

Laptop Lessons

Although we see more articles every week about schools doing iPad pilots, a great number of districts are finding ways to launch one-to-one laptop initiatives or refresh their laptop carts. Still others are using Title funds and applying for grants to get netbooks into students' and teachers' laps. However your district pays for it, there are a few essential issues to discuss. Here are some of them and thoughts from other districts.

LAPTOPS

THE PEDDIE SCHOOL, HIGHTSTOWN, NJ



WHAT DO YOU USE?	226 TOSHIBA PORTÉGÉ R700S, WWW.TOSHIBA.COM/TAI
HOW WERE THEY FUNDED?	"We look at tech spending as the same as spending on teacher salaries or electricity," says Tom Phelan, IT director. "It's part of the cost of doing business." The private school buys laptops in bulk and issues them the way public schools issue textbooks. A student has the same laptop all four years; it's built into tuition.
HOW WILL YOU MAINTAIN THESE MACHINES?	The school has run a laptop program since 1998; as such, it has well-developed repair procedures in place. "We have loaner laptops, so there is no downtime," Phelan says.
DESCRIBE YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING.	Department chairs drive the process, working with Phelan to provide academic technology leadership. One of the many benefits of this method is that when new teachers come on board, their colleagues share information with them and get them up to speed in terms of tech.
ANY INTEROPERABILITY PROBLEMS?	The school deliberately standardized with one operating system. "I have a seven-and-a-half-person staff, so we need everything to work together. We may offer a smaller number of products, but that's better than being all things to all people."
HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO GET THE LAPTOPS RUNNING?	It's a smooth and ongoing process. Sophomores receive brand-new laptops they keep until graduation. Each summer, Phelan pays students to clean and reimage the used laptops, which are given to incoming freshmen.