

# Seven Pointers to Ensure your Technology Investments Pay Off

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As school districts invest in technology to meet growing student and staff demands, technology directors need to consider how future upgrades and additional devices will work with already existing equipment and software. If your network is due for refurbishment, you should know what is involved and take the right steps to plan properly in order to minimize downtime, work out system bugs, and get staff up to speed.

Below are 7 things you should be aware of to ensure your investment in technology pays off.

1. Take inventory of your existing system. What are your users' needs? How much bandwidth are you currently using? Is your Internet slow?
2. Make security a priority. You can have the best equipment money can buy, but without proper security and firewalls in place, plan on downtime and discontented users.
3. Make sure you have a proper census of end users. Any individual may have a laptop, cell phone and tablet, all requiring Internet connectivity. Make sure all units are accounted for. Don't forget security...each IP camera counts.
4. Can you afford to maintain the equipment once it's purchased? Cutting-edge today needs maintenance tomorrow, and that costs money. Make sure you



have the funding to pay for upgrades and other maintenance issues that will ultimately arise.

5. Timing is everything. Pursue all funding sources as early in the process as possible. Make sure you have school board approvals in place as well. The last thing you want is to undergo a network installation after hours right when school starts.
6. Document, document, document! IT staff should keep records of all of its VLAN infrastructure setups, IP address schematics, processes and the project plan. IT and building maintenance need to cooperate with installation of server racks and electrical components. With so many people involved across various departments and disciplines, keeping everyone up-to-date is a priority.
7. It's a lamentable fact that many school buildings are outdated. Physical space and electrical capacity are real concerns. Figure out the requirements for the system that is being installed. It can be noisy. Make sure the noise won't be an issue for nearby classrooms or study areas.

Technology in the classroom has been a potent game changer and an essential educational tool, changing the way teachers teach and students learn. It's not considered a luxury anymore. But the caveat is that it has to *work* and be maintained, otherwise it becomes a distraction and a burden. Preparing students for the 21st century and making sure they are competitive requires an occasional updating of resources. It's part of the cost of doing business.