Tips for Buying Your Child His/Her First Laptop

Buying a laptop for your child as a school tool can be a daunting task. Striking the balance between buying a laptop that will be an effective tool for your child, while managing the budgetary needs of your family, can be a challenge. To help you with this task, we've put together the following list garnered from the past years of working in the classroom with students and teachers.

1) **Please, No Tablets:**
   The tablet is an amazing machine and certainly has a place in your overall technology life, but tablets are hampered by their limitations to their platform's app store, a dependency on the cloud, a lack of direct connectivity to other devices (such as printers) and by their tendency to be viewed more as entertainment devices than productivity tools by children. Editing written work also is difficult. Tablets are great in the older grades to view online textbooks, but only in addition to a laptop/netbook for writing and organization of files.

2) **Used is Fine:**
   Many people are in a constant upgrade path. There is a plethora of used computers on the market. Just make sure that you spend time with your new (to you) computer deleting any old files left and setting up a user account for your child. If you have the know-how, consider doing a full wipe and reinstall of your laptop's OS to start off with a total clean slate. We ask that the computers run reliably, have word processing and spreadsheet capability, and are able to connect to the internet. We also recommend systems which have a battery life of 2 hours and a small footprint.

   The following computers are recommended for our students, and by our students:
   - Apple MacBook or MacBook Air
   - Chromebooks (Acer, Samsung, Asus)
   - Acer Aspire systems
   - Dell Inspirons

   Actually, most laptops/netbooks/chrome books will provide what students need. We expect families will spend between $250 – 500, unless they decide to get an Apple, which tends to run more cost wise.

3) **Apple or Windows?**
   We believe either platform is viable for the classroom. Netbooks, like Chromebooks, are fine too. As with anything technological, there are strong supporters on both the Apple and PC front and we support both systems, without prejudice or bias. We haven't found one computer "stand out" brand over another based on the many types of laptops that our students come to school with over the years. Our main recommendation and need is for the computer to run at an acceptable speed, have at least a two-hour battery life, a USB port, and software for basic word processing and spreadsheet capabilities (this can be Google Drive) and internet research capabilities. OSX and Window operating systems are reliable and have shown to break down about at the same rate. However, Apple does have the leg

up regarding some of the creative software (Garage Band, iMovie) and they have earned the "it just works" moniker in that their components work very well together. We are equally familiar with both platforms and think that either works great. It's really what your family preference is.

Don't spend more than $500, and you often can find good netbooks around $200.

4) Set clear boundaries:
A new computer will be very exciting for your child. They will want to immediately dive in and begin tinkering. Talk to your child about the appropriate amounts of "screen time", safe web searching, and appropriate programs to install. At school, the laptops will be used solely for word processing, research and content creation. Consider keeping this new laptop clear of things like games and other entertainment software. Keeping games just on a home family computer helps you keep a better eye on how your child is spending their computer time and helps them to view their laptop as a productivity tool, not as another game console.

5) Required software, agreements:

- Web Browser (Chrome recommended)
- Google Safe Search Activated
  https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/510?hl=en
- Google Drive and Gmail Account
- Office Suite with Word, Spreadsheet, Presentation components (MS Office, Open Office, or Google Drive are recommended)
- Virus Protection (AVG, Avast, Norton, McAfee, Windows Defender)
- NO games and extra "stuff" that serves as distraction
- Signed Mackintosh Technology Usage Agreement regarding when and how technology will be used and maintained at school.