



Windows 8: Reimagined for learning – Choosing the right device.

Choose the Right Device for Your School

Today there are a myriad of devices for schools that range from those that are good at doing just one thing to those that promise to do everything. It's confusing to know which choice is the best fit for your school's budget, educational goals and existing technology investments.



In an era when schools are asked to do more with less, school administrators really want to make sure new devices meet the needs of students and drive positive educational outcomes. Students need to be prepared for life skills they'll take into higher education and their career.

There's a lot to think about. In an attempt to help, we've narrowed down ten important considerations schools should keep in mind when purchasing new devices.

One: Choice

Choice and competition drive innovation, lower prices, improve service, and ultimately customer satisfaction. Education institutions benefit as manufacturers create affordable best-in-class hardware designed specifically for the demands and rigor of a school environment. It's very important for schools to understand they do have a choice when it comes to devices and they should be wary of getting locked into a single form factor or a single hardware provider.

Two: Total Cost of Ownership

The cost of the device is only one of many expenses when it comes to deploying hundreds – if not thousands – of devices across a school system. It's very important to understand the hidden costs of maintaining the devices, like hiring IT professionals to deploy, update, track, and replace equipment when needed. That's why schools should procure devices that deliver the best overall performance for the price.

Three: Compatibility and Interoperability

There may be switching costs when schools move to a new device with an operating system that's not compatible with existing equipment. Schools should do their homework on what will need to be replaced as a result of a switch.

Schools should also consider whether or not existing educational content works on the new device. For example, if a school uses educational content that runs on a specific program or requires certain hardware, they should consider devices that will meet those needs.

Four: Security and Privacy

In education, the security and privacy of students is perhaps the most important consideration for any new device. Yes, there will always be bugs and viruses across all platforms and operating systems, but the question is how well does the company that manufactures the device and operating system handle security problems?

Whether it's due to cutting corners or misunderstanding, some hardware manufacturers load an operating system on a device that does not have the security standards in place that protect your students and meet your minimum security requirements. The best bet is to go with a device manufacturer and software maker that you trust.

Five: Manageability

When assessing what your school wants to do with the device, decide if you want the student to be able to take the device home and if you want to be able to control what the student does on that device. The ability to manage devices on and off school premises is a very important consideration and should be taken very seriously by schools that want to ensure students don't get distracted.

It is also important to be able to easily deploy software applications and images across hundreds, if not thousands, of devices.

Six: Productivity and Employability

Consider how teachers and students learn and work on the device. Most students and teachers want devices where they can multi-task between applications, have windows open side-by-side when doing research, and easily cut, paste and print.

Also consider whether or not the device runs powerful applications such as the Microsoft Office suite or Adobe Photoshop. These applications are industry standard productivity applications that will help your students be more productive and learn important skills used in the workplace. Keep in mind that operating systems and productivity software keep getting better over time and it's important students are versed in the latest versions when they graduate.

Seven: Partners and Partner Ecosystem

Outside of the device hardware and software, there is a very important ecosystem of companies that produce applications, hardware and systems that provide educational solutions to schools. There are even companies that deploy devices and manage their upkeep and security. Understand which education partners are working alongside your device hardware and software manufacturer to maximize the utility you'll get from your device.

Eight: Durability and Quality

Schools are tough places for fancy devices. Many new devices are made rugged with rubber bumpers, spill-proof keyboards, and scratchproof glass. If that isn't enough, a trusted device maker will have generous service plans in case something goes drastically wrong. Remember that devices in schools get thrown in backpacks, dropped on the playground, and get heavy general use during the day.

Nine: Training and Support

There are many places online to get curriculum and training that shows best practices for using technology in the classroom. With nearly 5 million members, Microsoft Partners in Learning is one such network – offering access to shared lesson plans, technology best practices, curriculum that integrates technology, and more.

Microsoft's IT Academy provides students and teachers with courses to sharpen their skills and get certified on Microsoft software.

Also consider the support you'll get from the device manufacturer. Do they offer additional services to schools that go beyond the device?

Ten: Accessibility and Language Support

Learning should be universal – regardless of physical or mental disabilities. That's why any device your school chooses should be able to work for someone who needs multiple, and sometimes non-traditional ways to input and consume information. For nearly twenty years Microsoft has focused on making computers easier to use for individuals with a wide array of difficulties and impairments.

Also consider students in your classroom may speak many other languages beyond what are supported by most devices. Microsoft provides fully localized versions of Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office in nearly 40 languages. Additionally, with the Local Language Program (LLP), Microsoft currently supports 95 languages.

We hope this guide has been helpful and we would be glad to assist you and your school in making the right technology decisions. Please feel free to contact us at <email address> to find your local Microsoft office and account team.

