

Laptop Essentials

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR HUNTER CENTRAL COAST TEACHERS



Classroom Management Strategies for Laptop Classrooms

Visit our Laptop Support COW

The Laptop Support COW is part of the Hunter Central Coast Regional COW's (Collaborative Online Workspaces).

Access

Access the COW's via the link on the HCC Regional Intranet:

https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/regions/hunter_ccoast/

Login with your DET portal username with the suffix @det

e.g. Jennifer.Wise@det

In a recent survey of 28 Hunter Central Coast Secondary Schools, classroom management was identified as one of the biggest concerns for teachers when integrating laptops into classroom practice. Many teachers feel a sense of 'loss of control' as students appear disengaged from the lesson. If you are experiencing problems in the transition to laptops for learning, you are not alone! This issue of Laptop Essentials offers advice on classroom management when using laptops for learning.

Getting Setup

As discussed in Issue 1 of Laptop Essentials, the **layout** of the classroom is an important aspect of laptop use. Setting your classroom in parallel rows will allow you to observe student activity from the back of the classroom. Helpful signage can also assist to minimise problems. Think about the physical changes that you can make in your classroom to better accommodate students with laptops (See Issue 1 for more information).

Establishing Consistent Expectations

Students enjoy having a clear set of **expectations** which are often displayed on the wall as a set of rules or 'shared beliefs'. A clear set of expectations around laptop use in the classroom should be established early and applied consistently to all students.

Establishing a Routine

Get students into a **routine** of entering the classroom quietly and logging onto their laptops while you mark the roll. This will save time and minimise disruption while you are giving instructions. Display instructions on the board to reinforce the routine e.g. 'Log on and Lids Down', or 'No Laptop Day Today'.

Teaching 'stop and Listen'

Students should know what is expected of them when it is time for the teacher to speak to the class. Give your students clear instructions to stop what they are doing and direct their attention to you. To minimise distraction during this listening or discussion time, instruct students to close their laptop screens or turn the screen so it faces the teacher.

NB: Don't continue until all students have done this.

Proximity and Presence

Make sure that your presence is felt in the classroom by circulating frequently and **monitoring** student activity. Redirect students who are engaging in off-task behaviour in the same manner you would redirect them without laptops in the classroom. Keep these encounters positive but make sure that you reinforce your expectations.

Good Planning and Reflection

Imagine sitting in your own classroom as a student. How would you feel about the content of the lesson? If your laptop lesson consists only of typing notes from the board then students will quickly become disengaged. To minimise the possibility of disengagement make your lessons **engaging** and interesting to encourage maximum student participation. Where possible, give students **choices** in how they can complete a task or present their work.

NB: Always have a **backup** plan for technology failure (especially last period on Friday!).

Do what you always do

One common question that teachers ask is "What do I do if students don't bring their laptop?" I usually reply by asking them "What do you do when students don't bring their books or other required equipment?" Laptops should be seen as a tool for learning, just like any other piece of required equipment. If a student fails to bring their laptop to school, **consistent consequences** that align with the other structures and policies within the school should be applied.

Learn from your peers

Find a person in your school (or region) who is having success with laptop integration. Speak with them about what they are doing that works. Ask if you can **observe** a lesson – you will be amazed by how much you can learn from observing others in the classroom.

Go Easy on Yourself

Don't be too hard on yourself as you make the transition to laptop integration. All worthwhile changes take a great deal of time and patience and most of us are faced with the same challenges. Remember to take small steps and ask for support!

Next Issue: Student organisation and backup strategies

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