



## 6 Secrets to Creating a 1:1 Computing Program on a Tight Budget

Now that blended learning is here to stay, schools are focused on finding ways to keep students connected and engaged both in the classroom and remotely — and that means being strategic about selecting hardware and software solutions that work together for the greatest ROI.

If your district hasn't fully achieved 1:1 computing yet, chances are you're relying in part on a BYOD strategy, which can bring unique challenges. How do you make sure your network can support a multitude of connected devices? And how do you enable high-quality learning while students are at home, regardless of what device they're on?

Nicholas Savoie, Director of Technology for Montville Public Schools faced these challenges a few years ago when trying to launch a 1:1 computing program for his rural school district in Connecticut. Here are six tips for setting your district up for BYOD success, from Savoie and LanSchool:



### 1. Upgrade the WiFi network.

It doesn't matter who owns the devices if they can't connect to the network reliably, so the first priority is to ensure that schools have the bandwidth needed to handle the load. And that load is going to be particularly heavy if districts encourage students to bring their own devices to school.

"When kids walk into school now, they have their smartphones, they have their computers, or their Apple watches," said Savoie. "It's not really a 1:1. It's almost a 1:2 or a 1:3."

A few years ago, Montville used E-rate funds to redo the wireless network in their high school, and the district quickly began talking about how to upgrade its Internet backbone to 10 GB from the previous 1 GB.

"Take your forecasted network load and then double it," advised Savoie. "If your infrastructure can't handle it, then your program is going to be in trouble."

## 2. Be flexible about BYOD.

In past years, Montville had been reluctant to let students bring their own computers to school, with administrators worried about the possibility of theft. Given the financial realities, though, the district had no alternative if it wanted a 1:1 computing environment. Theft has not been a problem, fortunately, but the district learned other lessons along the way. First, schools cannot be selective about what devices students bring.

"You're going to see a mix," said Savoie. "You're going to see a MacBook, you're going to see a Chromebook, a Lenovo, or an HP."

The challenge with introducing mixed devices is ensuring any software the district is selecting will work across platforms. Software also has to be easy to update across devices to keep IT administrator overhead low.

Montville chose to leverage cloud-based productivity suites, including Google Classroom and Office 365, which can be accessed online without the need for software uploads. In the realm of classroom management, cloud-based LanSchool Air offers similar benefits, working on any device and remaining accessible even when students are working on their home networks.

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Second, schools must accommodate students who—for whatever reason—are not able to bring a device from home. Some parents can't afford a laptop. Others may share a computer with their kids, while still others don't want their kids bringing expensive devices to school. Of course, some students simply forget their devices at home.

In circumstances like these, it's imperative that students have access to school computers. To that end, Montville initially purchased 100 laptops that it can lend out to kids. Not surprisingly, the number of students who bring in their own devices varies from grade to grade.

"At the high school, the BYOD approach has worked out great," said Savoie. "In the middle and elementary schools, though, parents don't trust their kids bringing in the devices."

At these lower levels, school-provided computers are the norm, with many teachers favoring the cart approach over having students carry laptops from class to class.

### **3. Leverage tools that keep students engaged with teachers.**

Any teacher who has taught students working on 1:1 devices — whether in the classroom or at home — has faced the uneasy feeling that students aren't really listening.

"They're concerned that they see only the backs of student laptops and have no idea what the students are doing," said Savoie.



LanSchool Air gives teachers a digital way to monitor students' progress, message students and collaborate, disable access to restricted websites, push a website to students' screens to get everyone on the same page, and more.

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The software also facilitates collaboration and teacher feedback. Teachers can share their screens with students, and with the raise hand feature, they can help students who might otherwise be too shy to ask a question in front of classmates.

"At the high school, kids can contact the library media specialist, who will take over their screens and message back and forth with them, which is really great," said Savoie. "It's not like calling kids out in front of the classroom where they get embarrassed."

And as a cloud-based solution, LanSchool Air works whether students and teachers are learning at school or at home, keeping everyone connected and engaged in real time.

#### 4. Train administrators and faculty.

In years past, school districts had to fight for buy-in from administrators and faculty for their 1:1 programs. Since COVID-19 closures, it's become readily apparent why 1:1 and BYOD programs are important.

Now, the bigger hurdle is ensuring key stakeholders are trained to use the technology they've been given. Without proper training, adoption lags and districts are not able to extract the full value out of their tools.

When vetting vendors, districts should consider what types of training resources each provider offers. Some vendors, including LanSchool, [offer a variety of options](#), including onsite training, virtual office hours, webinars, step-by-step guides, blogs, and more to help teachers and IT teams discover the information they need to use the software to its full extent.


#### 5. Make security a priority.

When digital devices are in the mix, it's vital to center student and network security in every decision. That means looking for best-in-class software that can accurately identify and block threats ranging from inappropriate content to bullying and self-harm statements.

LanSchool is partnered with two safety providers to give districts an affordable, comprehensive digital safety program that includes:

- **Monitoring and safety** – [Bark for Schools](#) provides free monitoring for school accounts to help protect students from potential risks, including cyberbullying, threats of violence, and illicit content. It utilizes artificial intelligence to monitor for concerning keywords and language sentiment in students' searches and conversations so caring adults can be alerted.

- **Threat protection and content filtering** – [DNSFilter](#) is a filtering software powered by artificial intelligence that protects networks from external threats like ransomware, malware, and other attacks. As a cloud-based solution, it works whether students are using their devices on school campus or at home. It also restricts access to adult content, gambling, weapons, alcohol, tobacco, and other inappropriate content. Moreover, IT administrators can choose to block streaming sites and other consumers of high bandwidth to more easily accommodate the multitude of devices connected to the school network.
- **Classroom management** – In addition to its classroom management features, LanSchool can block specific sites to keep kids safe and on track. Its messaging feature also enables teachers to better address student questions and social emotional learning needs in the moment.



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## 6. Look for bundle deals.

For many schools, BYOD is a stop gap on the path to a 1:1 device program. One great way to make your budget go further when it's time to make 1:1 purchases is to leverage vendors who provide hardware-software bundles or software specials.

For example, Lenovo [provides a complimentary LanSchool Air license](#) with every qualifying education device purchased, helping schools maximize their investments in Chromebooks or other Lenovo digital devices. And software vendors often have partnerships that enable them to deliver a variety of compatible applications at a discounted rate, similar to LanSchool's arrangement with Bark and DNSFilter.

## Be BYOD Smart

Building a secure BYOD program is a great way to address today's digital learning needs without straining your budget. Being smart and strategic in your approach will save you more time and money down the road.

## About LanSchool

As a pioneer and innovator of classroom management software, LanSchool helps teachers connect with students to create more meaningful online experiences, both in the classroom and remotely.

Backed by Lenovo and building on 30 years as an edtech leader, LanSchool helps guide learning, increase collaboration and maximize teaching time. We've also partnered with best-in-class safety solutions because we believe student safety should be a given.

Learn more at [www.lanschool.com](http://www.lanschool.com)

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