



Dear Grade 5–8 Parents and Students,

I want to inform you of some exciting changes to our ePack 1:1 program for all students entering Grades 5–8. All students will start the year with a pen-enabled iPad. In addition, all Grade 7 and 8 students will be required to have a personal keyboard.

**In short:**

**Grades 5 and 6**

Students will be issued a new pen-enabled iPad with a case and a Logitech Crayon stylus during the first week of school. Students are NOT required to bring their own dedicated external keyboard; class sets will be available during the school day. However, parents are welcome to follow the *Keyboard Recommendations* below for home use.

**Grade 7**

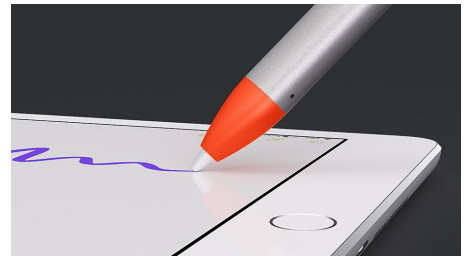
Students will be issued a new pen-enabled iPad with a case and a Logitech Crayon stylus during the first week of school. New this year: Grade 7 students are required to bring a personal external keyboard to school. Please see our *Keyboard Recommendations* below.

**Grade 8**

Students already have possession of a pen-enabled iPad with a case and a Logitech Crayon stylus distributed at the start of school last August. New this year: Grade 8 students are required to bring a personal external keyboard to school. Please see our *Keyboard Recommendations* below.

**Longer:**

About a year ago, Apple updated their base-level iPad to include pen-enabled functionality, similar to what has been available via the iPad Pro versions for several years. In addition, Logitech released the school-friendly Crayon, which brings the same functionality as the Apple Pencil. We piloted both with our Grade 7 students last year and, by most accounts, this led to a surge of more effective note-taking, productivity and creativity.



Given the success, we are providing pen-enabled iPads to all students in Grades 5–8 as well as faculty. All Grade 8 students will retain their current iPad and Crayon, and all students in Grades 5–7 will be issued new equipment at the start of the school year.

In addition, we are requiring personal keyboards for all students in Grades 7 and 8. Although the iPad's virtual keyboard is sufficient for most casual writing, full-size physical keyboards better support the long-form writing demands of our older students. Last spring, Krista Inchausti, our K–8 Educational Innovation Coordinator, recruited several students to test equipment and provide reviews of a wide variety of Bluetooth, plug-in, and case-based keyboards. "I was struck by how individualized student response was to the different keyboard options," Krista said. "What worked for one student didn't work at all for another." Thus, we decided to embrace a *bring-your-own-keyboard* program for Grades 7 and 8. We ask each family to decide what's best for their student(s). We see this as a transition to our full-fledged bring-your-own-device program in high school.

## Keyboard Recommendations

There are dozens of potential keyboards to choose from. Below are some recommended models, but you are free to find and purchase one of your choice. Please purchase one prior to the start of school. Below are Amazon.com links for your convenience, but you can purchase from any retailer of your choice.

[Sounwill Foldable Keyboard](#) (\$27) — This option features a Bluetooth wireless connection with a long-lasting rechargeable built-in battery. It is super quiet and folds into a small space for easy backpack storage. Students say: “I liked how easy it is to carry because it is super light. The buttons are easy to press. And once you connect it to your iPad, you never have to do it again.”



[Belkin B2B124 Wired Keyboard](#) (\$49) — This wired option doesn't require Bluetooth connection set-up, batteries or recharging. Since it does not fold, it's larger and on the slightly noisier side, but durable. Students say: “It was nice being able to type, but it was very large and not very portable.” This is a good solution for home use and for students wanting the simplicity of a full-size plug-in keyboard.



[Logitech Slim Foilo](#) (\$89) — This built-into-case option requires Bluetooth connection and is not a full-size keyboard, but some students may benefit from the ease of access. Please note that we've found built-in keyboard cases tend not to protect the iPad as well as our standard provided case, so students risk higher breakage rates. Students say: “I had a hard time getting used to it at first since the keyboard is smaller than normal.” And, “I like the keyboard because it's easier to do writing assignments, and I don't need to keep looking for the plug-in keyboards ... it made it so easy to do assignments.” Note: students choosing this type of option should return their provided iPad case.



I am happy to answer any questions and look forward to the return of students in the days ahead,

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