

Big Mac: Really? It's just the same? A teacher instructing students is doing the same sort of work as a farmer plowing a field?

What classroom experience is Mr. Goedde drawing on? I taught for six years, and I found that the more technology I introduced to a lesson, the more things went wrong. I finally settled into using the overhead projector and occasionally the TV. Anything more was just asking for trouble. Computers fail. Webpages lock up or move. Computer projectors never seem to work correctly.

I see trouble ahead for this laptop program. As I understand things, students will be issued a laptop as freshmen and expected to use it throughout the four years of high school. Here are some problems that I can foresee.

First, many students are going to lose or break these things. About 5% of books in each class go missing or are destroyed each year. Books are a lot harder than laptops. Kids lose things. It happens. Will the district replace lost laptops for free? Will the kid have to buy a replacement before his education can continue? When a kid forgets his book on a particular day, I can loan him one from my small reserve. What if he forgets his computer?

Second, technology changes very rapidly. My home computers last about three years until I have to upgrade. Schools would have to price out laptops during students' eighth grade year if they want to issue them to freshmen. A 2006 laptop would not cut it today. Will students receive upgrades as technology changes?

Third, not all teachers are computer experts. I'm pretty good, myself, but even I could not keep up with the kids. Students usually do know more about computers than their teachers. If this is meant to be some sort of educational tool so that teachers can teach kids about computers, it's just not needed. If the legislature is expecting teachers to troubleshoot and fix tech issues during class, that's just not going to happen either.

Fourth, computers are little attention suckers. It's tough to concentrate on anything else when you're on the computer, and it's easy for other computer programs to distract you from your work. Does anyone seriously imagine that kids won't find ways to install instant messaging, or to find ways to visit blocked websites, or install games?

So there are some significant problems with issuing every student a laptop. I haven't heard anyone make a case for why we SHOULD issue laptops. I've just heard some legislators say, in effect, "computers are great! Kids need them!"