

Dr. Glenn's editorial (Laptop mandate: Where's the benefit?) dated January 12, 2006 raised interesting questions about the goals of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. From Dr. Glenn's editorial, it seems that perhaps the goals of public education are to finish high school and pass all achievement tests along the way. I would beg to suggest that the goals of public education are to prepare future generations to live and work in the society of which they will be a part. It is therefore our job as professional educators to meet the academic needs of these students in ways that will ensure their ultimate success in society. That society, like it or not, is technology-rich, and the traditional teacher-centered instruction that 'worked for us' does not work for the digital kids of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Dr. Glenn suggested that computers simply 'tell' students information. I encourage Dr. Glenn and others to venture inside a technology-rich classroom and witness active learning. In Dr. Glenn's own words, people learn by listening, watching, or doing. It is a well-known fact in educational circles that the most effective learning and retention of knowledge occurs when students are actively involved in the learning process. Using laptops for learning provides exactly that opportunity.

The common misconception by those not fortunate enough to witness one-to-one learning is that the laptops are used as part of a traditional teaching approach. In reality, the structure of schooling in a laptop school is markedly different. In addition to the complex internal communication structures (email, assignment submissions, electronic bulletin boards,...), students use educational software (that can be individualized to meet specific student needs) and popular software that prepare students to function in a digital society. A visit to a one-to-one classroom will prove to any observer the power of one-to-one learning. Admittedly, one will not see students sitting quietly at their desk completing pages from a textbook and the teacher will not be standing at a podium instructing students. If you stay more than a few minutes and actually listen to the classroom interactions and ask students to describe what and how they are learning you will witness powerful learning. Students and teachers share the responsibility for learning – students learn from each other and the teacher, and they learn by exploring concepts using technology.

The use of technology for learning, in particular one-to-one laptops, is not unique to Fullerton School District in Orange County. Research on existing one-to-one laptop programs shows that one-to-one access to technology improves students' writing scores, improves students' mathematical problem-solving, expands students' horizons through Internet-based learning, and enhances student organization and motivation to learn. If we want our students to stay in school and graduate high school we need to motivate them to attend school and learn while they are there. Dr. McCune and the technology leaders of Fullerton School District need to be commended on their foresight for initiating a one-to-one laptop program in a city that itself is at the forefront of technology infusion into society.