



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about PowerUp 1:1 Devices

What is PowerUp?

In order to prepare Houston's students for a world beyond the four walls of a classroom, HISD has launched PowerUp, a districtwide initiative aimed at transforming, teaching and learning. The comprehensive initiative has three main drivers: technology (which includes 1:1 laptop distribution), the "HUB" (an online teaching and learning platform) and personalization (customized learning experiences to meet the individual needs of students). To find out more about the PowerUp initiative, visit www.houstonisd.org/powerup.

What does 1:1 mean?

1:1 is shorthand for one-to-one. This means there will be one laptop for each high school student to use for learning at both school and home.

Why the decision to go with a 1:1 model?

HISD has chosen to implement the 1:1 model because more than 80 percent of HISD students are on free or reduced lunch and therefore most likely cannot afford to purchase a laptop to bring to school. In addition, Core Initiative three of HISD's 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.

Why aren't all high school students receiving laptops for the 2014–2015 school year?

After consulting with other school districts who have implemented successful 1:1 initiatives, the decision was made to distribute laptops to students in stages, with phase one (the pilot stage) beginning at 11 high schools during the 2013–2014 school year. In phase two, 21 high schools will be added during the 2014–2015 school year. By 2016, all high school students at HISD will have a laptop for use at school and at home.

Why the decision to have a gap between teacher training and laptop distribution?

A key component of the district's 1:1 implementation plan is training, professional development, and support for teachers on not only how to use the devices but how to incorporate them, digital instruction, and web tools into their daily instruction. With that in mind, the district made the decision for phase 1 teachers to receive their laptops in August 2013, followed by student laptop deployment in January 2014. This provided teachers with an entire semester of training. The same will happen in phase two, with teachers receiving laptops in August 2014, followed by students in January 2015.

What kind of training do HISD teachers receive?

Teachers at the 11 schools have access to a robust, hands-on lineup of weekend, after school, and early-release-day trainings developed and provided by HISD's instructional technology and professional development departments. In addition, a group of "early adopter" teachers, as well as campus leaders from each of the phase one and two schools, are participating in trainings with staff from the Mooresville Graded School District in North Carolina. Mooresville has one of the most successful one-to-one initiatives in the U.S. and has seen impressive academic gains since the program was implemented.

How was the specific device selected?



Many manufacturers and models of devices were evaluated by the district. In addition, other school districts from around the country that have implemented both successful and unsuccessful one-to-one programs were consulted for advice and guidance. After extensive research, it was determined that a laptop would provide the best security, value, and durability needed for the initiative. Because of the rapid advancement of technology, the decision was made to “lease” student laptops equipped with Microsoft Office 365 and other educational software rather than to purchase the devices. Teacher laptops, however, are being purchased by the district.

How will the 1:1 program be funded, and what are the costs associated with it?

HISD is repurposing dollars from others areas and using Title I and Title II funds to pay for the majority of the costs associated with the distribution of laptops. Money spent in other areas, such as textbooks, has been redirected to carry the burden and minimize impact on the overall district budget. The cost to lease a laptop (which includes software) for each student is roughly \$260 a year.

Are there fees for students associated with the program?

Each student is required to pay an annual, non-refundable \$25 security deposit fee to receive a laptop. Under board policy, questions regarding fee eligibility should be directed to the student’s principal.

How are students protected from inappropriate content?

Each device is pre-loaded with district-approved filtering software that blocks keyword content and inappropriate websites, including some social media sites, while in use at school, home, and anywhere that has wireless Internet access. Before students receive their devices, they are also required to take a digital citizenship class that reviews the district’s policy on the proper use of technology and electronic services. Both parents and students are required to sign a laptop loan/acceptable use agreement before a student will receive a computer. Improper use of the laptop and/or technology will result in strict consequences such as discipline, detention, and/or limited use of the device as determined by the district’s Code of Student Conduct.

Who is responsible for loss, theft, or damage while the student’s laptop is away from school?

As with any other instructional material, the student is responsible for his or her laptop. Teachers will work with students on responsible use and safekeeping of their laptop. Each device comes with a protective bag for safekeeping. Additionally, each device is equipped with the LoJack® Stolen Recovery System, so stolen devices can be disabled and recovered. Students are required to report a lost or stolen laptop immediately to their teacher. Damaged devices will be evaluated by the school to determine whether or not they can be repaired.

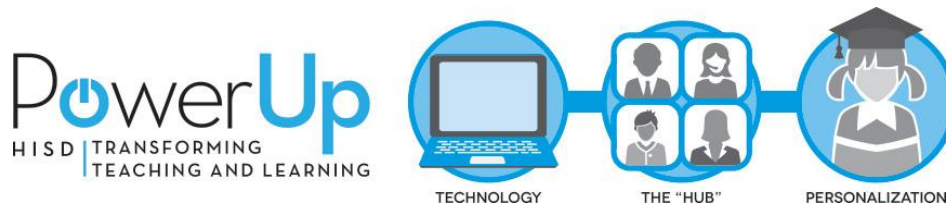
What if a student doesn’t have access to the Internet at home?

HISD recognizes that students may not have access to the Internet away from school, so each HISD campus is equipped with wireless Internet. Additionally, all Houston-area public libraries have Internet. HISD is also developing partnerships with local organizations and businesses to increase the availability of free Internet services throughout the city.

What if a student moves or transfers during the school year?

Each laptop is the property of HISD. If a student moves or changes schools during the school year, the student will need to return the device to the campus. All laptops are returned to the campus at the end of each school year.

Does a student have to bring a laptop home if there is already a device at home?



All students are able to use their laptop at school and at home during the week and on weekends. To ensure compatibility, and because many software applications and documents created by students will be saved on their laptop, the district encourages the primary use of the HISD laptop at school and home.

Does a student need to have a printer to print out assignments?

Printers are not necessary. Assignments will be shared with teachers and among students using Office 365, email, and the HUB, which is the district's online teaching and learning platform.

How long does the laptop battery last? What if a student's laptop battery runs out during the day?

Students are advised to plug in their laptop every evening at home to ensure that it is fully charged each day. When students are not using the device during the day, they will power down their device to conserve its battery life. Classrooms are equipped with electrical outlets for recharging as needed throughout the school day.

Does the 1:1 program eliminate the need to bring textbooks home?

Students will continue to have access to textbooks for most classes. Over time, however, the use of traditional textbooks may decrease as most textbooks will be available to students digitally on their laptop.

Can a student "opt out" of the 1:1 initiative?

Yes, a student may opt out of the 1:1 initiative, but HISD believes that all students will benefit tremendously from having such a device to assist them in achieving at high levels. Therefore, the district encourages all students to participate.

How will 1:1 distribution impact students with special needs?

Students with special needs will benefit immensely from having a laptop. Based on their unique learning needs, special-ed students' devices may be equipped or modified to include adaptive software and programs. The district is working closely with the Department of Special Education and the Multilingual Department to ensure that all students with special needs are appropriately accommodated.