

Untethered Technology

Looking for the right wireless notebooks or handhelds for your schools? We've got you covered. **BY CHRISTINA WOOD**

"IN FIVE MINUTES, A STUDENT CAN GO on the Internet and find more information on a topic than a teacher can learn in an entire career," says Mike Hall, Ed.D., former principal of Houston County High School in Warner Robins, Georgia (see Spotlight School on page 39). "Teachers have to be facilitators—not deliverers—of information." When technology is accessible from each student's desk, lap, or palm, it transforms the way teachers teach and students learn. Integrated into lessons, available whenever questions arise, illustrating complex topics, and making projects

possible that once seemed to rest solely in the realm of professionals, wireless technology creates a revolution in each classroom. For all of these reasons, Houston County High is entirely wireless: From the computer-aided design system in wood shop to the whiteboards in algebra class, students feast on information.

"Wireless technology is making the classroom look more like a knowledge workplace than a classroom," says Elliot Soloway, professor at the University of Michigan School of Education and director of the school's Center for Highly Interactive Computing in Education. "It prepares kids for the 21st century."

Fortunately, \$100 wireless routers now handle what once entailed rewiring buildings with expensive fiber optics. Houston County High School went wireless for \$7,000. Notebooks and handheld computers have become more powerful and affordable, too, but choosing one hasn't gotten easier.

The products in this buyer's guide represent notebooks and handhelds from the 10 major manufacturers

developing products for education. All are solid wireless choices because of their durability and value.

Your decision should be dictated by how your teachers plan to use the systems—and by your budget—rather than by any single feature. If students work primarily at their desks, desktop replacements are a budget-conscious option. They are heavier and use a less expensive desktop processor instead of the newer Pentium M processors. If visuals are important, take a look at the wide-screen models. If getting a computer into an already heavy backpack is the top priority, balancing cost against weight will be your task.

With handhelds, how you get data into them is key to how much use you'll get out of them. Handhelds are great for sending e-mail, gathering data, and taking files into the field. But they are not replacements for computers that students can use to search the Internet and create multimedia projects.

Whatever you decide, you can feel good about it. You are starting a revolution, after all. And everyone in your district will think you're a hero.

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WIRELESS CARTS



Installing a school- or district-wide wireless network and distributing new notebooks or handhelds to each student—even in just one grade—might seem like an undertaking too huge to contemplate. But don't let that stop you: Several companies offer mobile wireless carts that are a cost-effective alternative to a traditional computer lab.

Apple, for example, has curriculum-based carts to meet specific learning needs, such as its K-6 math cart that includes Destination Math. You can also configure your own cart. For more information, call (800) 800-2775.

OTHER CART MANUFACTURERS:

Acer: (800) 571-2237

Dell: (888) 508-3355

Gateway: (888) 888-0392

[Buyer's Guide]

The World

IN THE FOLLOWING CHARTS, we compare the latest
Not sure which will best suit

NOTEBOOKS

	 iBook G4	 Aspire AS2002Lci	 Latitude D505	 Gateway M405
COMPANY	Apple www.apple.com (800) 800-2775	Acer www.acer.com (800) 571-2237	Dell www.dell.com (800) 999-3355	Gateway www.gateway.com (888) 888-2075
LIST PRICE	\$1,198	\$1,622	\$1,049	\$1,049
PROCESSOR	800MHz PowerPC G4	1.5GHz Centrino Pentium M	1.4GHz Pentium M	1.20GHz Intel Celeron M
HARD DRIVE	30GB Ultra ATA	40 GB	30 GB	40 GB
WIRELESS TYPE*	802.11g	802.11b	802.11b or 802.11b/g	802.11b
WEIGHT AND SCREEN SIZE	4.9 lbs 12 inches TFT (thin film transistor)	6.6 lbs 15.4 inches	6 lbs 14 inches	6.17 lbs 15 inches
NOTABLE FEATURES	Impact-resistant exterior; rubber-mounted hard drive	A wide screen	Built for easy networking and support	Big screen and hard drive; not-so-big price
THE SKINNY	According to Cnet.com, it "goes beyond its good looks to deliver an attractive package."	Great features for the money, says Cnet.com.	Incorporates a new budget chip from Intel to create a wireless notebook for less than \$1,100, says ZDNet.com.	<i>PC Magazine</i> calls the design bland but praises the performance and battery life.

*802.11g and 802.11b describe wireless Internet standards (often referred to as Wi-Fi). They both operate at the same frequency, but 802.11g is five times faster than 802.11b.

of Wireless

notebooks and handhelds for the education market.
your district's needs? Read on!

			
nx5000	Thinkpad x31	VAIO K13 PCG-K13	Satellite A40-S270
HP Compaq www.hp.com (800) 888-3224	IBM www.ibm.com (888) 839-9289	Sony www.sonymstyle.com (877) 865-7669	Toshiba www.toshiba.com (888) 978-2542
\$1,199	\$1,399	\$1,400	\$1,429
1.20GHz Intel Celeron M	1.3 GHz Intel Pentium M	2.80GHz Intel Pentium 4	2.80 GHz Intel Pentium 4
30 GB	40 GB	40 GB	60 GB
802.11b	802.11b	802.11b/g	802.11g
5.75 lbs 15 inches	3.6 lbs 12.1 inches	7.3 lbs 15 inches	7.7 lbs 15 inches
Optional multi-bay battery lasts for nine hours	Drop it and it “braces” for impact	Stylish and reasonably priced	Comes with Microsoft One-Note 2003 digital note-taking system
<i>Laptop Magazine</i> praises the large screen and abundant features.	Speed and battery life make it more than worth its price, according to <i>PC Magazine</i> .	Sony's less-expensive K13 line of notebooks “is anything but boxy,” says Cnet.com, “and has ample features.”	“A good deal, even in the world of thousand- dollar laptops.” — <i>PC Magazine</i>

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[Buyer's Guide]

HANDHELDS



Tungsten C



Dana Wireless



Axim X3i



CLIE PEG-UX50



Pocket PC e800



iPAQ h4350

	Tungsten C	Dana Wireless	Axim X3i	CLIE PEG-UX50	Pocket PC e800	iPAQ h4350
COMPANY	Palm www.palmone.com (888) 223-4817	Alphasmart www.alpha-smart.com (888) 274-0680	Dell www.dell.com (800) 999-3355	Sony www.sony-style.com (877) 865-7669	Toshiba www.toshiba.com (888) 978-2542	HP Compaq www.hp.com (800) 888-3224
LIST PRICE	\$499	\$429**	\$297	\$600	\$599	\$499
OPERATING SYSTEM	Palm OS	Palm OS	MS Mobile for Pocket PC	Palm OS	MS Mobile for Pocket PC	MS Mobile for Pocket PC
SIZE AND WEIGHT	4.8" x 3.1" 6.3 oz	1.9" x 12.4" 2 lbs	4.8" x 3" 5 oz	4.1" x 3.5" 6.2 oz	5.3" x 3" 6.8 oz	5.4" x 2.9" 5.8 oz
INPUT DEVICE	Integrated QWERTY thumb keyboard	Full-sized keyboard and stylus	Stylus	Small QWERTY keyboard or touch screen	Voice command and voice to text; touch screen	Small, integrated keyboard or touch screen
WIRELESS TYPE	802.11b	802.11b	802.11b	802.11b	802.11b	802.11b
NOTABLE FEATURES	Color screen; super fast 400MHz ARM processor	Wide-screen with backlight; long-lasting battery	A recorder with playback; touch-sensitive color screen	High-resolution screen; video record and playback; MP3 player; digital camera	Voice applications	3.5-inch TFT display
THE SKINNY	ZDNet.com loves its "blazing performance."	More than a handheld but not quite a laptop, says Cnet.com.	It's slim, fast, and affordable, according to Cnet.com.	"The handheld meets the laptop." —ZDNet.com	Lots of memory for a PDA, says <i>PC World</i> .	Cnet.com says the integrated keyboard and higher-capacity battery make it a top choice for heavy Wi-Fi users.

**Quantity discounts are available.