

Verizon Innovative Learning Program launched in Boston Public Schools

BOSTON — Saturday, Oct. 28, 2017 — Mayor Martin J. Walsh and Boston Public Schools Superintendent (BPS) Tommy Chang today joined students and families of the James P. Timilty Middle School to launch the Verizon Innovative Learning Program, a partnership that is equipping 1,100 students and teachers at three BPS middle schools with iPads as part of a program aimed at integrating technology-based learning into classrooms.

In addition to the devices, Verizon is also providing students at the Timilty, Edwards and McCormack middle schools two years of Verizon Wireless 4G LTE data plans for 24/7 internet access in the classroom and beyond. Each school is also receiving, for two years, a full-time technology coach from nonprofit Digital Promise to ensure students learn how to use these tools responsibly and to provide teachers ongoing, instructional support.

“Our goal, as a city, is to build 21st century classrooms in all of our schools. BuildBPS is guiding our work to ensure that all of our schools have the resources and opportunities necessary for our students to succeed, and this includes access to technology,” said Mayor Walsh. “We are grateful for Verizon’s partnership in providing our students tablet computers that will help innovate their learning and knock down barriers to the digital world.”

According to [Pew Research](#), roughly one-third (31.4%) of households whose annual incomes fall below \$50,000 and with children ages 6 to 17, do not have a high-speed internet connection at home, placing low income students at a learning disadvantage. While there are more than 4 million available jobs in science and technology, too many economically disadvantaged students are caught in the digital divide, unable to explore STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields without access to technology and educational resources.

BPS Superintendent Chang said providing the Verizon Innovative Learning Program can help schools close persistent opportunity and achievement gaps.

“All students deserve access to this essential learning and research tool. By giving our students iPads and free access to the internet, we are making great strides in bridging the digital divide,” Chang said. “Technology is the great equalizer for the STEM jobs of the future.”

Outfitting students with tablets that have full-time wifi access will allow teachers to integrate mobile technology in their lessons, and ensure that learning takes place as much outside the school setting as it does inside.

“Instruction now is not limited to the confines of the classroom, and learning does not have to stop at the bell,” said Boston School Committee Chairperson Michael O’Neill. “It can take place in the home, on the T, or wherever students are using their mobile

devices. This is critical as we look to educate the next generation of innovators, scientists, mathematicians, doctors, engineers and pioneers in the STEM fields.”

Donna Cupelo, region president for Verizon New England, explained that by providing opportunities for students to learn and use advanced technology both inside and outside the classroom, Verizon Innovative Learning is giving kids the tools and immersive, hands-on learning experiences that are crucial to succeed in today’s global economy.

"By putting technology into the hands of students and educators, Verizon is providing the tools needed to build a brighter future for our students, their families and our communities," said Cupelo. "Our partnership with Digital Promise and Boston Public Schools is one example of our commitment to bridging the digital divide."

The Verizon Innovative Learning Program does not rely solely on classroom teachers to give students technology tutorials. Each school has developed Student Tech Teams that are responsible for helping train their classmates.

“We are empowering our students to be tech ambassadors and teach their peers high-tech skills,” said Timilty Principal T’Sheba Martin. “These student leaders have worked for weeks to prepare for the rollout of this program and to provide ongoing support, guidance, and leadership to their classmates.”

The hundreds of students who arrived at the Timilty Middle School to receive their free tablets also participated in interactive, hands-on learning activities aimed at bringing technology to life through sports and robotics and spark greater interest in coding and engineering.

The students had the opportunity to explore:

- **“Smart” connected soccer balls** that allow students to measure the mathematical accuracy of their kicks by providing instant feedback on power, spin, strike and trajectory.
- **Sphero SPRK+ robots** that teach the fundamentals of block coding by having students compete in a game of “bowling” and navigate their robots down a lane and attempt a “strike.”