Frequently Asked Questions

What is the goal of the PowerUp initiative?
In order to prepare students to succeed in the 21st century and to compete with their peers around the world, schools must ensure that students are digitally literate, critical thinkers, successful problem solvers, clear and effective communicators, and connected with the world around them. HISD's PowerUp initiative will allow students to develop these skills and competencies, and will provide a key instructional resource for teachers. Watch Video

Why is the initiative so important?
Technology and electronic devices are a huge part of the daily lives of most children, so it is incumbent on large, urban school districts like HISD to bring technology into the classroom. Today’s children also learn and process information differently than previous generations, so schools must transform the way teachers provide instruction in order to meet their unique needs.

Why the decision to give every student a laptop?
When it comes to integrating computers and technology into the classroom, there are a number of options that public-school districts are using. There is the blended learning model in which students bring their own devices to school, and there is the one-to-one model in which school districts provide computers for their students. HISD has chosen to implement the one-to-one model because over 80 percent of HISD students are on free or reduced lunch and therefore most likely cannot purchase such a device to bring to school. In addition, Core Initiative 3 of the HISD Strategic Direction emphasizes the importance of providing every student with equitable access to a rigorous instructional program. Providing a laptop to every high school student moves the district significantly closer to achieving that goal. Watch Video

Why aren't all high school students receiving laptops for the 2013-2014 school year?
The PowerUp initiative is more than just giving every student a laptop. It involves changing the way HISD teachers deliver instruction. The planning, development, and implementation of the initiative has and will continue to involve multiple departments, including curriculum, professional development, and instructional technology. Because of the breadth of the initiative and the training, support and cultural change it will require for many of our teachers and school leaders, the decision was made to roll it out in stages, with phase 1 or the pilot stage beginning at 11 high schools during the 2013-2014 school year.

Which high schools were chosen to be in phase 1 and how were they selected?
In order to select the high schools for phase 1, HISD looked at overall readiness of the campuses, the principals themselves, and whether or not they were already embracing technology at their school, as well as considering all nine board members’ districts. The 11 high school schools selected are Austin, Bellaire, Chavez, The Energy Institute, Kashmere, Lee, Madison, Sam Houston, Sharpstown, YMCPA, and YWCPA. Watch Video
How is the district preparing for the rollout?
During the summer of 2013, the 11 pilot schools will have their infrastructure upgraded to include cabling and new equipment to ensure that internet access is available throughout the campus. The HISD curriculum department is currently creating enhanced curriculum documents that will incorporate an expanded and robust set of online instructional strategies and resources for teachers. The documents will link to the online components of currently adopted instructional materials, online district resources, and other high-quality online instructional resources and materials. A package of key instructional software will be part of each laptop that teachers will receive in August. Students at the 11 schools will receive their laptops in January 2014. Watch Video

Why aren’t teachers and students receiving laptops at the same time?
To ensure the success of the PowerUp initiative, HISD teachers will need support and training, not only on how to use the laptop but how to use it as a tool to provide their students with effective instruction. All teachers at the 11 schools in the pilot program will undergo an entire semester of training with HISD’s instructional technology, professional development, and curriculum departments. This training will teach them how to incorporate the laptops as well as web 2.0 tools in their classroom to create engaging and interactive instruction for students Watch Video. Each campus will also be staffed with an instructional representative and a technology representative who will work with teachers to develop instruction and troubleshoot problems should they arise. Watch Video

What kind of computer will teachers and students receive?
HISD has selected a Hewlett Packard solid-state laptop that is currently being used by other school districts who have successfully implemented the one-to-one model. A solid-state model was recommended because it is very durable and less likely to break when dropped.

How will the PowerUp initiative be funded for the 2013-2014 school year?
HISD is repurposing dollars from others areas and using Title I funds to pay for the PowerUp initiative so that there is no increase in the district’s bottom line. Because the initiative is comprehensive and involves more than just technology upgrades, money spent in others areas can be redirected to carry the burden without affecting the overall budget for the 2013-2014 school year. Watch Video