

CASE STUDY

Achieving Access for All

How The Oxnard Union High School District rolled out a comprehensive one-to-one technology program.



ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY OPENS NEW AVENUES for learning, exposes students to the potential of STEAM curricula, and helps prepare them for what they will encounter when they reach college and the working world. Helping prepare students for their education and employment futures is a driving force for schools to equip students with technology; but that's not the only driving force.

For Reina Bejerano, Chief Technology Officer for the Oxnard Union High School District, her primary goal in driving a one-to-one device distribution program for her high school students is equity. The Oxnard area is ethnically and financially diverse, and Bejerano is passionate about providing every student with the same access to technology and the Internet, not only at school but also at home. Achieving that goal of equity is Bejerano's driving force.

One-to-One at Oxnard Union

The Oxnard Union High School District services more than 17,000 students within 10 high schools with another under construction and scheduled to open for the 2023/24 school year. Several years ago, the district began implementing a one-to-one program with



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the goal of equipping every student with his or her own device; in this case the Acer Chromebook.

“The key was equity and access,” says Bejerano. “We have lot of students who do not have any access to technology outside of the school day. Then we have students who have unlimited access. It’s a mixed bag, so we want to be deliberate in ensuring all students have what they need to be college and career ready once they graduate from our high schools.”

And the timing proved especially provident. “We started implementing the one-to-one program a year before COVID, in the 2018/2019 school year. We did it in two phases for a total of two years,” she says. “In the second year just as COVID was hitting, we were able to ensure all of our students had Chromebooks in time for distance learning.”

Every year, Bejerano purchases about 4,500 Chromebooks to distribute to incoming freshmen and maintain the one-to-one program. The Oxnard Union High School District is the only all high school district in Ventura County and the only district in the county where enrollment is actually on the rise. While they currently have more than 17,000 students, that figure will increase, which is allowing them to build a new high school, thanks to Measure A, a bond passed by voters in a 2019 election and reallocate students at schools that are at or above capacity. “We like to say, ‘It’s the same pizza, with more slices,’” she says.

From COWs to Chromebooks

The educational technology landscape wasn’t quite as advanced when Bejerano first arrived. The Acer Chromebooks replaced a herd of COWs—computers on wheels—throughout the high schools. Each school site was responsible for buying their own COW carts, which immediately introduced a degree of inequity.

“Some sites were putting money into buying these carts, and at other sites it wasn’t a priority,” she says. “Some sites had 40 COWs, and others had 150, so it was certainly not equitable. Some teachers would get lucky and get a COW and some didn’t. Some teachers would share a COW. That’s what they were doing when I first arrived. It was definitely not a situation where every student had access to technology.”

The choice of Acer Chromebooks came about after a diplomatic and inclusive process. “We have a Technology Advisory Committee(TAC), which meets once a month. We would talk about the one-to-one rollout, and get feedback from teachers and administrators,” she says.



When it came time to select which device they were going to use for the one-to-one program, they had a group presentation with HP, Acer, and Dell. Each vendor had about 15-20 minutes to showcase their product, everyone could ask questions, then Bejerano sent out a survey and Acer came back as the winner. “I rely on the teachers’ voice. They’re the ones using it. They’re the ones on the front lines, so I rely heavily on their voice and feedback,” she says.

How It Eased the Pandemic

Oxnard Union’s move to a full one-to-one program could not have happened at a better time. At the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, the students were already equipped with his or her own device and ready for distance learning. This helped the schools, teachers, and students make the shift. “It’s completely ironic, but when COVID hit and we moved to distance learning, we were ahead of the game. A lot of districts were coming to us for guidance and we were happy to offer insight to our neighboring districts,” she says.



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Oxnard Union conducted more than 225 professional development sessions for teachers to ensure they felt comfortable and prepared to teach in the new distance learning environment suddenly thrust upon them. “We were able to get ahead of it. We felt that we were better equipped than we initially anticipated,” says Bejerano. “Our kids had hot spots. They had Chromebooks. They had the curriculum and we were doing all we could to support our teachers who were thrust into teaching in this non conventional way, but we felt we were in a really good position because we had so many teachers utilizing these Online tools anyway.”

Had the circumstances been different, Bejerano feels it would have been dire. “My colleagues in other districts couldn’t get products.

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Everybody jammed on the gas at once and was calling their vendors and partners. Everybody had the same idea, so several districts were out of luck,” she says. “It would have been a disaster.”

While Bejerano says it was just luck, the move to a one-to-one technology program had been in the works for some time. “I have been with the district for six years, and from moment of hire, that was the conversation we were having,” she says. “I had done a roll out in a previous district, and they knew that. So, we were thinking, ‘How are we going to do this? What does it look like? How much does it cost?’”

Some administrators feared the students would break any device they were given. “The superintendent and I rallied and said ‘If you give these to the kids and let them know they’re theirs, they’re not going to destroy them,’” says Bejerano. And she was right. Her district has less than 1% breakage, and it is usually the same issues of cracked screens and keys popping off the keypad, which does happen with normal student wear and tear.

Chromebook Governance

There are of course policies that govern how the students are able to use their school-issued Chromebooks. Parents are also involved in understanding and adhering to those guidelines. “Every student has to sign an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) at the beginning of the year and they have to watch a student-made video about how to treat your Chromebook and what to do if you need assistance,” she says.

Students and parents both sign the mobile device policy form that outlines the educational purposes. “It essentially states they’re not going to give it to their little brother. It is for their use only,” she says.

Beyond the governance policies, there are other safeguards in place. “We manage the Chromebooks individually, and have Go Guardian and other content filtering in place, so that helps tremendously,” she says.

Upon graduation, students are able to purchase the Chromebook they have been using during their time in high school. They can buy their Chromebook for \$40, but if they opt to not retain ownership, the devices are serviced and used as loaner devices through the district.



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Looking Ahead

The impact has been overwhelmingly positive, but one school stands out in Bejerano’s heart and mind. “One success story is Frontier High School. These are students who are mostly credit deficient and who have not been successful in a traditional school setting,” she says.

“When we rolled out the Chromebooks, we also bought cases and gave students the choice of which case,” she explains. One was a briefcase type, and the other had a strap to carry it across the body like a messenger bag.

“Frontier students were so excited about their new Chromebooks! They now proudly walk around campus with their cross-body cases and their Chromebooks,” she says. “It is definitely sweet to see them taking pride and taking ownership of their Chromebooks. Most of these students have never owned their own device before, so they enjoy showing it off a bit. Now they are more engaged.” And for those students, that depth of engagement seems to also translate into classroom.

Bejerano has no plans of stopping her one-to-one program. She will continue to order 4,500 Chromebooks every year for incoming freshmen. She will continue to provide technology access for all students, giving them all a solid platform from which to grow and succeed. “I am passionate about our kids and families,” she says. “I want them to feel cared for and have equity. Every kid has the right to learn.”



Reina Bejerano
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