

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about the PowerUp Initiative

What does 1:1 mean?

1:1 is shorthand for one-to-one. This means there will be one laptop for each student. The Houston Independent School District (HISD) refers to the initiative that provides a laptop to each student in your school as “PowerUp.” To find out more about the PowerUp initiative, see <http://www.houstonisd.org/powerup>.

Why is HISD implementing 1:1 at my school?

HISD believes preparing students to succeed in the 21st century and competing with students around the world requires digitally literate students with strong critical-thinking and problem-solving skills who are connected with the world around them. HISD’s PowerUp initiative will allow students to develop skills in the classroom and practice those skills in the home. Students will be able to take their laptop home, which strengthens the school-home connection.

Are there fees associated with the program?

Each student is required to pay an annual, non-refundable \$25 security deposit fee to receive their laptop. Per Board policy FP (LOCAL), questions regarding fee eligibility should be directed to the student’s Principal.

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

Similar to any other instructional material, the student is responsible for their laptop. Teachers will work with students on responsible use and safekeeping of their laptop. Each device comes with a protective backpack for safekeeping. Additionally, each device is equipped with the LoJack® Stolen Recovery System, so stolen devices can be disabled and recovered. Students should immediately report a lost or stolen laptop to their teacher. Damaged devices will be evaluated by the school to determine whether it can be repaired.

How many schools are participating in PowerUp in 2013-2014? What about in future school years?

High schools are selected to participate in the 2013-2014 school year (e.g. Phase 1) based on the quality of campus infrastructure and campus leadership interest. The 11 high schools participating in Phase 1 are Austin, Bellaire, Chavez, The Energy Institute, Kashmere, Lee, Madison, Sam Houston, Sharpstown, Young Men’s College Preparatory, and Young Women’s College Preparatory. HISD intends to expand the 1:1 program districtwide in phases.

What research supports the implementation of a 1:1 program?

Other districts, such as Los Angeles Unified, Mooresville Graded School District and Klein ISD, have implemented 1:1 programs. HISD is allowing students to take laptops home and is implementing a thoughtful and robust teacher development program. There is evidence that with the increased use of student and teacher technology, student engagement and interest increases, as does student achievement.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about Student Responsibility

What if my 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 my student have to bring the 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 your child will be creating will be saved on their laptop, the district encourages the primary use of the HISD laptop at school and home.

What is the consequence for a student improperly using the laptop/school network?

Improper use of technology will result in consequences such as discipline, detention, and/or limited use of their device. Please refer to the district's Student Code Of Conduct and your campus handbook.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Related to Technology

How was the specific laptop device selected?

Many manufactures and models of devices were evaluated. The laptop that provided the best security, value and durability was selected.

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, an HISD student and teacher email and collaboration system.

How are students protected from inappropriate content?

Each device is pre-loaded with district-approved filtering software. Inappropriate websites will be blocked using filters installed on every device by the district. Students should follow the expectations outlined in the Student Code of Conduct and report any accidental inappropriate material to their teacher or administrator.

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.

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

HISD recognizes that students may not have access to the Internet. So, each HISD campus is equipped with wireless Internet. Additionally, all Houston area public libraries have Internet as well. HISD is developing partnerships with local organizations and businesses to increase the availability of free Internet services throughout the city. Attached, you will receive a list of sites that provide free Internet.

Additional Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Does PowerUp eliminate the need to bring textbooks home?

Students will continue to have access to textbooks for classes. However, overtime the use of the traditional textbook may lessen, as most textbooks will be available digitally to students on their laptop.

Can my student “opt out” of the 1:1 initiative?

Yes, there is an option to opt out of the 1:1 initiative. However, HISD believes that your child will benefit tremendously from having a device to assist them in achieving at high levels and the district encourages all students to participate. Please contact your principal if you have additional questions.

What if I don't know anything about how computers work?

HISD values the school-home connection. Students are “tech savvy” and are great technology teachers to adults. Have your student show you what they are working on using their laptop, their school's website or how to view grades online. HISD encourages families to routinely engage and observe their student's technology use.

Will there be parent support and training offered?

The district is planning to offer computer classes for families. Additional information will be provided once dates and locations have been selected.

How will PowerUp impact students with special needs?

Students with special needs will benefit from having a laptop. Based on their unique learning needs, 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.