Conclusions & Recommendations

Immediate Conclusions
The problems teachers and students report while using the laptops must be addressed promptly if teachers and students are to use the laptops without frustration. While teachers and students desire more on-demand technical support, teachers could easily remedy most problems observed if they were provided trouble-shooting strategies.

- To solve the slow performance of Google Docs, ensure users know to use Google Chrome as their web browser instead of Explorer. Ensure Chrome is installed on all laptops and provide a desktop shortcut to launch it.

- To solve the problem of students’ losing wireless access, familiarize teachers and students with the wifi switch on the front of the laptop. Given the poor placement of the wifi switch on the front edge of the computer, users may inadvertently shut off wifi. A simple push of the switch turns it back on. Additional routers will also boost the wireless signal and increase speeds.

- To remedy slow start-up times, ensure laptops are left in sleep or hibernate mode over night instead of being shut off. When the laptops are shut off, they cannot install after-hours updates that are pushed out to them by the IT technician; thus, the updates install in the background during start up and slow log-in speed.

Long-Range Planning
The district’s Professional Development Committee and Technology Planning Committee have essential roles to play in ensuring teachers and students use laptops efficiently and effectively, and the district’s leadership must secure the funds necessary to provide technology support and training.

- As the school’s curriculum is revised, integrate grade-level and course-specific expectations for students’ technology use, thus communicating to teachers what students ought to know and be able to do with technology in Writing Workshop.

- Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to learn Web 2.0 applications, such as Google Docs, and practice their classroom use. As two of the four Writing Workshop teachers continue to schedule classes in the B wing computer lab and show resistance to learning new technologies, additional training, modeling, and training and support is essential for the more widespread and efficient use of the laptops and for the adoption of paperless classrooms.

- One of the principal’s goals is to see laptops widely used to conduct short formative assessments, to collect data, and to adjust instruction quickly. That goal, however, has not been communicated to the staff. While all Writing Workshop teachers monitor for understanding and provide feedback on drafts and short writing assignments before students undertake their quarterly summative assessment, only one conducts formative assessments as the principal describes. To better achieve this goal, a clear vision must be communicated, and teachers must be trained in the use of online tools, such as Google Forms, Survey Monkey, or Quiz Star, to create such technology-enhanced formative assessments and to make instructional decisions based on student response data.

- As the principal intends to reduce expenditures for site licenses by adopting more open source software and online productivity applications, the technology and curriculum committees must consider the place of MS Office products on the district’s laptop computers and desktop PCs. With MS Word available on the HP minis, students rely on the familiar word processing program unless required by their teacher to
use Google Docs. Student survey data show that no student uses Open Office although it is available on each laptop’s desktop. To initiate a student and teacher migration to open source software, MS Office should be uninstalled and teachers and students introduced of Open Office and the suite of Google products, which may also help achieve the goal of reducing paper costs.