



Why not Macs for the Stanwich School Laptop Program?

Every year the Stanwich School Technology Department considers Macs for use in the Laptop Program. The short answer is that while other schools in the area use Macs, The Stanwich School network is just not compatible to allow their use in a meaningful way. By and large, they are great laptops, especially in a home environment, however, in a managed network there are many more considerations and issues that may preclude their use.

The main issues that prevent The Stanwich School from introducing Macs into the Laptop Program are:

Compatibility

The Stanwich School has always had a Windows Server environment and while many aspects of our network continue to converge with other technologies so that multiple operating systems become usable, we are not there yet. Specifically, web based technologies, such as our forthcoming student information system and online library catalog will allow any computer with a web browser to connect. Many technologies continue to move in this direction, however, many critical components simply cannot. These include printing at school, sharing files and other resources, plus several software programs that are not currently Mac compatible.

Control and Manageability

For seventh grade, when the students first enter the laptop program, it is our experience that they need considerable instruction as well as control over what they are allowed to do. In a Windows environment, we are able to restrict and manage many aspects of each laptop so that the students cannot inadvertently cause problems while still allowing them to utilize all of the tools that they need. Further, the monitoring capabilities of our systems keep us informed of student activities so that we can guide them to be productive and responsible computer users – these capabilities do not extend to the Mac OS.

Uniformity

The possibility of having a choice between Mac and ThinkPad would introduce another set of issues as well as greatly decrease the IT department efficiency. Every year we require the students to all have the same model for several reasons:

1. There isn't any rivalry or material competition
2. Technical support is much easier if we have one manufacturer to contact, one model to support and one type of hardware for spare parts
3. When hardware problems occur, students are able to use spare laptops that we have on hand to minimize downtime

Next year, with an ever increasing number of Junior House students, we would have to unreasonably expand the size of the tech department to support two separate operating systems and hardware platforms.

No Compelling Virus Problem

Many people tout the Mac invulnerability to viruses as a compelling reason for their use. And while I agree that there is certainly a smaller volume of viruses that will attack the Mac OS, they are by no means immune. Further, we have not had a significant problem with viruses at The Stanwich School due to our security policies and software practices.

I hope you understand our reasoning and feel free to contact me at 203.512.0014 to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Adam Pacchiana
Director of Technology
The Stanwich School