

## **FAQ for 2009-2010 Laptop Parental Option Model**

### **Introduction:**

Based on input received through the recent laptop survey – as well as other feedback and data – the district will again offer a family option regarding the laptop program to better accommodate the diverse preferences for laptop access expressed by stakeholders. Specifically, **the family option policy is designed to allow families to choose between 1) having their student(s) check out a laptop for full 24/7 access with an agreement to all fees and conditions set by the district and/or school, or 2) to use school-housed laptops when teachers determine they are needed for classroom activities, plus agreeing to provide sufficient access to home technology for completion of school assignments.**

### **Q1. Why is the district offering this option?**

A1. Over the course of the two years of the laptop program, a certain percentage of families have reported that the 24/7 access to the laptop has not been successful in their homes, and that school-only access to the laptops would be preferred. Among the reasons cited were excessive gaming and other nonacademic use by students, difficulties monitoring usage at home, additional weight to carry to and from school, and the extra responsibility related to damage/theft of an expensive item.

In addition, a number of staff have reported that full-time laptop access has had a negative impact on some students' performance and classroom behavior, and that laptop use is difficult to implement when students do not bring laptops or their laptops are in repair.

### **Q2. What are the parent and student responsibilities for each option?**

A2. Students checking out a laptop for 24/7 access will be agreeing to terms similar to those used in the past two years. The fees associated with checking out a laptop should be identical to 2008-2009, pending final confirmation by the insurance carrier. Also, parents and students are encouraged to carefully review the addendum to the Laptop Agreement so that they are fully aware of what is and is not covered by insurance. All of these documents are available at [http://www.shorelineschools.org/departments/instruction/tech/laptop\\_docs.php](http://www.shorelineschools.org/departments/instruction/tech/laptop_docs.php).

Families choosing to forego 24/7 access are accepting that students will have access to laptops in school only when the teacher makes them available for specific classroom activities. These students will not have a dedicated laptop at their disposal throughout the school day, and must use an alternate method of saving and transferring files (USB drive, email, student server) from school to home and back. Furthermore, this option involves a commitment by the family to provide sufficient home access to technology such that the student is able to complete all assigned work requiring use of computers or the Internet.

**Q3. What kind of computer access will my child have if we choose Option 2?**

A3. As stated above, students will only have access to those laptops made available by their teachers while in a class where laptops are to be used for that day's activity. There will be no provisions for students to check out a laptop for the entire school day and return it at dismissal time. Each school will have additional computers available in common spaces such as libraries, but in all cases students will be responsible for managing their own documents and files on media other than a dedicated hard drive.

**Q4. What are some adjustments my child will need to make with Option 2?**

A4. The two biggest are likely to be the process of transferring files between home and school, and becoming accustomed to working in a dual-platform situation if the home computer is a PC. The second of these will require a little knowledge of file formats and naming protocols so that files will open on whichever applications are available at home and at school.

Another adjustment will be developing an organizational system to replace the use of a digital organizer such as iCal. Given that most Option 2 students are unlikely to have access to a laptop in every class on every day, even a web-based tool like Google Calendar may not be workable. Some form of paper planner or daytimer may be a better option. Once home, however, students will be able to access teacher iCals and web sites just as they have in the past.

**Q5. Will there be parental controls on the laptops that students take home?**

A5. A parental control software application, called SafeEyes, will be installed on all middle school and Echo Lake laptops. The same product will be available for high school students upon parent request, since last year we removed or decreased the controls on over half the high school laptops. The SafeEyes program is managed remotely by district officials and parents will be able to choose from several levels of control (called "profiles"). Students will be given a login name and password for SafeEyes which must be entered before using the Internet.

**Q6. Can students bring their personally-owned laptops to school?**

A6. At this time, no, but we will continue to explore strategies for accommodating this option at some future time. Currently, there are too many issues related to network operations and security, software licensing, and enforcement of acceptable use policies for us to ensure a successful transition to an open environment.

**Q7. Can students switch between options throughout the school year?**

A7. Each school will develop its own specific policy for handling special situations but our general expectation is that families will stick with the option they chose at the start of school. While it is certainly conceivable that unique circumstances can necessitate a change in access options mid-year, no school is sufficiently staffed or equipped to accommodate frequent shifts between Options 1 and 2 without a strong compelling reason.

**Q8. What are some factors that our family should consider in choosing the best option for our student(s)?**

A8. While far from a complete list, here are a few things that came up in various discussions so far:

- student's demonstrated ability to abide by the terms of the laptop agreement regarding care/handling and prohibition of nonacademic uses of the laptop – both in school and at home
- degree to which child's teachers will be assigning work requiring access to the internet and online resources; along with this, the amount of uncompromised access to home technology the student will have
- whether or not any classes make exclusive use of online text or other materials that are not otherwise available in print form
- degree to which the student might benefit from having a centralized place (i.e. the laptop) to keep all documents, assignments, calendars, bookmarks, etc.
- potential effect on encouraging appropriate usage presented by prospect of reverting to an Option 2
- extent to which more robust parent control software might address any prior home-use issues

