**Grade 8, Unit 5**

**Directions**

Read the following essay. Then answer the questions that follow.

**Put a Laptop in Each Lap!**

**Richard Olivares**

Laptops belong not only in the classroom, but also in every student's lap! Computers may just be the best equalizer of education to be had. The availability that computers provide helps offset the geographic, economic, and cultural differences in our schools. With the Internet at their fingertips,

young people everywhere can easily locate information.

Computers also help students develop the technical skills they will need in this computer-based world. They will become comfortable with touch screens, dialogue boxes, and hyperlinks to perform daily tasks. Students will also practice physical operations such as dragging and dropping.

Some will argue that computerization is a long way off because people can still do activities “the old-fashioned way.” For example, you can walk up to a bank teller rather than stop at the ATM machine. However, banks often charge their customers an extra fee for talking to a teller. How long will it be before that cost is too high to pay? The old ways of doing business are slowly being phased out. It's only a matter of time before everyone will be required to vote, bank, pay bills, and other activities online. Trying to resist this trend is like trying to buy new music on vinyl records or recently released movies on videotapes- almost impossible.

Furthermore, because computers are our future, we need to take the opportunity now to teach students to become discriminating consumers of Web-based information sources. If no one is looking over the shoulder of the student asking, “Is that really a reliable source?” or explaining the criteria for determining a source's credibility, when and where will kids learn these skills? They certainly will not get them from their less tech-savvy parents! And if they don't learn these skills in school, we will all suffer. Do you want your future government officials to be elected by people who cannot distinguish a trustworthy source of information from a campaign advertisement? Do you want your medications prescribed by a doctor who thinks that pharmaceutical (drug) company's Web site provides complete information?

According to a survey, students who use computers in the classroom also benefit personally and academically. Teachers report that students who used computers in the classroom showed gains in independence, concentration, and motivation. These students also tended to develop confidence in their own abilities, judgment and take risks. This may be true because almost everything done on computers is reversible, making it easier for students to try out a new writing style, tackle a challenging math problem, or use a drawing program and learn from their mistakes.

One cannot deny the many benefits of having computers in the classroom. If our kids are to get the most out of their educational experience and be ready to enter the world of the 21st century, we must support the purchase of a laptop for each and every student. Truly, that is the only way that no child will

be left behind.

**Comprehension**

**Directions**

Answer the following questions about “Put a Laptop in Each Lap!”

1. What is Richard Olivares’s claim?

a. Classrooms should contain several types of computers.

b. All teachers should take courses in computer technology.

c. Every student in a classroom should have a laptop.

d. Parents should help their children develop computer skills.

2. The phrase “equalizer of education” is effective because it-

a. explains why teachers should use computers more often.

b. shows readers that finding information is important.

c. illustrates the lack of resources in various schools.

d. convinces readers of the value of computers.

3. Olivares supports his claim by providing evidence that

a. many real-world tasks are computerized.

b. every movie is available on videotape.

c. all doctors rely heavily on technology.

d. most parents use computers at home.

4. According to Olivares, the effect of purchasing laptops for students will be to

a. encourage them to work together.

b. improve their overall math abilities.

c. help them succeed in the modern world.

d. increase their awareness of government.

5. Oliveras responds to opposing viewpoints by using

a. statistics.

b. real world tasks.

c. appropriate sources.

d. bandwagon techniques.

6. What counterargument does Olivares offer to people who wish to perform activities “the old-fashioned way”?

a. Banks charge a fee for using a teller.

b. Voters must cast their ballots online.

c. Music is not available on vinyl records.

d. Computers are used for cash withdrawals.

7. If Oliveras wanted to add an effective source to support his argument he might choose a/an

a. quote from a children’s book illustrator.

b. statistics on successful computer students.

c. comment in an article in a medical journal.

d. author of an article from Sports Illustrated.

8. Oliveras explains a need for computer technical skills. His evidence uses-

a. valid sources.

b. an ethical appeal.

c. specific examples.

d. irrelevant information.

**Directions**

Read the following essay. Then answer the questions that follow.

**On Computers in Classrooms: Please Proceed with Caution!**

**Grace MacPherson**

**\*Adapted**

Computer supporters like pointing out that computers can provide a lot of information to students. They also share studies that find that students in computer-equipped classrooms show gains in independence, concentration, motivation, and confidence. No reasonable person would argue with these benefits. However, before parents and teachers start petitioning their school boards to buy every student a laptop, they ought to take a good hard look at some of the negative aspects of computers in the classrooms.

According to Clifford Stoll, author of the book *High Tech Heretic: Why Computers Don't Belong in the Classroom*, spending huge amounts of class time on the computer has a negative effect on students' social skills. Stoll claims that sitting in front of a computer does not teach students to interact with others. Students only see their own reflection on the monitor and tend not to consider other people's thoughts. Doing so robs them of necessary practice in the important skills of cooperation and compromise. Stoll then takes this one step further, asserting that “power . . . depends on social skills,” not on information or knowledge. If he is right, then we are actually damaging our kids by giving them so much computer time. Are we willing to take that risk?

Overuse of computers can also interfere with the growth of young people's bodies, causing injuries and obesity. A report by the Alliance for Childhood says, “Most schools are allowing children to use desktop or laptop computers in ways that strain their bodies and eyes. . . . Long hours at a keyboard, constantly repeating a few hand movements, may hurt children's hands, wrists, arms, and neck.” Sitting so long in front of a computer could be harmful. The human body is not designed to sit in one position for long periods of time.

Then there is the obvious argument against spending money on computers, voiced by Kirk A. Johnson, Ph.D., in a Center for Data Analysis report. “Dedicating large amounts of money to the purchase of computer hardware, software, and teacher training could crowd out other worthwhile education purchases, such as new textbooks, music programs, vocational education, and the arts.”

A less obvious cost of having computers in classrooms is noted by Lowell Monke, a computer teacher from Des Moines, Iowa. He believes that computers in schools may force teachers to pay more attention to the tools rather than the students. He supports this statement with the fact that almost 50% of the recent staff courses in his district were computer training classes. In fact, Monke noted that it was “absolutely clear to everyone that supporting them eats up resources, especially money and time.” Monke further noted a more serious hidden cost. When a great deal of time and money has been invested in these tools, administrators feel the need to defend the purchase. As one principal told him, “We've invested so much money in technology, we have to make it our main concern.”

So before we go pouring our money into buying more computers, we should make sure that the costs of investing in them-financial and otherwise-will not bankrupt our kids.

**Comprehension**

**Directions**

Answer the following questions about “On Computers in Classrooms: Please Proceed with Caution!”

9. How does MacPherson deal with conflicting evidence?

a. She begins her essay challenging it.

b. She tackles it with every point she makes.

c. She doesn’t argue the opposing side at all.

d. She considers counterarguments at the start and finish.

10. Lowell Monke is an effective source because he-

a. illustrates the concerns of parents and school officials.

b. describes the actions of fellow teachers in Des Moines, Iowa.

c. shows the negative impact of computers on the education process.

d. mentions a statistic about the number of available computer courses.

11. MacPherson’s explanation for computers damaging children’s bodies is-

a. biased.

b. inaccurate.

c. misleading.

d. insufficient.

12. Did MacPherson use effective sources? Use information from the essay to explain your answer.

**Comprehension**

**Directions**

Answer the following questions about both essays.

13. As a result of reading both essays, a reader could say having computers for every child-

1. will be a hardship.
2. needs further discussion.
3. is the only way to instruct.
4. will lead to a stronger government.

14. Both authors discuss the effect computers have on student’s personal development. Using information from the essay, explain how their ideas are different.

15. After reading both articles, you can conclude-

1. teachers prefer using computers.
2. laptops are better than traditional computers.
3. computers will always help organize students.
4. computers are beneficial when used in moderation.

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