



Computer Purchasing Guidance for Parents & Students

The information provided in this document is not meant to endorse a specific Chromebook, laptop, or desktop for purchase, but instead to provide information that will aid you in your search to purchase a device. The Effingham County School District does not require students to provide their own device. Each school offers an opportunity for students to request a device to be assigned to them. However, parents may want to provide their child a computer they can call their own that will be available to them through the summer and at all times. As such, below are some considerations.

Chromebooks

- The Effingham County School District has used various models of Chromebooks over the last 10 years including Samsung, Lenovo, HP, Acer, and ASUS. All seemed to be fairly good. This is not to say that there are not other models that are just as good.
- The screen size we use is 11.6 inches and RAM is now a minimum of 4 gigabytes (4 GB) with 8 gigabytes (8 GB) being preferred for future upgrades.
- All Chromebooks run the Chrome Operating System, so they all look the same when you are using them.
- Chromebooks are made to last about six (6) years. If you want to know how long a Chromebook may last just Google the make and model of the Chromebook and “release date” (ex. Lenovo N21 release date). Information on many devices may also be provided directly from Google as part of their [Auto Update Policy](#).
- You should be able to find a good Chromebook somewhere between \$150 and \$250.
- When making a purchase it is important to pay attention to the reviews. If you find a make and model that you are interested in, check the reviews on multiple websites for that device. Pay attention to the number of reviews in addition to the ratings. If a device has thousands of reviews and good or great ratings then the device is probably a safe purchase. If the device has 100 or less reviews but they are all great the device may still be good, but you may need to be cautious with so few reviews.
- If you find a Chromebook for \$100 or less, it is likely that it is refurbished or about 5 years old. That may be perfectly fine for you and your student, but keep in mind that as the Chromebook gets older it will slow down, the battery may not last as long, and it may not be able to receive and install updates due to the hardware being older than 6 years.

Students enrolled in the Virtual Option may find a larger laptop or even a desktop computer more comfortable to work on with a larger screen (14”, 15” or even 17” or more) available. However, students who are enrolled in the traditional program will probably benefit from a smaller laptop that is more portable, especially in the early grades. For these students, it might be best to look for 11.6” or 12” displays in either a traditional “clamshell” design or in a “convertible” touchscreen option.

- If you have a laptop that is older ([Check here to see if your device is compatible](#)) and you are a bit tech savvy or know someone who is, you may want to consider using [CloudReady Neverware](#) to give the old laptop new life as a Chromebook. Please understand that if you do this, anything that is on your laptop will be erased completely.
- When students log into a Chromebook for school use, they should be using their school assigned login credentials. There is no need to create a personal email or Google account.
- Some articles that may help you are:
 - [What is a Chromebook? Buying guide and advice | Laptop Mag](#)
 - [Best Chromebooks for Students in 2020 | Android Central](#)
 - [The Best Chromebooks for Students in 2020 | Digital Trends](#)
 - [The best Chromebooks in 2020 | Laptop Mag](#)
 - [The Best Chromebooks for 2020 | PCMag](#)

Laptop/Desktop Computers

If you are considering a Windows or Macintosh computer, it is recommended that you purchase a model with at least 8 Gigabytes (8 GB) of RAM. While Chromebooks can operate on 4 GB, Windows and Mac systems perform much better with more RAM and a 4 GB system may not meet the needs of your student(s). Additionally, more storage is recommended for these systems (500 GB or better Hard Disk Drive (HDD), preferably a newer Solid State Drive (SSD)).

- Buying a laptop or Desktop computer can be tricky as there are many things to consider. One of the first questions you will need to answer is whether you want a Windows or Mac computer. ECSD is a Windows school district, so if you want your students to use a device that is similar to what they would use in school, you will want to purchase a Windows computer.
 - You will want to consider screen size, whether the screen is a touch screen, amount of RAM, Processor type and speed, Operating System (OS) version, included software (like Microsoft Office), webcam/microphone, Wi-Fi and/or LAN connection, and more.
 - Entry level laptops are \$600 or less. Mainstream laptops are in the \$600-\$1000 range. Desktops are often cheaper than laptops, but lack portability for those students who need to take a device to and from school.
 - Often, laptops off the shelf at Walmart, SAMS Club, Best Buy and other retailers are good purchases. Amazon and other online retailers may also offer good deals.
- When making a purchase it is important to pay attention to the reviews. If you find a make and model that you are interested in, check the reviews on multiple websites for that device. Pay attention to the number of reviews in addition to the ratings. If a device has thousands of reviews and good or great ratings then the device is probably a safe purchase. If the device has 100 or less reviews but they are all great the device may still be good, but you may need to be cautious with so few reviews.
- If you are set on a laptop, but on a tight budget, you may want to consider local resellers. These businesses offer laptops that have been used, but have been refurbished for resale. One such local shop is [RePowerIT in Guyton](#).

- If you purchase a refurbished computer, please keep in mind that these devices may already be older and have limited life remaining.
- If you have a laptop that is older (*[Check here to see if your device is compatible](#)*) and you are a bit tech savvy or know someone who is, you may want to consider using [CloudReady Neverware](#) to give the old laptop new life as a Chromebook. Please understand that if you do this, anything that is on your laptop will be erased completely.
- Some articles that may help you are:
 - [Laptop buying guide: What to look for in 2020, and what to avoid](#)
 - [Laptop buying guide: 8 essential tips to know before you buy](#)
 - [Laptop Buying Guide: How To Buy A Laptop - Best Buy](#)
 - [Choosist](#)

Parents may help protect Chromebooks/laptops by purchasing a case or sleeve in which to place devices while being transported. While cases may add bulk, they may offer additional storage for power adapters where sleeves will only accommodate the device itself. Additionally, showing students how to protect their Chromebook/laptop by placing it in a backpack between books or notebooks so it is not exposed to the "outside" of the backpack might be helpful.