Battery Boost:

Get the Most Use Out of Ed Tech Devices

Ed tech devices are becoming more and more ubiquitous in classrooms throughout the United States. Indeed, public schools nationwide have a computer to student ratio of one to five, school districts spend over $3 billion each year on digital content, and more elementary and middle school students will take their standardized tests via computer or tablet than with paper and pencil this year. This increasing use of technology in the classroom boasts big benefits as well; according a study conducted by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Algebra 1 students who used tablets were 20% more likely to score "Proficient" or "Advanced" as compared to their counterparts using traditional textbooks.

All of this adds up to the need for teachers and school administrators to ensure that the ed tech devices that they use with students are available whenever called for. Unfortunately, something as basic as insufficient battery life can reduce the effectiveness of many ed tech tools while recharging wastes valuable classroom time. With that in mind, there are some easy ways that you can extend the battery life of the classroom technology that students and teachers rely upon.

Tablets - Tablets are an effective and prevalent tool for engaging students and presenting material in innovative ways, but constant use of a tablet can cause the battery to drain too quickly to last the entire school day. Certainly, keeping tablets plugged in whenever possible is the best way to keep the battery charged. However, if that isn't possible, these easy fixes will help extend the battery life of any unplugged tablet:

Brightness - Turn down the brightness of the screen by accessing the Settings menu of iPads or Android tablets. This will help conserve battery power. Similarly, reducing the delay before Android tablets go to sleep or iPads auto-lock will help, because the dark screen uses much less battery.

Connections - Wi-fi and Bluetooth connections can drain power, so turn them off whenever not in use. Likewise, location services are not necessary for most in-class app usage, so turn off the those as well.

Wallpapers - On Android tablets, refrain from using any widgets or live wallpapers.

Updates - Some apps will automatically sync and push notifications through at all times (largely social media, email and weather apps). Not only are notifications distracting during class, this continual syncing zaps battery life. Instead, set them to manual sync or at least set the sync frequency to every two hours.

Laptops - Extend the battery life of laptops in the classroom using many of the tablet tips above, including turning on the laptop's battery saver or eco mode, turning off wi-fi and Bluetooth when not in use, and reducing screen brightness. Other tips include:

Keyboard Lighting - Some laptops have backlit keyboards, an overlooked battery drain. Since keyboard lighting is unnecessary during the school day, turn this feature off under settings.

Unaccounted for Tasks - Sometimes students or staff forget to close a window and minimize instead. Or, on Macs, the program may have been closed but not "Quit." Either way, these forgotten programs will drain laptop battery. To close them on PCs, access the Task Manager by pressing Ctrl+Shift+Esc, or use Ctrl+Alt+Del and select Task Manager from the menu. Once in the Task Manager, look at the open apps and close out of any programs not currently in use.

Charging Cart Access - If possible, keep a charging cart in each classroom and help students build the habit of plugging in before they leave the classroom each period. For some models, it's possible to keep extra batteries or external battery packs on hand to charge when a laptop being used by a student is completely drained of power.

Energy Efficient Hard Drives - When it is time to upgrade your school's laptops, opt for those with solid state drives (SSDs) rather than traditional hard drives as SSDs are significantly more energy efficient.

Follow these simple tips to boost the usefulness of the entire range of classroom ed tech devices used in your school or district, ensuring that students *and* teachers benefit from your technological investment.

A Troxell account executive can work with you to pair your devices with charging carts or stations that are most suited to both your technology, your classroom and school layout, and any other unique factors. Troxell never forces a one-size-fits-all solution; instead, we strive to pair your school or district with the technology that best supports your staff and student body. Contact your local Troxell office to learn more about how we can help you!