



IT Services Board of Directors Update

Kevin Bremner – Director of Technology

November 14th, 2023

Cyber Performance Grant

Maine DOE notified us in September that we were awarded just over \$93,000 for the MLTI Cyber Performance Grant. The funds were awarded to purchase additional network switches to replace the remaining hardware throughout the district and to renew licensing for the switching that was put in place over the last two years. The equipment will be ordered in the next few weeks and will be installed as time permits.

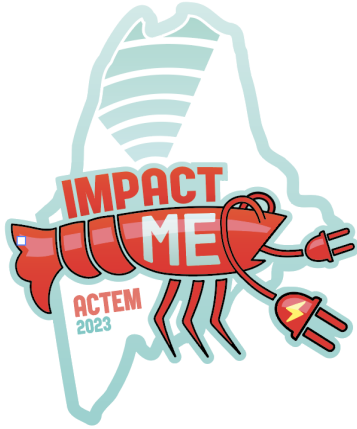
As each switch is put into service, it will take some time to physically move all of the connections to the new hardware and then finalize any configurations and perform testing. To do that work, portions of the network in each building will need to be offline for a period of time. In order to minimize disruptions to staff and students, most of that work will happen after school hours or during vacations.

The premise behind the CPG was to allow districts to work toward meeting the primary goals that were put forth in CISAs report titled [Protecting Our Future– Partnering to Safeguard K-12 Organizations from Cybersecurity Threats](#). This primary finding and it's recommendations is to implement the most meaningful security measures to bolster short term security improvements. In this case, replacing long outdated network equipment with new, more secure hardware that will allow us to focus efforts on other important security implementations.

These new switches will have several benefits over the current hardware. First and foremost, we can efficiently keep them up to date with firmware updates as they are released and they will work hand-in-hand with our new firewalls. This ensures that we are always updated against the latest security threats. These switches are also more compatible with the complex networking designs that are being implemented to secure our network. As we move toward a zero trust framework, we require more complicated VLAN configurations and a myriad of rules that restrict traffic between these VLANs to keep traffic from being able to access parts of the network that they don't need access to.



ACTEM Fall Conference



ACTEM held their annual Fall Conference at the August Civic Center on October 12th and 13th. Myself, the district Technology Training Coordinator, and many of the Tech Coaches and librarians were able to attend one or both days. There was a big focus on AI at many of the sessions this year and several of the coaches reported that these were the best AI focused training that they participated in and they gained good insights into how they can use it to improve some of their lessons and teaching. The ACTEM conference is also a great opportunity for teachers to network with other teachers from around the state to see how they are integrating technology into their classrooms and get ideas to bring home to our district. There are already conversations happening among those that attended about how to bring some of the ideas back to Mt. Blue.



Security Updates

- Updating our app approval process - creating a pathway for teachers and staff to formally request apps (resources) to use that involves technology and curriculum people to evaluate what we can and want to support as a district. Google recently made changes to their platform which now gives us the ability to allow or restrict our users from using their Google account to access online platforms. We can now vet these resources to make sure they adhere to our privacy and security needs.
- Cybersecurity Incident Response Plan - there were several sessions at the ACTEM conference covering the creation of an IRP. The document that our district created is in line with what others that have started this work are doing. Other ideas were also shared that will be incorporated into our plan over the coming weeks.
- [Table top exercises](#) - we are planning several of these exercises over the next few months to evaluate how our district would react to various cyber incidents.