

MS Laptop Pilot Program

Frequently Asked Questions

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Introduction

We are working on a pilot program for next year that will provide each seventh-grader with an Apple iBook laptop computer. Each laptop will come in an “always-on” protective case, and it will be purchased, owned and maintained by OES. During the school year, students will be allowed to take the laptops home for school-related work, and during the summer the laptops will be updated by OES before the start of the new school year.

This program will take place with the Seventh Grade class in 2005-2006, and it will be evaluated throughout the year. If successful, the program may continue in the Eighth Grade the following year (2006-2007). There will be no fees, tuition increase, or additional costs to parents for this pilot program.

Contents

The Overall Program

- Why is this being done in the Middle School?
- Why the Seventh Grade? Why not start with all the Middle School grades?
- Will students use computers “too much” for schoolwork?
- How can laptops improve learning?
- Will students learn faster or slower with laptops?
- Will the laptops enable a rise in standardized test scores?
- How will the laptops be used in the classroom?
- How will you assess the program?
- Why Apple iBooks?
- Will using the Apple OS X operating system instead of Windows put the students at a disadvantage? Most of the working world uses Windows software, doesn't it?
- What software will be on the iBooks?
- Can students bring their own laptops from home instead?
- How have the Seventh Grade teachers been involved with this program?

How Will It Work?

- How much is this going to cost?
- Can students install their own software?
- What about games?
- What about music and movies?
- What about Instant Messenger?
- Will students play on computers during the school day instead of going outside for recess? What about computer addiction?
- What about viruses and spyware?
- What about ergonomics?
- How will the program start?
- Will the laptops make it easier for students to misuse the Internet at school?
- Will the laptops make it easier for students to “hack” the school network?
- What about inappropriate uses?
- Are wireless networks safe?
- Who is going to handle warranties and repairs?
- What happens when a student laptop is in the shop for repairs?
- Will the student files on the laptops be private?
- Where do the laptops go when not in use?
- What about dead batteries? Will students “plug in” in the classrooms?
- Will the laptops eventually replace desktop computers in the Middle School?

Home and Family Questions

- Are families responsible for the costs of damage or loss?
- Will the laptops have theft or broken screen insurance?
- Are these laptops going to add to the heavy loads students carry from home to school?
- How will laptops be used at home?
- Does this mean we have to have high-speed Internet access at home? Is it going to be difficult to enable the iBooks to use our home Internet connection?
- How are we supposed to supervise appropriate Internet use at home?
- What if the parents never want the iBook to access the Internet at home?
- Can students plug in and use printers, scanners, digital cameras, and camcorders at home?
- Can students use their iPods and the iTunes Music Store on their iBooks?

“What’s Next?” Questions

- What about the following year, when the students move to Eighth Grade? Will the iBooks move with them?
- What about the Lower School?
- What about the Upper School?

The Overall Program

Why is this being done in the Middle School?

The Middle School years are an important time of change and choice. Starting in the Sixth Grade, students can begin to use computers in a routine, productive manner. Basic software and resources, such as the Microsoft Office suite and Internet access, can be used to support the development of higher-order thinking skills (organization, research, communication, composition, and presentation). These everyday uses of technology lay a foundation for students' attitudes and ideas that will serve them well in the future.

In terms of access to technology resources, we believe uniformity is important for this age level. Research has shown, for example, that girls in this age group are most likely to "back away" from science and technology as areas of interest and ability. Enthusiasm for computer use is high and uniform, and this is the time to create a culture of technology use that maximizes the benefits for students while enabling them to critically assess the drawbacks as well.

In all areas, we see the Middle School as a time to define the correct balance of digital and traditional tools and learning experiences. In well-designed programs of this type, students can clearly see the benefits of research and project work where computers play only a minor or supportive role (or none at all). This critical and knowledgeable approach to technology use is what we seek when defining the balance, and it is all part of developing higher-order thinking skills that will guide students' actions and work in the future.

So, this program isn't designed to "increase technology use" for the sake of using computers more often. We're concentrating on the larger issues of a balanced approach to the benefits and drawbacks of the technology, starting with the issue of equity of access and opportunity at an age when students may benefit the most. After Middle School, the issue of uniformity may be less important, and a diversity of choices may be more appropriate and beneficial for each student.

In the end, Middle School students may not use computers any more than they do now as a result of this program, but access will be more direct, consistent, and reliable. The curricular program of the Middle School will not be changed as a result of the laptops, but the quality and impact of students' computer use can be substantially improved.

Why the Seventh Grade? Why not start with all the Middle School grades?

The pilot program is designed to assess the long-term feasibility of one-to-one laptops in the Middle School, and for the first year we are looking for an accurate representation of the integration and support issues. The Seventh Grade makes sense in two important ways. First, the students aren't new to the Middle School (as are sixth-graders), so they are already familiar with the culture and environment. The introduction of the laptops will be a new element for them, but it won't be combined with a large

number of other new elements. Secondly, if the program is extended to a second year, , then we would have an experienced set of students to observe a second year. Currently, there are no plans to extend this program into the Ninth Grade.

Some schools have started laptop programs across multiple grades at once, but we prefer a gradual approach. In terms of budget, it would be much harder to purchase (and later replace) 195 laptops in one year instead of 65 per year. Secondly, we want to do the best possible job of providing support and fast turnaround on technical issues; therefore, we would rather “ramp up” support over three years.

Finally, the Seventh Grade is ready for laptops. This grade has done exceptional work with the MS computer lab and laptop carts, and they are ready to move forward.

Will students use computers “too much” for schoolwork?

As noted above, the goal of this program is to reach an appropriate balance of using traditional and digital learning tools. This balance will be the foundation of the laptop culture we hope to create, in terms of appropriate computer use at school, during free periods, and at home. Overall, we want to shift students’ perceptions of computers from “toys” to “tools” that can serve them now and in the future.

In the first year of the program, students may use the laptops no more than they currently use OES desktops and laptop carts, but their access will be more direct and less cumbersome. Additionally, the laptops will allow them access to all their school files at home (on the local drives) instead of only on our network.

We definitely don’t want to displace learning experiences that are best taught without computers. There will still be courses where computers won’t be used at all. In some cases, computer use during the school day may actually decrease if specific computer work can be done at home instead.

How can laptops improve learning?

Laptops can serve as “virtual workspaces” for students, creating opportunities for research, composition, revision and communication that are fluid and exciting. With easier access to information and feedback, students can more easily “re-think” their original ideas and go further with their conceptual development. In general, this is the main reason most of us now use word processors instead of pencils or typewriters—we can express our ideas more fluidly, and then more easily revise and reshape them.

Teachers at OES who have worked at “laptop schools” also report that they miss the organizational benefits of laptops—student work is kept in a portable, easily accessed tool, and there are fewer reasons for not being able to share examples of work in progress.

Finally, working in a networked environment where it is easy to share developing work and research with peers and teachers is much closer to the environments students will live and work in during high school, college, and the future. Becoming comfortable and capable with these opportunities during the Middle School years is a wise investment.

Will students learn faster or slower with laptops?

Students may complete projects both faster and slower with laptops. Over time, the laptops may help students have more individualized learning experiences that are self-paced. For some students, this will mean that they may cover material faster or slower than their peers, and the laptops can allow clearer documentation and record-keeping of student work in progress.

In part because of the access to online materials, some students may do more in-depth research and work on projects, and this may increase the quality of their work but slow down the rate at which the process proceeds. Teachers will be alert to opportunities when this could serve students, as well as cases where students may be “spinning their wheels” and need to move on. This is a critical part of the balance we hope to achieve with the laptops.

Will the laptops enable a rise in standardized test scores?

Research includes reports that one-to-one laptop programs led to a demonstrated rise in standardized test scores and other reports that did not show an increase. Even in the reports without an increase in test scores, improvements were reported in writing, research, and overall enthusiasm about learning. Associated with this is the opportunity for higher quality, student-centered learning opportunities.

As noted above, the introduction of laptops at OES is more of an evolutionary step than a revolutionary step. We are not moving from “no Internet access” to “Internet access for all,” for example. Many of the benefits of student-used computers have already been gradually integrated into Middle School subjects. As time passes, however, we may find positive crossover benefits. Students who are challenged to write both with computers and long-hand, for example, may find their abilities improving in each medium.

How will the laptops be used in the classroom?

Most of our initial objectives are continuations of what we are currently doing with technology in the Middle School. Students have been writing and revising with Microsoft Word, collecting data via Vernier probeware in science, and using Excel to crunch numbers and create graphs. We have been using SharePoint collaborative websites to enhance student communication and discussion. These password-protected websites enable all students to contribute their ideas and examples in a less-intimidating environment. When used to supplement in-class discussions, we can move closer to 100 percent participation of students, and an increase in quality of exchanged ideas.

Foreign language instruction may make use of the built-in microphones in the iBooks, which could be used for recording “oral quizzes.” Teachers could also use the

recording features to share examples of proper usage, or add “listening challenges” to tests.

Many other opportunities will be enabled by the presence of the laptops, but we won’t be making too many innovations during the pilot year. First we want to solidly appraise the overall program, and then additional innovations may occur in later years.

How will you assess the program?

In addition to teacher and student interviews, and a parent survey later in the first year, we will be using an assessment tool based on Levels of Technology Integration (LOTI) developed by Chris Moersch. This tool will be used this year with seventh-grade faculty to get a baseline assessment, and then repeated at the end of the pilot year (and perhaps each following year) to determine the overall impact of the laptops on technology integration and higher-order thinking skills. To learn more about this tool, go to <http://www.loticonnection.com>.

Why Apple iBooks?

In other student laptop programs (in Maine, Virginia, California, Ohio and other states), Apple iBooks are the most common choice. The main reasons for this is the smaller size of the laptops, the lower number of viruses and spyware that may affect the operating system, and the lower initial cost and cost of ownership of the laptops. Some schools consider the cost-to-weight ratio of the iBooks to be the decisive factor when compared to PC laptops of similar capability, and ergonomic specialists recommend that the lightest possible laptops should be selected.



The seventh-grade teachers have been using Apple iBooks for the past two months as a trial, and they have found few difficulties with shifting from PCs to the iBooks. There are slight differences in file management, for example, but there are also benefits in terms of battery life, wake from sleep, and size and weight. Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel files are perfectly compatible between PCs and iBooks. Students should be able to work on their files equally well on both the iBooks and PCs.

Will using the Apple OS X operation system instead of Windows put the students at a disadvantage? Most of the working world uses Windows software, doesn’t it?

There is no question that Windows is the dominant operating system in the workplace, and the majority of computers on the OES campus are running Windows. If

we consider the core needs of Middle School students, they are met well by the Apple OS X operating system, Microsoft Office and other available applications.

At the Middle School level, all students need equal access and equal opportunity to use technology. Their main technology learning goals at this stage are to use common productive software (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint) in authentic, productive ways, while also learning to use the Internet for quality research and communication. The features of Microsoft Word, for example, are nearly identical on both the Apple OS X and Windows. Math and science needs are also covered by cross-platform software (Vernier Logger Pro, Geometer's Sketchpad, and others).

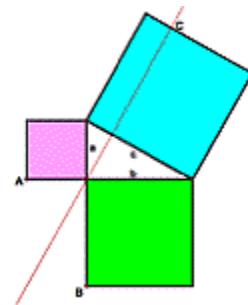
The OES Upper School will continue to be a cross-platform environment, with an emphasis on Windows software, and all students will be expected to be competent in both operating systems. Given the changing nature of computer software and applications, having a varied competency with technology is the best experience for students in the long run.

What software will be on the iBooks?

Our intention is to keep the software on the iBooks fairly streamlined. Many specialized software titles would be nice to use, but we need to make uniform decisions and buy licenses for all laptops for whatever titles we choose. Once we start supporting 65 student laptops, or 130 or 195, then even minor software titles can become expensive.

For the pilot year, the proposed software loads for the iBooks include:

- Microsoft Office 2004 for OS X
- Geometer's Sketchpad
- Vernier Logger Pro software
- Internet Explorer, Safari and Camino for Internet access
- iPhoto, iMovie, iCal, and other Apple applications
- One or more on-laptop textbooks (if approved)



Can students bring their own laptops from home instead?

Currently, almost no Middle School students bring laptops from home. Home laptops can be difficult to configure for our network, can bring unwanted viruses, and can be expensive to equip with the same software that we can purchase at substantial discounts. Additionally, we can't "re-image" (replace) all the software on home laptops because of licensing issues, and students are more likely to bring computer games to school from home.

For these reasons (and others), we don't want to support or allow home-purchased laptops at OES, even if parents were to purchase iBooks. It will be easier for us to support the program if everything is uniform.

How have the Middle School teachers been involved with this program?

The input from Middle School teachers has been essential to the development of this project. Last year, during the first presentation to teachers about different possible laptop programs, everyone agreed that growth in the use of technology in the Middle School has been a positive experience and that the system of providing access to computers needed to be improved. The teachers made it clear, however, that they were concerned about cost of laptops for families and the need to achieve the right balance of traditional and digital tools. The importance of simplicity and reliability was also emphasized, along with the necessity of clear policies for acceptable use.

In response to these concerns, we designed the pilot program to reduce costs as much as possible. Their concerns about simplicity and reliability contributed to the decision to use the Apple iBooks and OS X, given their track record of durability and fewer maintenance issues in the Lower School.

To ensure that the teachers' own transition from PC laptops to OS X would be successful, we provided all seventh-grade teachers with iBooks in November 2004 so they could use the same laptops the students will use. After using the iBooks for two months, teachers reported back about their experiences. They reported some glitches with email and other details, but overall they were happy with the size, long battery life, and fast wake from sleep capabilities of the iBooks. They had no problems with switching to the OS X versions of Word, PowerPoint and Excel.

How Will It Work?

How much is this going to cost?

The pilot project will be funded entirely from existing technology funds. There will be no fee, lease, or tuition increase in the Middle School for this program. With an always-on case, three year warranties and software, we project that the cost of each iBook will be around \$1,100. If we purchase 65 of these per year for the project, this will be a higher than normal investment in technology in the Middle School, but if the program continues we will be able to retire nearly all desktop computers in the Middle School. We may also achieve savings if we use alternative textbook options (online or on-laptop) in the future.

If the program extends to all three grades in the Middle School, it may result in savings for parents if a school-provided computer is used at home for academic work.

The long-term goal is to make this program self-sustaining within the present budget structure. Whether we achieve this goal is dependent on how well we can rein in hardware and software costs, avoid costly insurance and repair expenses, and achieve a level of participation that helps us protect and preserve our investment.

Can students install their own software?

One of the benefits of individual laptops is that students will feel more responsible for the computer, and part of this relationship is individualization of the laptop. Students will be allowed to change background images and interface details.

Basically, the iBooks will be school-owned computers for school-related use. They aren't a replacement for a home computer, which may have a variety of specialized software and features installed. Because the school owns the laptops, only software licensed by the school can be installed. Students won't be allowed to install their own software, even if they own licenses for it.

What about games?

If a game or scenario software is used by a class for academic purposes, the school will purchase licenses and install the software for student use.

Other than that, the iBooks won't be used for gaming during free periods or after school, and game software will not be installed. As for online games, the school Internet filter (Websense) blocks most game sites during the day. As noted above, students cannot install their own software, even if they own legal copies, on the iBooks.

What about music and movies?

Music and movies will be allowed for academic reasons (such as support for a report), but not for recreational uses (watching videos or listening to music fests during break times). See below for more information regarding iPods, the iTunes Music Store, and student iBooks.

What about Instant Messenger?

The current use of instant messaging at school by students is limited. It is accessible on OES computers, but teachers in the Middle School have not reported problems or distractions. Currently, students do not overuse this communication tool at school, yet we do hear of occasional misuse of messaging (too much use, or harassment of friends or other students) on home computers.

Some faculty use instant messaging software for communication with students, in part because many students are fluent and comfortable with the medium. We don't have plans to investigate this formally during the pilot program, but we do plan to monitor Instant Messenger use as we do online games and other opportunities for overuse or misuse by students. It will be permitted for appropriate uses (communication with parents or faculty), but not allowed if it becomes a distraction or a problem for a student.

Will students play on computers during the school day instead of going outside for recess? What about computer addiction?

We will have clear guidelines for students for appropriate laptop use both inside and outside of class. It won't be acceptable to use the iBooks during break times for games, movies or music fests. Students who violate these rules will be subject to common Middle School penalties and/or the temporary surrender of their iBooks.

Additionally, the presence of the laptops will allow us to more accurately deal with student misconceptions about technology. For example, many students believe the Internet should be the first (and sometimes only) research source for writing papers. Seeing this in action, teachers can intervene to emphasize how the Internet is not always the best, first or even a desirable source of information.

As for home use, we will offer parent information sessions and materials online with recommendations for the best use of the laptops at home. The issues of screen time limits, supervised Internet use, and best academic uses will be covered.

What about viruses and spyware?

Viruses and spyware do exist on the Apple OS X operating system, but they are far less common than those created for the Windows operating system. All student iBooks will have anti-virus and anti-spyware applications. We have had very few problems with spyware and viruses on existing OS X computers on campus.

What about ergonomics?

Laptops have both advantages and disadvantages as far as ergonomics are concerned. For writing and other uses that involve using the keyboard for more than 30 minutes, it can be better for the arms to have the laptop positioned lower on the lap of the user. The always-on cases absorb most of the heat produced by the bases of laptops. A disadvantage of laptops is that the screens can be positioned quite low for the user, causing a "looking down" position.

The height of many of the tables in the Middle School is adjustable, and we may reposition the height of the tables to meet the needs of students. We also plan to seek the advice of ergonomic specialists on chair height and types, and we will make recommendations for the best use of the laptops at home and school. We will make this information available for students and parents so that the safest and best ergonomics practices can be used at home, too.

How will the program start?

The iBooks will be configured and prepared over the summer. During the first weeks of class, the seventh graders will have time to settle in. Then, later in September, they will be introduced to their individual iBooks through a series of training sessions. About the same time, we will offer evening sessions for parents about the iBooks, home use, learning objectives, care and protection, and other issues.

After the introductions (to students and parents), the iBooks will be used as part of regular coursework and homework.

Will the laptops make it easier for students to misuse the Internet at school?

All Internet use at OES will continue to be filtered by Websense, which blocks access to inappropriate web sites. We also control Internet access with our Packeteer packet-shaping appliance. This means that common file exchange applications (such as Morpheus, BitTorrent, Bearshare, Limewire, and others) won't work. The students will have the same Internet experience as they have now, and there will be no "filtering" software on the laptops themselves (which can be easy for students to disable).

Will the laptops make it easier for students to "hack" the school network?

The iBooks will have access to the students' files on the file servers, the Internet, and the students' email, but they will not be "authenticated" domain computers of the entire school network (currently running on Windows servers). In this sense, they are less able to see or access any network services or storage that is private.

What about inappropriate uses?

Students need to respect the iBooks as school-owned computers. They will be allowed some leeway to personalize the computers (in terms of software interface and pictures), but students may not apply exterior stickers or labels. These laptops will be used by other students for two more years, so they need to be kept as clean and gently used as possible.

Students will also be held accountable for all other inappropriate uses (of the Internet, our network, and copyrighted software) as listed in the OES Computer Use Policy in the Handbook. Students should not use the iBooks for online purchases, for example. Additionally, the iBooks should not become the depositories of personal music collections (more details below).

Are wireless networks safe?

This was the core issue at a Wireless Network Panel at Holton Arms School in Maryland in May 2000. A representative from the FCC on the panel described how wireless access points and radios (in the laptops) do emit small electric fields, but the level of energy that is released is much smaller than a typical cell phone and other devices in the school environment. He felt there was more risk from exposure to microwave ovens and cell phones than from the wireless technology in laptops, and overall he was not concerned about wireless networks and laptops in schools.

Greensboro Day School in Maryland did exhaustive testing and research on this issue in 2000 as well. When they made actual radio-frequency electric field measurements at the school, they found that a room of wireless laptops produced lower measurements than produced by fluorescent lights and even cell phones in use in the carpool line. Their research discovered that devices we use routinely emit these fields, and the wireless technology of laptops and access points is not a significant source when compared to other common devices. The National Association of Independent Schools published an article by Ralph Davison about this research, and it is available at <http://www.nais.org/publications/ismagazinearticle.cfm?ItemNumber=144272>.

At OES and other independent schools, the electric field issue has been researched. Because of their limited range and weakness, wireless networks have not been considered a health concern. For parents who do not want their students to use the wireless radios in the iBooks, they can be removed or disabled, and wired network drops are available in Middle School classrooms.

Who is going to handle warranties and repairs?

OES will handle all warranties and repairs, as well as all software installs and maintenance. We use local repair shops that can normally do warranty repairs in 3-5 days. This eliminates shipping issues, but delays will occur when laptops are being repaired.

What happens when a student laptop is in the shop for repairs?

We plan to have a small fleet of loaner iBooks (and possibly Dell laptops) for students to use when their iBooks are in for repairs. Students will routinely “back up” their files to the school file servers so that they can easily use a different laptop or desktop to do their work when necessary.

Will the student files on the laptops be private?

Currently, we scan student files on the school file servers on a regular basis to check for inappropriate files, too many files, and other issues. “Privacy” doesn’t really exist when you use a school-owned computer, and the same policy will apply to the iBooks. They can be scanned for inappropriate files at any time.

Where do the laptops go when not in use?

Student lockers are equipped with locking rings (for use with a padlock). If students bring locks to school, their iBooks can be put into their lockers and locked when not in use. Alternatively, we’ll have locking cabinets in the classrooms where laptops

can be kept between classes and overnight. Classrooms are locked when not in use, and the cabinets will be locked at night.

Another option will be supervised charging cabinets in the MS computer lab. Students can drop off and plug in their iBooks in these open cabinets and leave them there between classes. This will provide both security and charging time.

One thing we cannot have is unattended laptops left around the building or campus. This invites theft, and it has been a serious problem at some laptop schools. Any unattended iBook will be picked up immediately by faculty or staff and turned in as a “lost” iBook. The penalty for leaving an iBook lying around may include a temporary surrender of the iBook for one or more days.

What about dead batteries? Will students “plug in” in the classrooms?

Each classroom where the iBooks will be used will have floor power strips that have 4-6 outlets stretched over a 4-5 foot span. One of these can support several students with low batteries.

Ideally, all students will charge their iBooks at home at night so that all laptops start the day with a full charge. iBooks run for approximately four hours on a charge, which should be ample for a typical school day. The warranties will cover replacement batteries as the iBooks age and the batteries begin to fail.

Will the laptops eventually replace desktop computers in the Middle School?

We currently have well over 100 desktop and laptop computers for student use in the Middle School, but it is still difficult to have more than a few sections of students use them at once. Labs fill up, the laptop carts are rolled around, and computers are reserved in advance, with the result that teachers don’t have the access they would like.

If the pilot program moves forward into a full program, desktop and laptop cart computers will gradually disappear from the Middle School. Desktop computers are less expensive and more robust than laptop computers, but the amount of use they receive is much less than computers in a one-laptop-per-student program. Two years ago, when we replaced the faculty desktops with faculty laptops, the actual use of the computers by faculty more than doubled.

Home and Family Questions

Are families responsible for the costs of damage or loss?

OES will handle all warranty claims and service on the laptops. Apple Computer determines if a claim is covered or not, with claims being covered if the failure occurred during normal use. Failed batteries, power supplies, hard drives, logic boards, keyboards, and case latches are covered if they fail during routine use.

If an iBook is accidentally dropped, lost, damaged or stolen, the repair or replacement will not be covered by warranty. Families may be asked to contribute up to 50 percent of the repair or replacement costs (not to exceed \$500) if this occurs. If an iBook is deliberately harmed by a student (or damaged or lost repeatedly), a family may be asked to contribute 100 percent of the repair or replacement costs (not to exceed \$1000). The always-on cases are designed to protect the laptops from common forms of accidental damage, which should reduce the frequency and severity of these events.

One of the benefits of this type of structure is that parents are protected from the most common costs of laptop ownership (hardware, software, support and maintenance costs), yet there is still responsibility for caring for and protecting the laptops. Some laptop programs with “zero responsibility” for damage and loss have had startling percentages of broken screens and other “rough handling” repair claims. Programs similar to ours have had very low numbers of non-warranty repair claims and theft (yet some still occur).

Will the laptops have theft or broken screen insurance?

For the pilot year, this program will not include theft or non-warranty repair insurance on the iBooks because it would increase the cost of each laptop by 15 percent or more, regardless of whether harm or loss occurs. In programs similar to ours, the cost of repairs and occasional losses has been nowhere near the cost of insurance. These types of coverage can be added later if we find that the program would benefit.

Are these laptops going to add to the heavy loads students carry from home to school?

An iBook in its case with power adapter weights about 8 lbs., which is the same as some Middle School textbooks. The iBook will be carried in its own case with its own shoulder strap. An iBook shouldn't be packed into an oversized backpack with other books and items, because this can lead to a compression fracture of the screen.

To reduce the weight carried to and from school, we are investigating alternative textbook options. For example, we are looking into class sets of textbooks that would be supplemented by their on-line or on-laptop editions. In this way, textbooks could be used and read in the classroom but would be used on the laptops at home and outside of class. This would reduce the weight transferred around the building and to and from school.

Reducing the size or number of some student binders (for notes and handouts) may also be possible.

How will laptops be used at home?

There will be two types of home use—one that needs Internet access, and one that doesn't.

Examples of home use that needs Internet access would include:

- Using the online searchable databases to which OES subscribes
- Using online collaborative websites that OES creates
- Using school email
- Using online textbook resources
- Using OES online file directories

Example of home use that doesn't need Internet access would include:

- Using any of the Microsoft applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint)
- Using any discipline-specific software (Geometer's Sketchpad, for example)
- Using on-laptop textbooks (CDs copied to hard drives)
- Working with audio, picture or video files on disk.

Does this mean we have to have high-speed Internet access at home? Is it going to be difficult to enable the iBooks to use our home Internet connection?

Not necessarily—most of the online use will not be bandwidth intensive. Additionally, online work will be compatible with home computers. Therefore, if configuring the iBook to use the home dial-up connection is too difficult, the online work can be done on the existing home computer instead. This is also recommended if parents believe it is too difficult to monitor student use of the Internet at home if the iBook is used.

The easiest way to enable Internet access is through a wireless network. The configuration for using a home wireless network will be very easy. The iBooks also have internal modems and wired network connection options if needed.

How are we supposed to supervise appropriate Internet use at home?

Most home Internet connections are unfiltered, and software for “filtering” Internet connections on the laptops themselves is too unreliable to use and trust. We recommend that parents always be aware when students are using the Internet at home, and that they supervise this use so that inappropriate sites and materials aren't accessed. It will be made clear to the students that OES will be checking Internet history files and other “telltale” evidence on the iBooks that would indicate misuse, and any inappropriate Internet use will be immediately reported to parents. We will provide handouts and information sessions for parents so that you can do the same.

The Middle School years can be a time when students “test boundaries” and occasionally get into trouble with how they interact with each other using technology. At this formative time, there is also an opportunity to state and enforce limits so that students gain a greater understanding about appropriate and positive uses. Learning about these issues now, in a “hands-on” sense, will serve them well in the future.

What if the parents never want the iBook to access the Internet at home?

If requested, we can “lock down” an individual student’s iBook network settings, so that the iBook will work only on the OES network.

Can students plug in and use printers, scanners, digital cameras, and camcorders at home?

In most cases, the operating system on the iBooks (OS X) already has the necessary drivers and software to use home printers and scanners. Students should be able to plug in the devices to the USB ports on the iBooks, and have the software self-configure for use. This should make the iBooks more functional at home.

Students will be “standard users” on the iBooks, which means they won’t be able to install specialized software for home printers and scanners. Sometimes, printer and scanner software also includes serialized software which is owned by family and not by the school. In the future, we may try to support these devices, but for the pilot year we don’t want to try to configure each iBook for unique devices at home.

Additionally, some families may want to use simple devices like Lexar JumpDrives (small USB memory sticks) to transfer files at home between the iBook and other computers. This makes it very easy to move files for printing, or to scan images on a home computer and then move the files to the iBook.

Most digital cameras and camcorders will also work with the iBooks automatically, without specialized software. The software called iPhoto on the iBooks is designed to automatically connect to most newer digital cameras, for example. Most firewire-enabled camcorders can be used with iMovie.



Can students use their iPods and the iTunes Music Store on their iBooks?

There are many issues surrounding iPods and the iTunes Music Store that have caused disappointment at other laptop schools. Using iTunes for school-related projects will be allowed, but the software shouldn’t be used as the student’s main music collection or for music purchased through the iTunes music store.

There are several reasons for this policy. First, to use the iTunes music store to purchase music (even with a gift card) means using the school network for a financial transaction, which is not allowed in the OES Acceptable Use Agreement. Second, the contractual limits with iTunes music purchases can be problematic. For example, a user is only allowed to install a song purchased from the iTunes music store on three computers. If the song is put on the student iBook, or purchased through it, the license for that song will be lost if we replace the software on that iBook. The problem can be avoided if the computer is “de-authorized” as one of the

three computers beforehand, but keeping track of the steps before working on the iBooks would be complicated.

Home computers should be used for music purchases and storage.

“What’s Next?” Questions

What about the following year, when the students move to Eighth Grade? Will the iBooks move with them?

If the pilot project is successful, we will purchase a new set of iBooks for eighth-graders to use, and we will keep the one-year-old iBooks in the Seventh Grade. If the program is extended to the Sixth Grade, the older iBooks sets will shift down, and a new set will be purchased for the eighth-graders. Over time, we would like the students to move to progressively newer laptops, so each year the new set of laptops would go to the Eighth Grade.

What about the Lower School?

There are no current plans to create a similar program in the Lower School, but we are purchasing increasing numbers of iBooks for LS students to use in the classrooms. In the future, the hallway LS computer labs may be replaced by laptops that can be used more flexibly within the classrooms and elsewhere in the Lower School.

What about the Upper School?

For the Upper School, we are working on a more diverse approach to laptops, in part because there are increasing numbers of home-owned laptops being brought to the US by students. During finals week in December 2004, for example, 88 OES computers were used for finals, and 93 home-owned laptops were brought on campus and used.

This diversity serves the US students well because some benefit from inexpensive PCs or iBooks, while others benefit from tablets or expensive PowerBooks. We are moving toward the support of a broad range of laptops in the Upper School instead of trying to implement a uniform program as in the Middle School. In addition, this makes sense in that US students should develop the skills and maturity to care for their own laptops, as they will when they go on to college and universities.

If you have additional questions (especially ones we could add responses to on this list) please contact Jim Heynderickx (heynderickxj@oes.edu) or Brad Baugher (baugherb@oes.edu). Thanks!