

# Synced FOR STUDENTS

## A partnership to build technological equity

In spring 2020, amid the coronavirus pandemic, Polk County Public Schools swiftly instituted districtwide distance learning. The effort was remarkable, but also challenging, in part because PCPS had far more students in need of internet-accessible devices than it had devices to give.

A donor stepped forward, offering dozens of computers no longer needed by his business. Those computers were issued to students living in group housing, providing them with access to their schoolwork – and all the knowledge in the world.

Synced for Students, a PCPS/Polk Vision initiative, is an outgrowth of that initial donation. The pandemic revealed a gaping digital divide in Polk County, but also the ability of individuals, businesses and non-profits to bridge it.

Synced for Students seeks to build greater technological equity within our community, one student at a time.

### GOALS

1. Provide students in need with internet-accessible devices.
2. Expand access to fast, reliable internet service.
3. Secure legislation and funding that supports these goals.

### HOW CAN YOU BE PART OF SYNCED FOR STUDENTS?

One of the easiest ways is to donate a used device. Individuals and businesses purchase new laptops, and tablets every few years. New gadgets are always nice, but in many cases, those old devices are still usable for years to come. When you donate your used device to Synced for Students, you're putting its full lifespan to use for a great cause: the education of our children.

### WHAT KIND OF DEVICES WILL BE ACCEPTED?

Donated computers should have at least one year of usability left in their lifespan. Laptops and tablets are preferred over desktops because they have fewer parts. The following specifications describe devices that will best be able to support distance-learning platforms:

- 128 GB hard drive or higher
- 4 GB RAM or higher
- 2.0 GHz Intel or AMD processor
- Windows 7 or later
- Internet Explorer or Google Chrome
- Adobe Acrobat Reader
- Anti-virus program
- Wi-Fi capable (or equipped with a network interface card for a desktop)
- Speakers
- Microphone or webcam is a plus



## **HOW DO I DONATE A DEVICE?**

PCPS and Polk Vision are strictly following social distancing guidelines until the coronavirus pandemic abates. For now, please send an email to [syncedforstudents@polk-fl.net](mailto:syncedforstudents@polk-fl.net). We will make arrangements to collect your device while protecting both you and our staff members.

## **HOW DO I PREPARE MY DEVICE TO BE DONATED?**

Donors are asked to erase personal data from their devices while leaving the operating system installed. Information on how to do this is readily available online. There are also services that can help. Once PCPS receives a device, a team of trained technicians who have passed a Level 2 background check will ensure that all personal data is eliminated from the device.

## **WILL THERE BE ANY PROPRIETY LIABILITY?**

No. Operating software is licensed to and transfers with the donated equipment.

## **AM I ABLE TO GIVE PARTS OF A COMPUTER, SUCH AS A SCREEN, MOUSE OR HARD DRIVE?**

You may donate parts. However, laptops are preferred because they require fewer parts and can be quickly formatted and placed with students. We will accept good used working components that have been in service for four years or less. Specifically, monitors need to have either a VGA or a display input, or both. We also need standard USB keyboards and USB optical mice.

## **HOW MANY STUDENTS NEED DEVICES?**

During the coronavirus pandemic, PCPS deployed approximately 23,000 devices. The school district estimates two-thirds of its students lack either a device or internet access and will benefit from the efforts of Synced for Students. Rest assured that every usable device donated to this partnership will be issued to a student in need.

## **HOW WILL STUDENTS BE SELECTED TO RECEIVE DEVICES?**

PCPS is a founding partner of Synced for Students. Members of its leadership team have been involved since the inception, with the sole purpose of creating greater technological equity for students. Regional superintendents work closely with school principals to identify students who lack sufficient technology for learning in their home. Students are prioritized based on their personal needs, as well as the demands of their coursework. For instance, a high school senior may need to do more work online than a first-grader, and therefore would be more likely to receive a device through Synced for Students.

## **IS THERE A TAX BENEFIT TO MY DONATION?**

Yes, Polk Vision Inc., a founding partner of Synced for Students, is a registered 501(c)(3). Upon making a donation, a receipt will be provided for use in filing your tax return.

## **WILL EVERY STUDENT RECEIVE A DEVICE THROUGH THIS PROGRAM?**

No. This program serves as a pipeline between individuals, businesses and nonprofits and students in need of technology. The aim is to put every available resource of our community to work for students. Students are not guaranteed devices; devices will be issued on an as-available basis based on need.