughout the district to remind students when phones, tablets, and laptops were to be used and when they were inappropriate. The District posted a District Acceptable Use Policy link for the school community to access and adhere to.

One of the fastest growing districts in central Texas the Leander Independent School District educates over 34,000 students at 38 campuses across approximately 200 square miles. Leander ISD’s demographics show that 3.87% of the students are African American, 23.58% of the students are Hispanic, 63.27% of the students are Caucasian, 5.21% of the students are

Asian / Pacific Islander, .3% of the students are American Indian, and 21.91% of the entire student population in LISD are economically disadvantaged. 

The Leander Independent School District participated in BYOD and research involving the school librarians was nonexistent. The survey revealed, “the district created a good BYOD policy but it was not done with the library specifically in mind.”

Literature Review

Experienced professional Library Media Specialists work directly with administrators, teachers, and students and are facilitators who are championing the use of technology in their schools. Literature reviews are examining the role of the teacher-librarian and how they continue to integrate programs such as BYOD into the curriculum. Though the literature reviews do not always focus on BYOD they all concur the future has arrived and technology can no longer be viewed by the education community as a barrier to learning.

Today’s teacher-librarians are now referred to as Information Media Specialists who are viewed as agents of change, facilitating, encouraging, nurturing and supporting their colleagues as they learn and adopt innovation into action. In his article, What flavour is your school library? The teacher-librarian as learning leader, Loertscher writes that teacher-librarians are technology leaders and exhibit transformative powers as they build enthusiastic learning experiences based on curriculum content.

Research Questions

1) Did the district implement a reasonable, manageable policy for implementing BYOD into the school library?
2) How does BYOD assist the school librarian meet the state standards? Why?
3) How would the school librarian assess the work students perform using their own devices? Does a district rubric exist? If not have you developed a rubric for your campus?
4) Does having students BYOD to the library assist school librarians with reading instruction?
5) Do you think that when BYOD is combined with the right pedagogy and used responsibly BYOD can provide authentic learning opportunities for students?
6) How do you feel about school districts merging their library and IT departments?
7) Do you feel BYOD will increase the socioeconomic divide in your school? Why?
8) Do you think a program such as Westlake’s iPad pilot program could be implemented in Leander ISD? Why?
9) Is it or is it not possible to accomplish the same goals with school-owned devices instead of having student use personally owned devices?
10) Will districts need to increase professional development for school librarians to ensure that all school librarians are proficient in the integration of technology into teaching and learning? Why?
11) How will school libraries accommodate devices that meet specific technical specifications, or require specific versions of operating system?
12) Will the school library provide a loaner device if a student forgets or cannot afford their device?
13) Will the school library be accessible to students when they are off-campus?
14) What if anything would you edit/remove from the current BYOD policy?

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Limitations of the Study

This research study was limited by numerous variables. The research study was conducted within a limited time frame and confined to one independent school district that had just implemented a BYOD pilot program during the current 2012-2013 school year. The researcher emailed the survey to the school districts thirty-eight campus librarians during the second week of May and closed the survey at the end of May 2013. Of the thirty-eight librarians surveyed thirty librarians responded to the survey. The responses from the school librarians varied from a single word response to a written response that provided the researcher with general information that sometimes lacked details.

Since mobile technology is relatively new in schools locating literature reviews regarding BYOD in school libraries was problematic. The researcher did find literature reviews regarding how technology effectively increased the student’s motivation for learning, the classroom teacher’s best practices for teaching using technology in the classroom and the administrations budgetary concerns, however relatively few articles discussed the teacher-librarian and BYOD.

Methodology

For this study the researcher will investigate how implementing BYOD can facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of the school librarian and the school library environment. The purpose of this initial active research study was to evaluate their viewpoints of the school campus librarians as they began implementing the school districts policies pertaining to BYOD. As the concept of permitting students to bring their own devices into school is relatively new locating research on the premise is quite limited therefore the researcher created an original online survey that was transmitted to all of the thirty-eight certified school librarians in the Leander Independent School District. The results were based on the received thirty responses. The data was weighed to represent one independent school district in Texas. The researcher provided an analysis the data and recommendations to the Leander Independent School District.
Findings

In total 30 of the 38 campus librarians (78%) participated in this survey. An overwhelming 92% of campus librarians surveyed agreed that the Leander Independent School District implemented a reasonable, manageable policy for implementing BYOD into the school library and while 8% disagreed the district created a good BYOD policy they stated, “it was not done with the library specifically in mind.”

Of the teacher-librarians surveyed 23% strongly agreed BYOD does assist teacher-librarians in meeting the state standards and 70% agreed BYOD does assist teacher-librarians in meeting the state standards while 7% disagreed BYOD does not assist teacher-librarians. While there was a written segment for this question all of the respondents opted to pass up the opportunity to write a written response.

Of the respondents surveyed who provided a written response to the question regarding BYOD and reading instruction 57% answered back yes BYOD assists them with reading instruction and they stated, “It helps with my reading "instruction". “I do think it helps to motivate some students to read more books because it is fun to read on your device, and they see

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9 (Ostlund 2013)
other students doing it.” Of the 43% of school librarians who responded no to the question, one respondent wrote, “Our school has not jumped on board with BYOT even though the district has policies in place. I have not had the opportunity to see how BYOD would assist with instruction first hand, but I feel like it could if we were utilizing it fully.” This made me consider whether or not BYOD will increase the socioeconomic divide in the school library?

According to the respondents 62% believed that BYOD will increase the socioeconomic divide on their campus. On teacher-librarian stated, “My campus is a Title 1 Bilingual school, so over half our student do not have any devices. The only thing we used it for this year was Overdrive, our online e-book format.” While 38% of the respondents believed BYOD will not have a significant impact on the socioeconomic divide. A common theme expressed by these teacher-librarians was “that with BYOD in place, the students who have the technology will use their own, freeing up the limited tech resources on campus for those who do not have their own devices. This would keep access open for all students and school librarians though the “The district actively seeks ways to provide more technology to campuses for student use to fill gaps.” Although no specific policy was mentioned at this time as to how the district attempts to fill

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10 (Ostlund 2013)

11 (Ostlund 2013)
these gaps one response stated, “a foundation that supports our district is helping provide devices for students who would not have any access to them.” Another district that strived to close the digital divide was Eanes ISD by implementing a iPad pilot program.

For those not familiar with the iPad program “For the 2011-2012 school year, the Westlake High School campus distributed iPads to all junior and senior students, as well as teachers, administrators, librarians, and counselors. In addition, students in other classes who applied to be part of the pilot program have received iPads as well. Entering 2012-2013, all 9-12 students have received iPads, as well as all 8th graders in the district.”

Figure 3 Do you think a program such as Westlake’s iPad pilot program could be implemented in Leander ISD?

Of the school librarians surveyed 58% of the librarians believed that Leander could implement a program similar to Westlake’s iPad Pilot program while 42% believed that it could not be implemented as it comes down to “Funding, training, and support are the main issues. If we had all three of those key ingredients, a 1-1 program would be ideal. I do not see that happening here, but it would be nice if it did. Since the pilot in Westlake is still new, we don’t know how well it is working out for those students/schools.” The issues regarding the progress

12 (Ostlund 2013)


14 (Ostlund 2013)
of the program and the funding for the program were addressed in the article, *iPads for Everyone: How a small library program became a runaway hit and reached more than 4,100 kids and teachers* by Carolyn Foote. The article stated, “There’s a stronger spirit of collaboration as we all learn how to use apps to support our instructional goals. Teachers are constantly helping other teachers; as the librarian, I’m helping the technology team; students help their peers and their teachers and 82% of students surveyed felt that iPads had improved their educational experience.” “We got funding for our iPads from bond money that was for technology upgrades. The apps were purchased by state tech funds (called IMA in Texas).”

The *HillCountryNews* recently wrote an article regarding how the Leander Independent School District embraced technology with its new ‘bring your own’ approach. The district recognized the need “for those without access to personal technology and equipped classrooms and the library with desktops and other devices so that “whatever is needed is going to be available in every classroom at each school.” Additionally, students will have opportunities before and after school to use these LISD devices.”

The library media and information technology specialist have taken the place of the traditional teacher-librarian. The combining of the IT and library departments of the Leander Independent school district will require the school librarians to rethink their roles as

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information technology specialists. Implementing a technology program such as BYOD is completely different from troubleshooting a device and the merging of these two departments means their roles may have to become interchangeable. Of those surveyed 60% believed it made sense to merge the two departments, however most respondents were concerned as one respondent stated “I believe this is the way it will be going in the future. My concern is that I do not feel comfortable being a technical trouble shooter and would like training on how to correct problems.”¹⁸

In her article Anne McCracken emphasized library media specialists need to move into the future and attend professional developments that expand their knowledge of information technology so that they can implement programs such as BYOD. Library Media Specialists agree quality professional development whether informal or formal should be designed to assist teacher-librarians as they develop into highly effective facilitators of technology.

Figure 4 Will school districts need to increase professional development for school librarians?

![Figure 4](image)

Of the teacher-librarians surveyed in LISD 58% responded definitely yes and 30% responded probably yes, for a combined percentage of 88% saying yes that they would like the

¹⁸ (Ostlund 2013)
Leander Independent School District to increase professional development for teacher-librarians to ensure that all school librarians are proficient in the integration of technology. Responses were positive and those librarians with limited technology knowledge admitted, “Although many of us are comfortable with technology, there are many who are not. Even though I am comfortable with technology, I am limited to the devices I own or have access to, so any training I receive is appreciated and useful. One librarian simply wrote “I need this now.”

The remaining 12% of librarians voted that they would probably not want or need an increase in professional development training.

Campus librarians were given the chance to voice their opinions regarding what they would edit/remove or add to the current BYOD policy. Half of the librarians surveyed wrote “Nothing so far” with one librarian summarizing BYOD as a “Policy that seems good to me. However, I have not had a long time to work with the new policy since it is only a year old.”

A common recommendation by campus librarians was the idea of adding “an online etiquette course that teaches students about sharing information and the do’s and don’ts.” Another recommendation suggested the BYOD video was not geared for appropriate grade levels, “We had to show one video to all students PREK - 5th, and the video was geared toward high school students. Perhaps the district could explain BYOD in simpler terms for the lower elementary school students. Further some librarians recommended a training seminar for librarians and teachers as they suggested “more training for teachers to manage student use, there needs to be a way to monitor what students are using the devices for too.” Librarians would further like to see stricter enforcement of the policies currently in place for the misuse of BYOD.

19 (Ostlund, 2013)
20 (Ostlund 2013)
Recommendations

Between the current literature written on the trend known as Bring Your Own Device, the responses acquired by campus librarians through this survey and my own personal observations as a substitute teacher in the Leander Independent School District for the past two years I have come up with several recommendations that I hope will be taken under advisement and hopefully implemented for the upcoming school year. A professional development session should be dedicated to expanding the campus librarian’s awareness and knowledge of the technologies they may encounter (or that a student might bring) and how to operate the basic features of these devices. Secondly professional development sessions throughout the school year should include teaching teacher-librarians to trouble shoot basic problems that may arise and a trouble shooting pamphlet should be created and given to each campus librarian for them to refer to should they encounter a technical problem with a device. Thirdly the Leander Independent School District should create age appropriate online etiquette courses and an age appropriate video explaining the Leander Independent School Districts policies regarding Bring Your Own Device. For the youngest students a cartoon video using simple sentences explaining the use of BYOD would make it easier for the lower grades to understand and comply with the schools BYOD policies. Throughout the survey one thing all the Library Media Specialists agreed upon was BYOD transforms the way student’s access technology in the school library. They agreed when integrated into the library curriculum BYOD provides students with an authentic learning experience that enhances student learning especially since students are very knowledgeable and comfortable with their own devices.
Conclusions

The researcher concludes that this small sampling of teacher-librarians provides a starting point for future BYOD studies. Findings from this study provided reference data that can assist the Leander Independent School District as they move forward with BYOD in the school library.

All of the participating Leander Independent School District Media Specialists were extremely honest in their responses and expressed legitimate concerns regarding BYOD in school libraries. The researcher realized that while the online survey provided many insights into the viewpoints of the teacher-librarians personalized visitations to the school libraries may have yielded more detailed answers and opened an ongoing dialogue that may have revealed more of the teacher-librarians concerns with regard to integrating BYOD into the school libraries. Bring Your Own Device is no longer a trend but a viable means of educating our students in the 21st century. In the age of accountability studies such as this one presents school districts with supporting evidence to maintain the programs such as BYOD in their school libraries.
Bibliography


