

Session 5A - Student Laptop Programs: Essential, Inevitable, or Unnecessary?

One-to-one student laptop programs have been around for years, and even some public school systems have deployed thousands of laptops to students. Session hosted by Jim Heynderickx, Oregon Episcopal School, and www.k12converge.com.

Position I: Student Laptops are Unnecessary

- Laptops are too expensive and too complicated to maintain
- Laptops are distractions in the classroom and lead to attention loss
- Kids use computers too much at home—school should be a haven from computers.
- Schools educate kids best with face-to-face interactions, not face-to-screen.
- Laptops don't address a problem or need in most schools, and nor will they ever.
- Several schools have started 1:1 programs, only to stop them.
- Academic research has not proven clear benefits from 1:1 laptops.

Position II: Student Laptops Are Inevitable

- Laptops used to cost over \$2000. Now good laptops can be had for less than \$1000.
- Today, the cost difference between laptops and desktops is incremental, but laptops can be used more frequently than desktops.
- In the coming years, laptops will become even less expensive, or laptop alternatives (small phone/tablet hybrids) will become commonplace and relatively inexpensive (\$500).
- Later generations of software for laptops will improve reliability and reduce support needs.
- Increasing numbers of private and public colleges and universities are requiring laptops.
- As more kids have laptops at home, how does a school argue that “no laptops are allowed or needed”?

Position III: Student Laptops Are Essential

- The “smoking gun” that proves the need for laptops is that high percentages of independent school Middle School and Upper School students have problems with organization.
- Maybe we expect more of students today of tracking their work, deadlines and commitments. If nothing else, they face more distractions for time and attention.
- If a fair percentage of these students can be helped by the “all-in-one-place” benefits of laptops, easy access to online course pages, combined calendars, and other resources.
- The communications benefits of individual laptops may equal or exceed the productivity benefits.
- Teachers have always had to adjust classroom management techniques for different generations of kids. Why would technology necessitate of “locking of techniques” that pretends that current and future generations don't use computers?
- If the kids, teachers and school is going to evolve and move forward on multiple fronts (organization, communications, productivity, classroom management, student-centered learning), then student laptops are essential.