

May 2012



Dear Peel District School Board Families:

As each of us knows personally, through observing our own children, today's students are leaders in the use of technology. More and more, they tell us that they want—they need—their learning experiences in school to reflect this. Students want to take the technology they use in their daily lives and integrate it with how they learn.

That's why the Peel District School Board's Learning and Instructional Technology Plan, which trustees approved at the March 27, 2012, Regular Meeting of the Board, is so exciting. The board's \$7 million investment in technology for our students will ensure our schools are increasingly connected and relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Some Peel schools are currently using Wi-Fi technology (Wi-Fi) to boost learning in the classroom, with great success. By the end of the next school year—2012-13—we expect students in all Peel schools to be able to communicate, collaborate and access educational resources online through wireless networks. This technology has become common in many homes and public areas, such as airports and hospitals.

The Peel board understands and is sensitive to the safety concerns some community members may have regarding the use of Wi-Fi in schools. We take advice from Peel Public Health regarding all health issues. They have provided us with information from the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion that says there have been numerous studies on radiofrequency exposure and its impacts on human health, but that there is no evidence of negative health effects of Wi-Fi. Providing safe and appropriate places to learn and work is a top priority for our board. We will continue to rely on the expertise and standards of organizations like Peel Public Health to guide our use of this technology.

Wi-Fi installations will begin in July and continue throughout the school year. This means that schools will be at different stages of the Learning and Instructional Technology Plan next school year. We expect that school and board staff will spend much of the upcoming school year preparing to fully leverage the board's investment in technology.

Wireless technology has been shown to have a positive impact on research skills, and on student engagement and achievement. As wireless becomes available in a school, students will begin to see teachers incorporate more digital resources into their lessons. It's important to note, however, that teachers in every classroom will not be expected to embed technology into every lesson. There's a right time and place for every instructional moment.

Also, once online resources are able to be accessed wirelessly, students will be encouraged to *BYOD—bring your own device*. The plan will also improve equity of access to technology for all students through classroom technology in schools, and a process to ensure schools and classrooms across the system have similar standards of technology so that no child feels excluded.

Students are going to live and work in a world where people use their devices 24/7. They need to learn to use technology effectively and respectfully. Digital responsibility is an important part of what we help students learn in school, and appropriate use will continue to be an expectation in each school's Code of Conduct as it is now. As we begin to move forward with the plan, principals, staff and School Council members will work together to develop school policies and practices that support the effective use of technology in the classroom.

These technologies—and anytime, anywhere access—have the power to make a real difference to prepare students for a successful future. A one-page overview of the board's Vision of Learning and Instructional Technology and the full plan is available on the Peel board's website—[www.peelschools.org](http://www.peelschools.org). Look for the link in the "Spotlight" section of the home page. I am excited by the opportunities this vision will create for students and staff in our schools. We look forward to your support and involvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Pontes".

Tony Pontes, Director of Education