

LAPTOP Q&A

WHAT IS mLISD?
mLISD is the Leander Mobile Learning Initiative, an endeavor to challenge, encourage and support students in a digital world. The district is providing students with increased access to digital content, resources and devices to support anytime/anywhere learning.

HOW WILL THIS HAPPEN?
The initial pilots have taken place over the last two years with three levels of implementation. Currently, teachers across the district have received laptops and training for utilizing them in the classroom. Also, three campuses are pilot schools — Canyon Ridge Middle School, Henry Middle School and Leander High School. Laptops were deployed to these campuses' sixth and ninth graders this year with plans to expand the deployment to sixth through 11th grade as early as fall 2015.

WILL WE RECEIVE LAPTOPS?
We already have them. There's currently 16 carts being used by teachers in their classes. The district is studying the results of the pilots and will present them to the school board. It is expected early next spring, laptops will be given to sixth graders and freshmen at each of the middle school and high school campuses. The district plans on continuing giving laptops to each incoming class.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF THE SCHOOL?
The sophomores, juniors and seniors will not receive laptops, but they will be made available in classrooms to the students via portable labs.

WHY?
The district wants to integrate technology into every classroom,

provide students with additional opportunities to use technology, and replace aging computer equipment.

IS IT FREE?
Freshmen will pay a \$35 per semester fee to cover the insurance for the laptop, essentially leasing it. The district also has said they're willing to work with students with financial concerns.

DO FRESHMEN HAVE TO LEASE THE LAPTOP?
No. Students can choose to buy the laptop outright or bring their own device. BYOT is advantageous for students who wish to download software or games, since they we be unable to add programs to the district laptops that are not part of the LISD Software Center.

WHAT HAPPENS TO LOST/STOLEN LAPTOPS?
The insurance students pay for covers the cost of the loss the first time the device is stolen, so with the proper police report, there will be no repercussions. Devices that are lost will be replaced for a deductible of half of the full price (estimated \$300). For the second time a device is lost or stolen, the student will have to repay the full cost of the laptop.

WHAT IF THE LAPTOP BREAKS OR NEEDS REPAIR?
Technicians will be assigned per campus to help students resolve their technical issues, but the fee students pay when they receive their laptops covers accidental damage and manufacture defects for the first two times. However, if the damage is due to intentionally destructive behavior or broken a third time, the student will pay an additional fee.

-compiled by Michelle Contreras, **Source:** mLISD Parent and Student FAQ

TECH IT OUT

“INSTEAD OF ASKING OUR TEACHERS ‘WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH THE MONEY?’ WE BEGAN ASKING ‘HOW DO WE WANT OUR CLASSROOMS TO LOOK?’ THE 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOMS WE KNOW ARE DIFFERENT FROM EVEN THE CLASSES 10 YEARS AGO.”

-LISD Director of ITS/Decision Support Sarah Martinez

BY JORDAN BUIE DESTINY DE LA PAZ
Co-Editor in Chief & Rumbler Staffer

On the second floor, down the English hall, clusters of students sit in their desks facing each other, pecking away at small keys. They glance up occasionally, murmuring to each other and tapping at the small computer screens.

A year ago, Pam Bowmer's Pre-AP English II class would have had to wait for a computer lab opening to create a newsletter about To Kill a Mockingbird. The students would have been forced to sit in low rows of computer desks, unable to work truly in a group setting. But thanks to a new endeavor by LISD, the district is transitioning to a new world, a mobile one where laptops are integrated into the classroom and curriculum.

The Leander Mobile Learning Initiative, or mLISD for short, is the district's answer to aging computer equipment, a drastic cut in textbook funding, and preparing students to be successful in a digital world. As LISD looked at replacing outdated technology, they realized the funds could be better spent by taking a different approach.

“Instead of asking our teachers ‘What should we do with the money?’ we began asking ‘How do we want our classrooms to look?’ ” LISD Di-



PHOTO BY CAMI CHAMBERLAIN
PORTABLE LEARNING Students use a portable lab during Lauren Murphy's Physics seventh period class.

rector of ITS/Decision Support Sarah Martinez said. “The 21st century classrooms we know are different from even the classes 10 years ago.”

Instead of replacing the schools' desktops and keeping limited computer labs that had to be shared, the district wanted a more mobile solution. Dubbed mLISD, the initiative integrates technology into everyday use, anywhere. Initially still in the pilot phases, the district's goal is to put laptops in the hands of every middle school and high school student and teacher over the next few years.

“The vision is to have ubiquitous access for students and teachers throughout the system,” Martinez said. “Not based on having cool technology in your hands, but having the functions that you need to gather, build, and share your knowledge and learning.”

The district invested in Lenovo Thinkpad laptops because of their durability, size and cost. Student laptops cost around \$640 each while the teacher ones were \$920 each. Both include three years of insurance, a charger and laptop case. The Lenovos are lightweight, touchscreen and can be turned into a tablet.

“They have done a lot of studies; it was a better price and a better machine,” technology facilitator, Scott Robertson said. “They like the fact that this can be used as a tablet that flips over, and the size, the durability add to it.”

As part of the current pilots, most middle school and high school teachers have laptops and have received training on how to integrate them into their classroom and curriculum. Three pilot schools, Canyon Ridge Middle School, Henry Middle School and Leander High School, distributed laptops this winter to their sixth and ninth graders.

This is the district's first pilot to have devices go home with the students. At Canyon Ridge, 100 percent of the sixth graders are participating, 98 percent at Henry and about 90 percent of Leander High School's freshmen are using the laptops. The district is studying these pilot schools to gage student engagement, classroom benefits and teacher feedback.

“It was amazing to me to see, to hear especially from our 1:1 ratio pilot campuses, how much difference it's already making with the instruction and with their beliefs about students owning their own learning,” Martinez said. “With

the types of efficiencies they're gaining with Google classroom and with the ways they are able to differentiate instruction they had never been able to before.”

While Canyon Ridge, Henry and Leander are the pilot schools distributing to students, the other middle and high schools in the district received Lenovo laptops to be used on campus. Cedar Park, Vista Ridge, Vandegrift and Rouse all received 16 shared carts holding 32 laptops each. All the middle schools, except the pilots, have nine carts.

The carts have given additional freedom to teachers to incorporate the laptops into their curriculum, from students looking up current events in Speech and Debate to using different presentation technologies to learn Spanish vocabulary.

“I would hope that the students would use it to search out options, like in particular with math,” Math Models and Geometry Jordan Anthony said. “Sometimes there's more than one way to solve it, there might be more than one method so I would hope that they would use it to search out different methods, search out for their understanding, or maybe where it relates to a more realistic situation.”

As part of the transition to the mobile community all of the teacher desktops from across the district will be removed next year and other equipment removed as it becomes irreplaceable or unusable. Within the next two years, all of the desktops in classrooms and most labs will be gone.

Meanwhile, if the pilots go well, the school board is expected to approve the continuation of the mLISD program. All sixth and ninth graders around the district will have the opportunity to lease a laptop. The pilot schools will expand from sixth to 11th grade. Students will pay a \$35 fee per semester for insurance. If a student is on free and reduced lunch they will only have to pay half the fee. All participants will take home the laptops each night and must return to school with them.

“I think most of our students will understand and appreciate the privilege that they are given to have use of that,” Bowmer said. “You are always going to have one or two that aren't going to ap-



TECHNICALLY ADVANCED The Lenovo laptops use Windows 8, can be used as tablets and have touch screens. The school currently has 16 carts with 32 laptops each to utilize in classrooms. Next year's freshman class is expected to receive laptops in the spring semester to use with their classes.

FIGURE
it out
\$5 million

spent on laptops for teachers and students so far. LISD expects to purchase more devices in the next few years.

MORE THAN 50% of technology on LISD campuses is older than five years, with some desktops more than eight years old
\$640

cost of each student laptop, teacher laptops were \$920 each

\$35 amount per semester freshmen will pay to lease the laptops. Students on reduced lunch will pay \$35 for whole year. Students also have the option to buy the laptop outright or bring their own.

-Statistics provided by LISD Information Technology

teacher vs student

TEACHER LAPTOPS	STUDENT LAPTOPS
• Windows 8	• Windows 8
• Touchscreen	• Touchscreen
• More expensive, \$920	• Less expensive, \$640
• More memory	• Less memory
• Can be used as a tablet	• Can be used as a tablet
• Keyboard recesses when folded over to become a tablet	• Keyboard is disabled, but does not recess when folded over to become a table