



Information for Students & Families

What Is TCSS Connect?

As we begin the 2022-2023 school year, the Tuscaloosa County School System is proud to introduce TCSS Connect!

Through TCSS Connect, every student in the Tuscaloosa County School System, grades kindergarten through 12, will have an iPad assigned to them, to support their learning. While we have used technology and electronic devices as part of our instructional program for years in the Tuscaloosa County School System, TCSS Connect is different, because each student will have one device assigned to them, for their use only.

This is different than when TCSS provided devices to some students at the beginning of the pandemic. That was to meet an emergency need, but TCSS Connect is a long-range commitment for our school system. Once our TCSS students become graduates, they will be part of workplaces and educational programs that will expect them to be proficient and confident in incorporating technology into their work. Shifting to an instructional model where every student has their own device will help us better prepare our students for their future. More and more school systems across the nation are moving to this type of technology initiative, and we're proud to be able to make this available to our TCSS students.

In the Tuscaloosa County School System, we strive to be a creative, connected community of learners. This is the purpose of TCSS Connect.

When Will Students Receive Their iPads?

Through TCSS Connect, students will begin receiving their devices in mid to late August.

Each TCSS student, K-12, will receive an iPad, in a case, with a charger. The devices will not work until your school assigns each device to an individual student. The cases will not all look the same, but every TCSS iPad will have the same capabilities.

TCSS has chosen Apple devices due to their durability and the support that comes with the devices. The cost of an iPad for TCSS is equal to approximately the cost of two new textbooks. We believe this is a great investment, because of the educational possibilities this will provide to our students.

Will Students Take Their Devices Home?

For students in grades K-2, the iPads will stay at school and not come home with the students. However, students in these grades will still have an individual device assigned to them.

Students in grades 3-12 will take their iPads home each afternoon. Taking the devices home is necessary, so students can charge them each night. There also may be assignments that must be completed at home using the iPad. However, any homework requirement on the iPad will not require internet. If a student does not have internet access at home, this will not be a barrier to completing an assignment. Also, please remember that free wireless internet is available on our school buses and in our school parking lots.



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End of the School Year/Moving to a New School

At the end of the school year, students will keep their devices over the summer break, as long as they plan to return to the same school the next year. Students who will be moving up to another school within TCSS, transferring to another school either in or out of the school system, or graduating, will turn their device in at the end of the school year. Students who transfer to another school within or out of TCSS, during the school year, will also turn their device in when they leave the school.

How Will Students Use Their iPads?

Teachers will incorporate devices as needed, for assignments, projects, or additional practice, just like they have already been doing with the devices in our schools. Devices are another instructional tool, and students will not be on devices all day long. Think of your TCSS-issued iPad like a textbook. Your TCSS-issued iPad is not optional, but it is a required educational device, just like a textbook you are issued. Also, it is an educational device, different from a personal device you may already have at home.

Teachers will use a program called Apple Classroom. Apple Classroom allows teachers to monitor what's happening with every device in their classroom. When students are using a particular app in class, the teacher can lock the devices into that app. Teachers can also project any TCSS device screen in the room to the projector screen in class. It's important that the iPads support the learning happening in our classrooms, and do not create a distraction. Apple Classroom is a great tool in helping ensure this.

Caring for Your iPad

Every TCSS student, K – 12, will be provided an iPad, case, and charger, at no cost to the student. Through TCSS Connect, students will receive instruction, starting before they receive their iPads, on proper device care and the responsibility that comes with having your own educational device.

If an iPad is damaged, destroyed, or lost, the cost to repair or replace the device will be the responsibility of the student and their parent or guardian. The iPads are durable, and when they are properly cared for, damages will be minimal. TCSS has already piloted this program for a full year in one school, and 97 percent of devices experienced no damages or losses. Our students are already experienced with using electronic devices and knowing how to properly care for them.



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Protection Plan & Damages

Your school will offer the opportunity to purchase a protection plan at the cost of \$50 per student. The protection plan is not a requirement. If a student does not purchase a protection plan, they will still receive their device.

The protection plan will cover one instance of a cracked screen, lost charger, broken case, or a full replacement of the iPad. Without the protection plan, the approximate current cost of these damages is \$284 dollars for a replacement screen, \$50 for a lost charger, \$100 for a broken case, or \$300 for a full replacement of the device.

One purchase of a protection plan is available to each student, per school year. It's like insurance. If the protection plan is purchased but not used in that year, it is non-refundable and it does not roll over to the next school year. If a family has more than one student enrolled in TCSS, a protection plan can be purchased for each student, not to exceed \$150 total.

If there is another damage once the protection plan is used, the student and parent/guardian will be responsible for the actual cost of the damage. When devices are properly cared for, multiple damages are not likely.

Reporting a Damaged or Missing Device

If your student's iPad is broken, lost, or malfunctioning, they should report it immediately to their homeroom teacher if they are in elementary school, or to their advisory teacher if they are in middle or high school.

The teacher will make a report to our TCSS Information Technology Department that the device needs repair, and the school will issue a replacement device to the student. Replacement devices will be kept at schools. Once the replacement device is assigned to the student, the content on the student's damaged or missing iPad will be available on the replacement iPad.

If there is a need to utilize your protection plan or pay the cost of a repair or replacement, your school administrator will notify the student and the parent/guardian.



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Device Safety & Security

If your student's device is missing or you believe it may have been stolen, your school will be able to "ping" the device, to help you find it. The ping noise will continue until the device is located and the school stops the ping noise.

If you believe your device has been stolen, once you notify your homeroom or advisory teacher, the school will lock the device, so nothing can be done with the stolen device. The device will not work once it is locked. The parent or guardian should also file a police report and provide a copy to the school. Your school will assist with this process if needed.

Even when your student's device is being used away from school, it is still routed back through the TCSS content filter. If there is an attempt to access inappropriate content on the device, the content will be blocked, just like it would be at school, and the school will receive an alert. Providing safeguards so that non-educational or age-inappropriate content is not available on these devices is a priority for TCSS.

Apps that are district-required will be non-removable on students' devices. Apps that are age-appropriate, free, and district-approved will be available to students through the app library. Apps go through our TCSS Software Review Committee before being made available on our TCSS iPads. Just like with filtering content, protecting our network and student data from hackers is also critically important for our school system.

Being Prepared for Class With Your iPad

Students in grades 3-12 should bring their device to school each day, fully charged. It is the responsibility of the student to charge their device overnight at home. We encourage students to leave their charger at home, in one location, so the charger is not lost. If the device is fully charged overnight, the device will have plenty of power for the school day, and there will be no need to bring your charger to school.

When there is a habit of a student being unprepared with their device, just like with any other material required for class, this will be treated as a discipline issue. However, we do not expect this to be a problem. Our students are already comfortable with using technology. Once they become familiar with having their own educational device for school, they will quickly develop a habit of remembering to bring it to school, fully charged each day.

More Questions?

Ask your teacher or school administrator if you have further questions about TCSS Connect. This is new for all of us - students, teachers, administrators, support staff, and families - and we'll learn together as we get started. We look forward to building our creative, connected community of learners through TCSS Connect!